



The Angels' Ministry to People According to *De civitate Dei* by St. Augustine

Służba aniołów ludziom w oparciu o *De civitate Dei* św. Augustyna

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Abstract: Angelological issues take centre stage in the classic work by St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*. In it, the thinker from Tagaste draws a Christian portrait of angels close to people, whom he often calls holy angels (*sancti angeli*), our angels (*nostris angeli*) or good angels (*angeli boni*). Although the Bishop of Hippo does not omit the issue of the creation and nature of angels, he gives their function and service to people a clear priority, which is confirmed by the use of the Latin term *angelus*, which for him means as much as *nuntius*, i.e. herald, messenger. The ministry of angels for people, their *ministerium* is, above all, the revelation of God in the world. They are the messengers who deliver the messages given to them; they are the servants who fulfil the task entrusted to them and who present the requests of the people to God. Even if angels serve both God and people, they are not mediators because the only mediator between God and people is the Man-Jesus Christ. Heavenly spirits do not grant people their immortality and happiness, and it is not through participation with them that these supernatural gifts also become part of man. People should imitate the goodwill of the holy angels and grow in their true – and free from weakness of affection – love. The angels lead men to the full glory of the true God and oppose any sacrifices made to them. Their help in man's spiritual struggle, especially against pride, is invaluable. The early Christian thinker also reminds us about the presence of angels on the last day, when their task will be to gather the righteous. In the final dimension of eternal life, the equality (*aequalitas*) of people with angels announced by Christ will be the fullness of life in God.

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While the creation, existence, ontology and morality of angels² can be regarded as enduring elements of patristic angelology, including that of

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² Cf. D. Keck, *Angels and the Angelology in the Middle Ages*, New York 1998, p. 16-17; C.C. Simut, *Angels: Augustine and the Patristic Tradition – The Reality, Ontology, and Morality of Angels in the Church Fathers and Augustine*, "The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology" 25/2 (2021) p. 57-74.

St. Augustine, the meeting of Christianity with Neoplatonism in the time of this great thinker resulted, as the Swiss Benedictine Basil Studer notes, in addition to a deepening of the nature of angels, in an increased interest in the traditional teaching on the salvific function of angels³. The Italian Xaverian Battista Mondin, in his treatise on the inhabitants of heaven, emphasizes that St. Augustine ascribes to angels essentially two functions: doxological (glorifying) and salvific (mediating)⁴. While the former relates to God, the latter refers to salvation history and includes both people and the Church.

A work of great importance for understanding the angelology of the Bishop of Hippo is his treatise *De civitate Dei*⁵. Although much attention has already been paid to it, it undoubtedly warrants continued research⁶. This is particularly true of the understanding of the nature and action of angels, which is so important for man. And although it starts from the ontic aspect⁷, it is much more concerned with the historico-redemptive one. More specific questions arise in this context: how does Augustine understand angels, and where does he get his knowledge of them? What tasks do the heavenly spirits perform towards humans? Are their actions an expression and testimony of their own initiative or the performance of a strictly defined mission? What can be said about the autonomy of heavenly spirits?

1. Definition of Terms

Even as a young priest (c. AD 394), Augustine was interested in the role of angels in the Old Testament⁸. The word “angel” derives from

³ Cf. B. Studer, *Angelo*, NDPAC I 295.

⁴ Cf. B. Mondin, *Gli abitanti del cielo. Trattato di ecclesiologia celeste e di escatologia*, Bologna 1994, p. 46.

⁵ The treatise is distinguished by its comprehensive nature, meaning that a number of topics are taken up in depth. This is also the case with angels. Cf. E.L. Fortin, *Civitate Dei, De*, in: *Agostino. Dizionario Enciclopedico*, ed. A.D. Fitzgerald – L. Alici – A. Pieretti, Roma 2007, p. 408; G. Madec, *Angelus*, in: *Augustinus-Lexikon*, v. 1, ed. J. Divjak – C. Mayer, Basel 1986-