



# Angelology in the Writings of Justin Martyr, Tatian and Athenagoras

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**Abstract:** The aim of the study was to analyse the texts of Justin, Tatian, and Athenagoras on the subject of angels. I do this in three points: the creation of angels by God/Logos as free beings (1); the tasks of angels (2) the sin of angels and the final annihilation of demons/evil angels (3). All three authors emphasise that God created angels and people as free beings, and therefore also responsible for their actions, and entrusted them with the care of people and his creation. However, some angels were deceived by the first angel (Tatian) or by the hostile power (Athenagoras), who let himself be carried away by vain glory, broke all ties of dependence on God, and wanted to appropriate the deity. He turned into a demon and his followers into a host of demons. Athenagoras combines the concepts of Tatian and Justin, stating that the power/spirit to whom God entrusted the management of matter and its forms, insulted its own essence and the power entrusted to it, and the angels from the first vault sinned by intercourse with women, which resulted in the birth of giants. Tatian's and Athenagoras' concept of the sin of angels is definitely less mythical than that of Justin. According to Tatian and Athenagoras, this state of fallen angels is irreversible.

**Keywords:** angels; Apologists; the sin of angels; Justin Martyr; Tatian; Athenagoras

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## 1. Introduction

The teaching on angels is not a central element in the writings of Greek Christian apologists of the second century. However, even if this subject is mentioned somewhat perfunctorily, and in addition to the discussion of other aspects of the Christian doctrine, the few references that these texts provide are priceless testimonies to the formation of the Christian teaching on angels, their creation, and their role in the history of salvation in the second century. Therefore, in this study, I would like to focus on the analysis of relevant passages from these writings, to reconstruct the reflections of specific authors on the topic in question. Since references to angels are made only in the *1 and 2 Apology* and *Dialogue with Trypho* by Justin

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Martyr<sup>2</sup>, *Address to the Greeks* by Tatian<sup>3</sup>, and *A Plea for the Christians* by Athenagoras of Athens<sup>4</sup>, I will focus on these works in further detailed analysis.

The Greek term ἄγγελος in singular and various grammatical forms (ἄγγέλου, ἄγγέλω, ἄγγελον) appears ca. 40 times in Justin's *First Apology* and *Dialogue with Trypho* alone, mostly in the context of the scene of the annunciation of the birth of Christ or the presentation of the Logos, the Son of God, as an angel/God's messenger, based on Old Testament prophecies<sup>5</sup>. However, these passages do not concern the teaching on angels in the strict sense, and therefore will be omitted in this study. The term ἄγγελοι in plural and various grammatical forms (ἄγγέλων, ἄγγέλους, ἄγγέλους) appears 57 times in different contexts in Justin's *First* and *Second Apology* and *Dialogue with Trypho*; Tatian's *Address to the Greeks*, and *A Plea*

<sup>2</sup> To learn more about Justin and his *First* and *Second Apology*, see: L.W. Bernard, *Justin Martyr. His Life and Thought*, London – New York 1967; E.R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr*, Jena 1923; E.F. Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, Tübingen 1975; Ch. Munier, *La structure littéraire de l'Apologie de Justin*, RSR 60 (1986) p. 34-54; Ch. Munier, *À propos des Apologies de Justin*, RSR 61 (1987) p. 177-186; Ch. Munier, *La méthode apologétique de Justin le Martyr*, RSR 62 (1988) p. 90-100, 227-239; L. Misiarczyk, *Wstęp*, in: *Pierwsi apologetyci greccy*, BOK 24, Kraków 2004, p. 162-206. On *Dialogue*, see: L. Misiarczyk, *Il Midrash nel Dialogo con Trifone di Giustino Martire*, Płock 1999; L. Misiarczyk, *Wstęp*, in: *Justyn Męczennik, 1 i 2 Apologia, Dialog z Żydem Tryfonem*, Warszawa 2012, p. 119-157; E. Ferguson, *Justin Martyr on Jews, Christians and the Covenant*, in: *Early Christianity in Context. Monuments and Documents*, ed. F. Manns – E. Alliata, Jerusalem 1993, p. 395-405; D. Rokeach, *Jews, Pagans and Christian in Conflict*, Jerusalem – Leiden 1982; D. Rokeach, *Justin Martyr and the Jews*, Leiden 2002; O. Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy*, Leiden 1987; D. Trakatellis, *The Pre-existence of Christ in the Writings of Justin Martyr*, Missoula 1976; H. Waszink, *Bemerkungen zu Justins Lehre vom Logos Spermatikos*, JAC 1 (1964) p. 380-390; J.C. Van Winden, *An Early Christian Philosopher. Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Tryphon Chapters One to Nine*, Leiden 1971.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. R.M. Grant, *The Data of Tatian's Oration*, HTR 46 (1953) p. 99-101; R.M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, London 1988, p. 67-82; M. McGehee, *Why Tatian never 'Apologized' to the Greeks*, JECS 1 (1993) p. 143-158; L. Misiarczyk, *Wstęp*, in: *Pierwsi apologetyci greccy*, BOK 24, Kraków 2004, p. 302-310.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. S. Kalinkowski, *Wczesnochrześcijańska apologetyka grecka*, in: *Atenagoras z Aten. Prośba za chrześcijanami, O zmartwychwstaniu ciała*, Warszawa 1985, p. 5-23 (esp. p. 10-16); B. Pouderon, *D'Athènes à Alexandrie. Études sur Athénagore et les origines de la philosophie chrétiennes*, Quebec – Louvain 1998; D. Rankin, *Athenagoras. Philosopher and Theologian*, Farnham – Burlington 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. E. J. Goospeed, *Index Apologeticus*, Leipzig 1912, p. 2.

for the Christians by Athenagoras of Athens<sup>6</sup>. In some of these texts, the term in question appears only a few times, or as a quotation from the Old Testament; therefore, they will be omitted in this analysis. Thus, there will be only 22 texts that are *strictly* relevant to the presentation of the authors' angelology; I will focus exclusively on these texts in the following part of my analysis. The analysis will be grouped around the following topics: the creation of angels by God/Logos as free beings, the tasks of angels, the sin of angels, and the final annihilation of demons/evil angels. Let us now concentrate on the analysis of relevant passages in the above-mentioned works.

## 2. The creation of angels by God/Logos as free beings

Angels are mentioned for the first time in Justin's *1 Apology* 6, 2 in the context of the exposition of the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity:

But both Him, and the Son (who came forth from Him and taught us these things, and the host of the other good angels [τὸν ἄλλων [...] ἀγαθῶν ἀγγέλων στρατόν] who follow and are made like to Him [αὐτῷ ἐπομένον καὶ ἐξομοιούμενον]), and the prophetic Spirit, we worship and adore [σεβόμεθα καὶ προσκυνοῦμεν], knowing them in reason and truth, and declaring without grudging to everyone who wishes to learn, as we have been taught<sup>7</sup>.

Several elements in this passage need a deeper analysis. Justin states that Christians worship and adore (σεβόμεθα καὶ προσκυνοῦμεν) God the Father, His Son who came forth from Him, and the prophetic Spirit, as well as "the host of the other good angels" (τὸν ἄλλων [...] ἀγαθῶν ἀγγέλων στρατόν). This is the oldest testimony to the veneration of angels, their worship, and adoration. Thus, Justin confirms that Christians worshipped angels as early as around the middle of the second century. He goes on to explain the motivation for this veneration – it is because the angels follow God the Father (αὐτῷ ἐπομένον), and so live in the divine space, and are made like to Him (ἐξομοιούμενον). Of course, the veneration of angels

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Googspeed, *Index Apologeticus*, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *1 Apologia* 6, 2; *Iustini Martyris. Apologiae pro Christianis*, ed. M. Marcovich, Patristische Texte und Studien 38, Berlin – New York 1994, p. 40. All works of St. Justin in translation by J. Donaldson, A. Roberts, <https://www.earlychristian-writings.com/justin.html>

does not imply that the Christians “idolise” them or place them on a par with God but that their unique status relies on the fact that they were made in the likeness of God and that they surround Him in heaven. Though they are and will always remain mere creatures, they are worthy of veneration due to their likeness to Him.

The second passage on angels appears in the *2 Apology* 7, 5-6. In 7, 3 Justin explains that men’s actions and destinies do not depend on blind fate only, but every person performs good or evil acts out of free will. He further explains that this was not understood by the Stoics, who taught that everything happened out of necessity. In this context we find the passage that is of interest to us:

But since God in the beginning made the race of angels and men with free-will (αὐτεξούσιον το τε τῶν ἀγγέλων γένος καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός), they will justly suffer in eternal fire the punishment of whatever sins they have committed. And this is the nature of all that is made, to be capable of vice and virtue. For neither would any of them be praiseworthy unless there were power to turn to both<sup>8</sup>.

Firstly, Justin emphasizes that God, at the beginning of the creation of the universe (ἀρχή), called angels and men into existence (ἐποίησεν τῶν ἀγγέλων γένος καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων). The verb ἐποίησεν that was used here appears in Septuagint in the account of the creation of the world in Genesis 1; therefore, there can be no doubt that its meaning is ‘to create’. Secondly, Justin makes it clear that, in the beginning, God created not only angels but also men. This, of course, does not imply that He created them together and at the same time, as we know that later Christian reflections would emphasize that angels were created before the creation of the world, while people were created after the creation of the world, as the crowning of all creatures. Therefore, when Justin uses the term “beginning” (ἀρχή), he treats it not as a single creative act of God but rather as a whole series of His acts performed at the beginning of the world’s history. His argumentation seeks to demonstrate, against the Stoics, that God created angels and men as beings endowed with free will (αὐτεξούσιον) and not determined by necessity. This freedom is the basis for their future responsibility for their actions and for the judgement over them. None of the creatures would have been praiseworthy if they had no power to choose between virtue (good)

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<sup>8</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *2 Apologia* 7, 5; PTS 38, p. 148.

and evil. What is more, without free will, no responsibility and no true judgement would be possible at all.

Meanwhile, in *Dialogue* 85, 6 Justin asserts the existence of angels, citing the Divine revelation: “The passage, then, by which I proved that God reveals that there are both angels (ἄγγελοι) and hosts in heaven is this: ‘Praise the Lord from the heavens: praise Him in the highest. Praise Him, all His angels: praise Him, all His hosts’ (Psalm 148:1-2)”<sup>9</sup>. The apologist was probably aware of difficulties that the creation of angels was not described explicitly in Genesis; therefore, an objection could arise as to how Christians knew of their existence at all. Justin replies that Christians learned about it from the Divine revelation, as angels appear many times in the Old Testament, especially in the Book of Psalms. And since they appear in the history of salvation, they must have been created at some point in the beginning of it.

In the *Dialogue* 88, 5 Justin reaffirms his previous thought expressed in the 1 and 2 *Apology* on the creation of angels and men as free beings. This is the passage:

For God, wishing both angels and men, who were endowed with free-will, and at their own disposal, to do whatever He had strengthened each to do (Βουλόμενος γὰρ τούτους, ἐν ἐλευθερα προαιρέσει καὶ αὐτεξουσίους γενομένους, τοὺς τε ἀγγέλους καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὁ θεὸς πράττειν ὅσα ἕκαστον ἐνεδύαμωσεν [δύνασθαι] ποιεῖν), made them so, that if they chose the things acceptable to Himself, He would keep them free from death and from punishment; but if they did evil, He would punish each as He sees fit<sup>10</sup>.

In the above passage, Justin, writing about the creation of men and angels by God, uses two Greek terms: ἐν ἐλευθερα προαιρέσει and αὐτεξουσίους γενομένους, which were translated as “endowed with free will and at their own disposal”. However, since, as we have seen earlier, Justin reserves the term αὐτεξουσίον to denote the free will of men and angels, it seems that it will be better to understand the whole phrase as “free beings endowed with free will”. Shortly after he adds that the purpose of creating them in this way was so that each of these beings, angels as well as men, would do what God “strengthened them to do”, or, in other words, act

<sup>9</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 85, 6; *Justyni Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone*, ed. M. Marcovich, Patristische Texte und Studien 47, Berlin – New York 1997, p. 217.

<sup>10</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 88, 5, PTS 47, p. 223.

according to their nature and God's will. As we shall see later, angels were assigned a different mission in the history of salvation by the Creator than men. So, acting in accordance with the capacity that God has given specific beings to do is the fulfillment of God's gifts, acting in harmony with nature, and following His will, or with what God has intended for them. Meanwhile, any departure from this, which, in the case of men, is the desire to pretend to be angels, and in the case of angels, the abandonment of doing God's will, is an action contrary to God's expectation.

In *Dialogue* 102, 4 Justin repeats that God created angels and men as free beings, but adds some new elements to it. The text is as follows:

But yet, since He knew that it would be good, He created both angels and men free to do that which is righteous, and He appointed periods of time during which He knew it would be good for them to have the exercise of free-will (ἐποίησεν αὐτεξουσίους πρὸς διακαιοπραξίαν καὶ ἀγγέλους καὶ ἀνθρώπους, καὶ χρόνους ὄρισε μέχρις οὗ ἐγίνωσκε καλὸν εἶναι τὸ αὐτεξούσιον ἔχειν αὐτούς). And because He likewise knew it would be good, He made general and particular judgements; each one's freedom of will, however, being guarded<sup>11</sup>.

In addition to the statement known from his earlier texts, that God created angels and men as free beings, the Apologist adds here that He has endowed them with free will so that they would be able to do justice in a free manner, and not be forced to do so by God. Further, the Creator appointed the periods of time during which He knew it would be good for them to have the exercise of free-will. We can see that here, again, the same Greek term αὐτεξούσια is used to denote the free will of men and angels. It is also worth noting that this passage mentions two new things: endowing angels and men with free will God made them capable of doing what is righteous, that is, doing what He had created them for to do. Then, he appointed periods of time during which He knew it would be right and good for them to have the exercise of free-will. These periods of time are, on the one hand, the individual lives of all men, until death, and, on the other hand, the end of the world and God's judgement. It is easy to imagine that in regard to men this statement bases on the general teaching of Christ about this matter; however, it is more difficult with regard to angels. After all, we know that angels do not die physically, so it can be speculated that

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<sup>11</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 102, 4, PTS 47, p. 245.

for each individual angel, this period of exercising free will ends with the free decision to abandon to doing God's will, or the task for which God has created him and which God entrusted to him. This would imply that in the case of angels too there would still exist the possibility of committing the sin of abandoning God and joining the rebellious Lucifer and other fallen angels. Later, theological reflection would rather emphasize that the so-called sin of angels was committed at the beginning of history and was a one-time act in which Lucifer and some angels rebelled against God and abandoned him, while other angels remained faithful to Him. Yet, there remains an open question whether this faithfulness of angels is an eternal decision that can never be changed, or not. In theory, only God makes decisions that remain unchanged forever, while all created beings, including angels, may change their decisions. Justin did not write anything about it, but it seems that he admitted this possibility, insisting that the free will of man and angels is reinforced when they freely make decisions in favour of righteousness. It is also possible that writing about a specific time of freedom enjoyed by angels, Justin meant the end of the world and the final judgement, however, we do not have enough primary source material available to make this point more precise.

A similar thought is found in Tatian's *Address to the Greeks* 7, 2, along with some important additions. At the beginning of chapter 7 Tatian remarks that the heavenly Logos made man immortal, so that as incorruptibility belongs only to God, in like manner, also man might have been immortal and share at least partially in the life of God. This is the context in which we find the passage important for our analysis:

The Logos, too, before the creation of men (πρὸ τῆς τῶν ἀνδρῶν κατασκευῆς), was the Creator of angels (ἀγγέλων δημιουργὸς γίνεται). And each of these two orders of creatures was made free to act as it pleased (ἐκάτερον τῆς ποιήσεως εἶδος αὐτεξούσιον γέγονε), not having the nature of good, which again is with God alone, but is brought to perfection in men through their freedom of choice, in order that the bad man may be justly punished, having become depraved through his own fault, but the just man be deservedly praised for his virtuous deeds, since in the exercise of his free choice he refrained from transgressing the will of God<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Tatianus, *Oratio ad Graecos* 7, 2; *Tatiani Oratio ad Graecos*, ed. M. Marcovich, *Patristische Texte und Studien* 43, Berlin – New York 1995, p. 23.

Unlike Justin, Tatian does not attribute the creation of angels and men to God the Father but to the Logos. Although in 7, 1 he uses the same term as Justin, stating that the Logos τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐποίησεν, in 7, 2 he prefers τῆς τῶν ἀνδρῶν κατασκευῆς, and uses the phrase ἀγγέλων δημιουργὸς γίνεται with reference to the creation of angels. This should not surprise us, however, if we remember that the Christian theological terminology was at the beginning, and some authors, such as Tatian, used it interchangeably with terminology drawn from Hellenistic philosophy. What is important for the present analysis is the fact that Tatian clearly states that angels were created by the Logos before men. Like Justin, he then goes on to specify that angels as well as men were endowed with free will. He even uses exactly the same Greek term like Justin αὐτεξούσιον. He further explains that the gift of free will belongs inherently only to God, while angels and men must confirm it all the time by freely making decisions that are in harmony with the mission entrusted to them by God. All this is so that the one who does evil, whether it is an angel or man, can be rightly punished for becoming evil through his own fault, as God did not make him so. Instead, the just one should be justly rewarded for his good deeds and for not using his free will to oppose the will of God. Thus, according to Tatian, although angels were created as free beings, they must constantly confirm this freedom by acting in harmony with God's will, as doing God's will is the peak of freedom.

The final passage that features the theme of the creation of angels is *A Plea for the Christians* 10 by Athenagoras of Athens<sup>13</sup>. The apologist justifies the Christian faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and, having introduced the Holy Trinity, adds:

Nor is our teaching in what relates to the divine nature confined to these points; but we recognise also a multitude of angels and ministers (πλήθος ἀγγέλων καὶ λειτουργῶν), whom God the Maker and Framer of the world distributed and appointed to their several posts (διένειμε καὶ διέταξεν) by His Logos (...) <sup>14</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. A. J. Malherbe, *The Structure of Athenagoras* Cf. E.J. Googspeed, *Index Apologeticus*, Leipzig 1912, p. 2. ,*Supplicatio pro Christianis* ', VigChr 23 (1969) p. 1-20.

<sup>14</sup> Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis* 10; *Athenagoras of Athens. Legatio pro Christianis. De resurrectione mortuorum*, ed. W. Schoedel, Oxford 1972, p. 11, transl. J. Donaldson, A. Roberts, <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/athenagoras.html>.



Athenagoras was the first among Christian authors to write about “a multitude of angels and ministers” (πλῆθος ἀγγέλων καὶ λειτουργῶν) serving God and men, although he does not provide their exact number. He also does not clarify what he means when he writes about the ministering beings in general terms, but because he differentiates between them and angels, one should suspect that these are beings that serve God and men, different from angels. He also did not use the typical Greek verb to refer to the creation of angels (ἐποίησεν) but rather he wrote that God established (διένευμε) them through His Logos, which seems to be equivalent to the terms “created” and “distributed” (διέταξεν) them, in the sense of appointing them to specific tasks. As I mentioned before, Justin attributed the creation of angels to God; Tatian attributed it to the Logos, while Athenagoras, in a way, reconciled these two visions, writing that God created angels through the Logos, which comes from Him. Thus, we are not talking about God and Logos as two separate sources of origin of angels but, since the Logos originates from God, God created angels, men, and the world through the Logos. Of course, Justin and Tatian did write about the Logos through which God created the universe, however, they did not apply this directly to angels.

### 3. The tasks of angels

As far as the tasks of angels are concerned, it should be emphasised that, of the three authors in question, Justin only mentions them in three short passages, while Athenagoras refers to them in one of his texts. Therefore, the analysis presented below will be less extensive than the other analyses, as the source material is modest.

In *Dial.* 62, 3 Justin interprets Genesis 1,26 (“let us make”) and 3,22 (“Adam has become as one of us”) as evidence of God addressing the Logos-Christ who pre-existed the act of creation of man. He also criticises the Jewish “heresy”, according to which God was then addressing angels: “For I would not say that the dogma of that heresy which is said to be among you is true, or that the teachers of it can prove that [God] spoke to angels, or that the human frame was the workmanship of angels”<sup>15</sup>. We know that rabbinic texts such as *Bareshit Rabba* 8, 4; 8, 8; 19, 3 attribute this interpretation to rabbis of the early third century and to Rabbi Simeon, son of Rabbi

<sup>15</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 102, 4, PTS 47, p. 245.

Gamaliel II, who lived around 130-160, which was in Justin's times<sup>16</sup>. In any case, nowhere in early Christian reflection were the above-mentioned passages from Genesis interpreted to mean that God addressed angels and that they were involved in the creation of man or the human body. This interpretation appears in Gnostic circles, which probably adopted it from Judaic gnostic trends, as was confirmed by Justin.

In the *2 Apology* 5, 2 Justin first states that God "made the whole world and subjected things earthly to man and arranged the heavenly elements for the increase of fruits and rotation of the seasons, and appointed this divine law". Then he adds:

These things also He evidently made for man – committed the care of men and of all things under heaven to angels whom He appointed over them (τὴν μὲν τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν πρόνοιαν ἀγγέλοις, οὓς ἐπὶ τούτοις ἔταξε)<sup>17</sup>.

There are a few important elements in this short passage. Firstly, it confirms that God created the world and everything that exists in it, for men. Secondly, the care (πρόνοιαν) over men and over the whole of the created world, was entrusted to angels. Thirdly, angels were created to care for men and for the whole of creation<sup>18</sup>. Of course, there is still the question about the manner in which they care for the whole of creation. While the care over men is easy to understand, it is very difficult to imagine what it could involve with regard to plants, animals, or inanimate matter. We can only speculate, as Justin does not explain it, that it is general care, exercised on behalf of God, who sustains everything in existence.

Another text that features the theme of angels' care for men and the world is a passage in *A Plea for the Christians* 24, 3-4 by Athenagoras. As I have mentioned, the author wrote about the creation of angels by God, and then explained the reason why they appeared in the world:

For this is the office of the angels – to exercise providence for God over the things created and ordered by Him (τούτων γὰρ ἡ τῶν ἀγγέλων σύστασις τῷ θεῷ ἐπὶ προνοία γέγονε τοῖς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ διακεκοσμημένοις); so that God

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. more on this topic in: L. Misiarczyk, *Il Midrash nel 'Dialogo con Trifone' di Giustino Martire*, Płock 1999, p. 146-165.

<sup>17</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *2 Apologia* 5, 2, PTS 38, p. 143.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. S. Longosz, *Opiekuńcza funkcja aniołów w nauce Ojców Kościoła*, in: *Księga o aniołach*, ed. H. Oleschko, Kraków 2003, p. 168-177.

may have the universal and general providence of the whole (ἔχων τῶν ὅλων πρόνοιαν), while the particular parts are provided for by the angels appointed over them(τὴν δὲ ἐπὶ μέρους οἱ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ταχθέντες ἄγγελοι)<sup>19</sup>.

Here, Athenagoras outlines several important issues, that are worth pausing over for longer. Firstly, he was the first among Christian authors to write about the creation of the office (σύστασις) of the angels to exercise providence (ἐπὶ προνοία γέγονε) over the things created by God. Thus, in his opinion, it is inherent in the essence of angels to care for everything that was created by God, and this is the purpose for which they were called by God into existence. Thus, if they desert this mission, their essence is modified. Secondly, this care, like in the earlier text of Justin, is referred to by the Greek word προνοία, which would later become a technical theological term denoting Divine providence. It is therefore worth underlining that around the middle of the second century, Greek apologists introduced into the theological discourse of the Church the idea of Divine providence, which means God's care over men and the created world, exercised by Him directly or indirectly through angels. As we have seen earlier, they did it in a polemic with the Stoic idea of fate. Thirdly, this is how God exercises universal and general (παντελικὴν καὶ γενικὴν) providence (πρόνοιαν) over everything; fourthly, angels appointed by God care for individual elements of the universe. Athenagoras makes a very important distinction here: God exercises a universal and general providence over the created world, while angels, as created beings, were entrusted with the care of individual elements of the created world, such as men. This implies that, according to Athenagoras, it is not the case that all angels exercise care over everything, but rather each of them, or groups of them, care for sectors of creation entrusted to them by God; for example, some care for people, others for nations, etc.

Apart from the above general statements about angels caring for things, in the *Dialogue* 19, 4 Justin mentions Lot who was rescued by angels. In *Dialogue* 19 he attempts to prove that circumcision is not necessary for everyone because God created Adam uncircumcised, had respect for the gifts of Abel when, being uncircumcised, he offered sacrifice (Genesis 4:4) and was pleased with the uncircumcision of Enoch, who was not found, because God had translated him (Genesis 5:24). The passage: "Lot, being uncircumcised, was saved from Sodom, the angels themselves and

<sup>19</sup> Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis* 24, 3-4, Schoedel, p. 34.

the Lord sending him out”<sup>20</sup> appears in this list. Therefore, Lot, although he was uncircumcised, received the grace of God and did not die in Sodom which was doomed to destruction. This was accomplished through the caring ministry of angels who led him out of the city before it was destroyed by fire and sulphur (cf. Genesis 19:16-20). This text confirms that angels exercise not only general care over mankind but that they care for specific people who find themselves in danger and in difficult situations. Yet, they always do it at the explicit command of God.

#### 4. The sin of angels and final annihilation of demons/evil angels

The reflection on the sin of angels and its consequences is found in many passages in works by the above-mentioned authors. Let us now look at the relevant passages.

The first text is the *2 Apology* 5, 3-4 by Justin Martyr. As we have seen earlier in passage 5, 2, Justin stated that God entrusted the care over men and everything that exists under heaven, to angels who were created for this purpose. Then follows the passage that is of interest to us:

But the angels transgressed this appointment, and were captivated by love of women, and begat children who are those that are called demons. And besides, they afterwards subdued the human race to themselves, partly by magical writings, and partly by fears and the punishments they occasioned, and partly by teaching them to offer sacrifices, and incense, and libations, of which things they stood in need after they were enslaved by lustful passions. And among men they sowed murders, wars, adulteries, intemperate deeds, and all wickedness<sup>21</sup>.

Angels refused to perform God’s command for which they were created and did not want to care for men and all creation. Justin used the general term “angels” which could suggest that all angels sinned in the same way, however, as we shall see later in other passages, he specified that only some of them acted in this manner, led by the most important and first angel. As they refused to perform God’s will, they became lustful and fell, had intercourse with women, and begot offspring called the demons. This topos, that

<sup>20</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 19, 4, PTS 47, p. 101.

<sup>21</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *2 Apologia* 5, 2, PTS 38, p. 143.

angels fell by sinning with women and begetting demons, will be often repeated by Christian writers of antiquity, without any explanation. Reading Justin, as well as other authors, we could wonder how they imagined the sexual intercourse of angels, who do not have a human body, with women. Justin, unfortunately, did not explain how this should be understood, he merely stated the fact that it happened. In any case, according to his account, these relationships led to the birth of offspring, the demons, who by magical writings (which were not specified), as well as fear and punishments they occasioned, taught people to offer them sacrifices, and incense, and libations. They sowed murders, wars, adulteries, intemperate deeds, and all wickedness among men. We need to insist on three important elements in Justin's argumentation. Firstly, unlike some other early Christian authors, he claims that demons were not rebellious angels who refused to perform God's commands but the offspring of the fallen angels. Secondly, demons would require divine worship from men and place themselves on a par with God. Thirdly, in a later section, Justin adds that poets and mythologists, who did not know that there were the demons who committed these crimes, recognised them as gods (*2 Apol.* 5, 5-6)<sup>22</sup>.

In *2 Apology* 7, 1-2 Justin demonstrates that "God delays causing the confusion and destruction of the whole world, by which the wicked angels and demons and men shall cease to exist (οἱ φαῦλοι ἄγγελοι καὶ δαίμονες καὶ ἄνθρωποι)"<sup>23</sup> because of the growing number of Christians. In this passage, the Apologist makes the first mention of the false angels and distinguishes them from demons. Yet, we can again only guess who these "false" or "evil angels" (as the Greek term φαῦλοι can also be understood in this way) are according to him. The simplest guess would be to understand "evil angels" simply as demons; however, since he presents them as a separate category, it seems that the two cannot be identified with each other. He further adds that "if it were not so, it would not have been possible for you to do these things, and to be impelled by evil spirits (ὕπὸ τῶν φαύλων δαιμόνων δυνατὸν); but the fire of judgement would descend and utterly dissolve all things"<sup>24</sup>. There is a recurring theme about people worshipping various deities and committing all kinds of evil due to being under the influence of demons. There is a new term "evil/false demons" (φαῦλοι δαίμονες), which may seem odd, as demons are evil by their very

<sup>22</sup> Cf. T. Gorges, *Die Götter als Dämonen bei Justin, Athenagoras und Tertulian*, in: *Gott – Götter – Götzen*, ed. Ch. Schwöbel, Leipzig 2013, p. 431-442.

<sup>23</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *2 Apologia* 7, 1, PTS 38, p. 147.

<sup>24</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *2 Apologia* 7, 2, PTS 38, p. 147.

nature, because they refused to perform God's will, even though they were created to perform it. Yet, the addition of "evil" becomes understandable in the context of the Hellenic philosophy in which, as we know, the term *daimonion* could also denote a good spirit. Thus, Justin emphasises that he means evil demons, hostile to God and to man<sup>25</sup>.

A similar thought can be found in the *2 Apology* 9, 4. Responding to the objection that "the laws of men are diverse, and that with some, one thing is considered good, another evil, while with others what seemed bad to the former is esteemed good", Justin makes the following statement: "We know that the wicked angels (τοὺς πονηροὺς ἀγγέλους) appointed laws conformable to their own wickedness (τῇ ἑαυτῶν κακία), in which the men who are like them delight"<sup>26</sup>. We can thus see that even in antiquity there were views similar to those held in our times, according to which categories such as truth and goodness are relative and entirely subjective. Justin explains that this happened because evil angels appointed laws based on their own wickedness (κακία) which were adopted with delight by wicked people. Here, he does not use the term "demons" but "evil angels"; yet, it is quite clear that it refers to the former. Instead of the Greek term φαῦλοι, the term πονηροὺς is used. Yet, as the right Logos arrived, explains Justin further, he did not recognise all these views and teachings as true; instead, he proclaimed some as good and others as false.

In *Dialogue* 45, 4 Justin argues that salvation will be granted to those who lived justly before the Law of Moses was proclaimed, such as Noah, Enoch, and Jacob, as well as those who lived according to the Law of Moses, and those who believed in Christ, the Son of God, who:

Submitted to become incarnate, and be born of this Virgin of the family of David, in order that, by this dispensation (διὰ τῆς οἰκονομίας ταύτης), the serpent that sinned from the beginning, and the angels like him, may be destroyed (ὁ πονηρευσάμενος τὴν ἀρχὴν ὄφις καὶ οἱ ἐξομοιωθέντες αὐτῷ ἄγγελοι καταλυθῶσι), and that death may be contemned, and for ever quit, at the second coming of the Christ Himself, those who believe in Him and live acceptably — and be no more: when some are sent to be punished unceasingly

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<sup>25</sup> To find out more about Justin's demonology in the *1 and 2 Apology* see L. Misiarczyk, *Egzorcyzmy w Kościele starożytnym od I do III wieku*, Warszawa 2015, p. 111-119.

<sup>26</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *2 Apologia* 9, 4, PTS 38, p. 150.

into judgement and condemnation of fire; but others shall exist in freedom from suffering, from corruption, and from grief, and in immortality<sup>27</sup>.

Here Justin refers to the idea of the economy of salvation, which was fulfilled through the birth, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Its purpose was to destroy the ancient serpent, who was evil from the very beginning, and angels similar to him. Justin makes a clear reference to the biblical account of the original sin when Satan took the form of a serpent and misled the first parents, who began to experience death. The Scriptures do not provide a description of the fall of Satan and his departure from God with other angels. Justin simply assumes it, emphasising that Christ's victory related not only to the Serpent and his angels but also to death which they provoked<sup>28</sup>. We find the same thought in *Dialogue* 100, 6 where Justin again mentions Christ "by whom God destroys both the serpent and those angels and men who are like him (τον τε ὄφιν καὶ τοὺς ὁμοιωθέντας αὐτῷ ἀγγέλους καὶ ἀνθρώπους καταλύει); but works deliverance from death to those who repent of their wickedness and believe upon Him"<sup>29</sup>. Although the Greek terminology in this passage is almost identical to that found in the previous text, we have two new elements here. Firstly, Justin writes about the future annihilation of the serpent and those who are like him, probably referring to Christ's final victory over Satan and his angels at the end of the world, rather than to the victory fulfilled on the cross, which occurred in the past. Secondly, that annihilation will affect not only Satan and angels who are like him but also men who are like him and who rejected God to follow His adversary. Meanwhile, in the *Dialogue* 140, 4, he adds, in accordance with his earlier statements, that God created angels and men as free beings and even if He knows that they will become unrighteous and wicked, He is not responsible for that but everyone is responsible for himself<sup>30</sup>. Here, however, there is nothing new apart from the simple statement of the fact that God knows in advance that some angels and some people will be unjust and unrighteous and that they will bear responsibil-

<sup>27</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 45, 4, PTS 47, p. 145.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Z. Janovic, *Divine Pronoia and existence of Evil in the theology of St. Justin Martyr*, in: *Pronoia. Providence of God – Die Vorsehung Gottes*, eds. T. Hainthaler – F. Mali – G.H. Emmenegger – M.L. Ostermann, Innsbruck – Wien 2019, p. 95-110.

<sup>29</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 100, 6, PTS 47, p. 243.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Iustinus Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 140, 4, PTS 47, p. 312. Cf. also: Misiarczyk, *Egzorcyzmy w Kościele starożytnym*, p. 119-127.

ity for it. God's prior knowledge of it does not determine, however, their actions.

There is also a very interesting passage in *Dialogue* 79, 1-4 in which Trypho accuses Justin of an interpretation of the Scripture that is not only perverse but even blasphemous, as it states that angels sinned and abandoned God (ἄγγέλους γὰρ πονηρευσαμένους καὶ ἀποστάντας τοῦ θεοῦ)<sup>31</sup>. Justin adds in reply that Christians did not invent these interpretations but based them on the Scripture. He cites various biblical passages to support this argument. First, he quotes a passage from Isaiah 30: 1-5 which, in his opinion "affirms that evil angels (πονηροὺς ἄγγέλους) have dwelt and do still dwell in Tanis, in Egypt"<sup>32</sup>. He further quotes a biblical passage according to the Septuagint from which I shall cite only one sentence: "the princes in Tanis are evil angels (ἀρχηγοὶ ἄγγελοι πονηροί)". As we know, the prophet Isaiah condemned the covenant of the kings of Israel with Egypt as an illusory hope for survival, citing as the main reason the fact that the leaders in Tanis were evil angels who misled people. He further cites a passage from Zechariah 3: 1-2 which states that the devil stood on the right hand of Joshua the priest in order to accuse him, and then a passage from Job 1:6 stating that "the angels (ἄγγελοι) came to stand before the Lord, and the devil came with them", as well as Genesis 3:13-14 which affirms that the serpent beguiled Eve, and was cursed by God. All these quotations were intended to demonstrate to Trypho and his companions that the teaching on the fall and sin of angels was present in the Scripture and was not a mere Christian invention. The Scripture explicitly mentions the good and evil angels, the demons, and the Devil, which implies that they had to turn away from God at some point.

In the *Address* 7, 3-5 Tatian explains how the fall and the sin of angels came about. First, as we have seen earlier, he emphasizes that the Logos, before creating man, called angels into being, and endowed both with free will (7, 2). The same Logos who possessed prior knowledge and knew what would happen in the future, though not by way of necessary fate but by way of a free choice made by those who would act, cautioned both angels and men against the consequences of future events, trying to prevent evil with prohibitions and reward good with praise. Tatian does not recall specific scriptural texts of the Old Testament treating about this topic, but

<sup>31</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 79, 1-4, PTS 47, p. 207-208.

<sup>32</sup> Iustinus Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 79, 2, PTS 47, p. 207.



he refers to them in general terms. The most important part of his argument appears in this context:

And, when men attached themselves to one who was more subtle than the rest, having regard to his being the first-born (πρωτόγονον), and declared him to be God, though he was resisting the law of God, then the power of the Logos excluded the beginner of the folly and his adherents from all fellowship with Himself. And so, he who was made in the likeness of God, since the more powerful spirit is separated from him, becomes mortal. But that first-begotten one through his transgression and ignorance becomes a demon (διὰ δὲ τὴν παράβασιν καὶ τὴν ἄγνοιαν ὁ πρωτόγονος δαίμων ἀποδείκνυται); and they who imitated him, that is his illusions, have become a host of demons (φαντάσματα δαιμόνων στρατόπεδον). And through their freedom of choice (αὐτεξούσιον) have been given up to their own infatuation<sup>33</sup>.

As we can see, Tatian accounts for the sin of angels and its consequences in a very synthetic and matter of fact manner. According to the texts mentioned earlier, angels and men were created to fulfill the will of God. Yet, the one who was created as the first among angels (ὁ πρωτόγονος) rebelled against the Divine law (τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ). This, again, refers to the Divine Law in general rather than any of its specific commands. We can suppose from the context of apologetic texts that the above-mentioned first angel (whose name Tatian does not mention) abandoned the mission entrusted to him by God. Then, some angels and men decided to follow the first rebellious angel and even declared him to be God (θεὸν ἀνέδειξαν). While only some of the angels rebelled against the Divine Law and decided to follow the first angel, Tatian does not make the same distinction for men, suggesting that all men followed him. Here one can easily see an allusion to Genesis and the first parents, Adam and Eve, who both sinned by following that first angel, and through them, all people who existed on earth in the beginning also sinned. We can thus see that the sin of the first angel had only partial consequences for angels, as, fortunately, not all angels followed him. Yet, it brought complete destruction to men, as, in a sense, it changed the nature of all of them. The essence of that sin was the rebellion against the Divine Law and God's will, while the purpose that the first angel sought to achieve through it was to take the place of God. He succeeded in persuad-

<sup>33</sup> Tatianus, *Oratio ad Graecos* 7, 4-5, PTS 43, p. 24.

ing some angels and all men to follow him and proclaim him as their god. Then, Tatian adds, the power of the Logos (Λόγου δύναμις) excluded the beginner of the folly and his adherents from all fellowship with Himself, which had grave consequences for men and the transgressing angels<sup>34</sup>. In the case of people created in God's image and likeness, they were immortal as long as they remained in union with God; now, they became mortal as they fell out of it. The first angel turned into a demon, and his imitators became "a host of demons" (φαντάσματα δαιμόνων στρατόπεδον)<sup>35</sup>. We can see, therefore, that the consequence of the fall of angels and men was the modification of their nature: men turned from immortal into mortal beings, while the first angel and his imitators turned into demons. Tatian does not provide a detailed account of the nature of demons, but he certainly perceives them as enemies of God and His law, who popularised the belief in astrology and magic<sup>36</sup>. He also perceives the nature of demons differently from Justin. While, according to Justin, demons are the offspring born from the intercourse of angels with women, according to Tatian, demons are fallen angels, whose nature was changed. The two authors define also the fall of angels in different terms. According to Justin, the fall of angels consisted of intercourse with women, while according to Tatian, it was the rebellion of the first angel, who wanted to be equal to God and who drew other angels and men to follow him. The tradition that angels fell by having sexual relationships with women, which led to the birth of demons, was adopted from ancient Judaism, as it was earlier known already to Philo of Alexandria (*De gigantibus* 2) and Flavius Josephus (*Antiquitates* I 3). Yet, it was criticised by the rabbis (cf. Midrash *Genesis Rabbah* 16, 5). It is hard to resist the impression that Tatian's conception is more mature and less mythical than that of Justin, who invoked ideas known to Trypho and his companions professing Judaism. Tatian concludes that, since men and angels were created as free beings, for which he uses the familiar Greek term ἀντεξούσιον, God, respectful of their freedom, left them to their own folly<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. J. Lössl, *Zwischen Christologie und Rhetorik. Zum Ausdruck, Kraft des Wortes* (Λόγου δύναμις) in *Tatians Rede an die Griechen*, in: *Logos der Vernunft – Logos des Glaubens*, eds. F.R. Prostmeier – H.E. Lona, Berlin – New York 2010, p. 129-147.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. a series of articles in: *Gegen falsche Götter und falsche Bildung: Tatian, Rede an die Griechen*, ed. H.-G. Nesselrath, Tübingen 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. M.R. Crawford, 'The Hostile Devices of the Demented Demons': *Tatian on Astrology and Pharmacology*, *JECS* 29 (2021) p. 31-60.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Misiarczyk, *Egzorcyzmy w Kościele starożytnym*, p. 127-137.

Further in the *Address* 12, 5-6 Tatian emphasizes that demons received their form from matter and thus became intemperate and greedy. He specifies that “turned by their own folly (ἀβελητρία) to vaingloriousness (πρὸς τὸ κενοδοξεῖν τραπέντες), and shaking off the reins [of authority] (ἀφηνιάσαντες), they have been forward to become robbers of Deity (λησταὶ θεότητος γενέσθαι προεθυμήθησαν)”<sup>38</sup>. Thus, again, Tatian describes the decision made by the demons as folly (ἀβελητρία), and defines the essence of their sin in three points: turning to vaingloriousness, shaking off the reins of authority, and wanting to become the robbers of Deity. All these elements have one thing in common: namely, the wish to become equal to God. In *Address* 15, 6-8 Tatian adds that demons have no flesh, “their structure is spiritual, like that of fire or air. [...] On this account the nature of the demons has no place for repentance; for they are the reflection of matter and of wickedness”<sup>39</sup>. Demons do not have bodies like human bodies; instead, their bodies are spiritual, similar in form to fire or air. Their bodies can be seen only by those in whom the Spirit of God dwells, and not by others. Since after the fall they became “a reflection of matter and wickedness”, there is no place for repentance in their nature. Thus, Tatian makes it clear that, due to the decision of their free will against the Divine law, demons will never be converted. As we know, this issue would be discussed broadly in later centuries as the theory of apokatastasis<sup>40</sup>.

The *Plea for the Christians* 24-25 by Athenagoras offers yet another explanation of the nature and fall of angels. At the beginning of chapter 24, the author states that Christians acknowledge the existence of the Holy Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as well as the existence of other powers (ἑτέρας εἶναι δυνάμεις) which exercise dominion about matter (περὶ τὴν ὕλην ἐχούσας καὶ δι’ αὐτῆς). He goes on to develop his extensive argument, from which I will quote only the most important passages:

One in particular, which is hostile to God (ἀντίθεον): not that anything is really opposed to God [...] but to the good that is in God, I say, the spirit, which is about matter, [...], is opposed. [The spirit] “was created by God; just as the

<sup>38</sup> Tatianus, *Oratio ad Graecos* 12, 5-6, PTS 43, p. 34.

<sup>39</sup> Tatianus, *Oratio ad Graecos* 15, 6-8, PTS 43, p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. H. Pietras, *Apokatastasis według Ojców Kościoła: nadzieja nawrócenia czy powszechna amnezja?*, CT 62/3 (1992) p. 21-41; L. Misiarczyk, *Apokatastasis realizata, attuale e futura nella tradizione patristica preorigenana*, “Augustinianum” 58 (2008) p. 33-58; W. Szczerba, „A Bóg będzie wszystkim we wszystkich”. *Apokatastaza Grzegorza z Nyssy. Tło, źródła, kształt koncepcji*, Kraków 2008.

other angels were created by Him, and entrusted with the control of matter and the forms of matter [...]”. Some [angels], free agents, you will observe, such as they were created by God, continued in those things for which God had made and over which He had ordained them; [...] namely, this ruler of matter (ὁ τῆς ὕλης ἄρχων) and its various forms, and others of those who were placed about this first firmament [...]. These fell into impure love of virgins, and were subjugated by the flesh, and he became negligent and wicked in the management of the things entrusted to him. Of these lovers of virgins, therefore, were begotten those who are called giants. [...] These angels, then, who have fallen from heaven, and haunt the air and the earth, and are no longer able to rise to heavenly things, and the souls of the giants, which are the demons who wander about the world, perform actions similar, the one (that is, the demons) to the natures they have received, the other (that is, the angels) to the appetites they have indulged. But the prince of matter (ὁ τῆς ὕλης ἄρχων), as may be seen merely from what transpires, exercises a control (ἐπιτροπεύει) and management (διοικεῖ) contrary to the good that is in God<sup>41</sup>.

Thus, Athenagoras accepts the existence of a power that is hostile to God and that, being the enemy of God, relates to matter and acts in it. He further states explicitly that God entrusted this power/spirit with the management of matter and its forms. Then, like Tatian, he emphasises that some angels, endowed with free will, continued in the tasks for which God created and ordained them, while others defiled the essence of their being and the power entrusted to them, and abandoned God’s plan. This ruler of matter (ὁ τῆς ὕλης ἄρχων) and its various forms, and others of those who were placed about this first firmament<sup>42</sup> have thus departed from God. Athenagoras does not mention the name of this ruler of matter or of the other angels. It is important, however, that, like Tatian, he defines the sin of the first angel, the ruler of matter, as carelessness and negligence of the management of matters that were entrusted to him. Other angels from the first firmament sinned, as Justin claimed, by desiring women, and were subdued by carnal passion, which led to the birth of giants<sup>43</sup>. As we can

<sup>41</sup> Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis* 24, 2-25, 2, Schoedel, p. 34-35.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. P. Janiszewski, *Dobro jako „przypadłość” Boga i Szatan jako „przypadłość” materii w „Prośbie za chrześcijanami” Atenagorasa*, in: *Hortus Historiae. Księga pamiątkowa ku czci profesora Józefa Wolskiego w setną rocznicę urodzin*, eds. E. Dąbrowa – M. Dzielska – M. Salamon – S. Sprawski, Kraków 2010, p. 523-533.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. S. Pappalardo, *La teoria degli angeli e dei demoni e la dottrina della provvidenza di Atenagora*, “*Didascaleion*” 8 (1929) p. 67-80; T. Gorges, *Die Götter als Dämo-*

see, he combines the reflections of Tatian and Justin on this matter. This does not necessarily imply that he was familiar with their texts but that this interpretation was becoming increasingly popular in the Christian world. Meanwhile, the angels who sinned, fell from heaven, inhabit the air and earth, and are unable to ascend back to heaven. It seems that Athenagoras also believes that their condition is irreversible. He does not apply, however, the term demons to the fallen angels like Tatian did or to the offspring born from the intercourse of angels and women, as was done by Justin. Instead, he defines demons as the souls of giants, which wander about the world, giving rise to appetites in men that have taken possession of them. All rebels who oppose the goodness of God are governed by the ruler of matter, the first angel (Tatian).

## 5. Conclusion

As it was demonstrated, Justin was the first among early Christian authors to confirm the veneration of angels (*1 Apol.* 6, 2). The three Apologists emphasize that God created angels through His Logos, as beings endowed with free will, so that they would serve Him and do His will. The main task entrusted to them was the care of men and everything that God created; this was exemplified by angels leading Lot out of Sodom (*Dial.* 19, 4). As far as the sin of angels is concerned, each of these authors presents a different conception. According to Justin, angels were unwilling to care for men and the created world, for which God created them, they had intercourse with women and begot offspring called demons. The demons/evil angels taught people to offer them sacrifices, incense and libations, as they would to gods, and sowed murders, wars, adulteries, intemperate deeds and all wickedness among men. Christ's work of salvation was intended to destroy the serpent and angels similar to him, condemning them to punishment in eternal fire. So, Justin is not consistent, as he sometimes calls the demons the offspring of angels, while at other times he identifies them with "evil angels" who sinned and abandoned God at the beginning. Tatian defines the sin of angels and men as following the first angel who wanted to be equal to God, and who, due to his transgression, turned into a demon, while his imitators became a host of demons. He adds further that this first angel

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nen bei Justin, Athenagoras und Tertulian, in: *Gott – Götter – Götzen*, ed. Ch. Schwöbel, Leipzig 2013, p. 431-442.

and his followers in their own folly turned to vaingloriousness and shaking off the reins [of authority] wanted to become robbers of Deity. Athenagoras also accepts that the power/spirit whom God entrusted the management of matter and its forms has defiled the essence of its being and the power entrusted to it. Angels from the first firmament sinned by having intercourse with women, which resulted in the birth of giants. The concept of the sin of angels proposed by Tatian and Athenagoras is definitely less mythical than that proposed by Justin, although Athenagoras combines these two concepts. According to Tatian and Athenagoras the state of fall is irreversible for angels, while Justin does not give any comment on it.

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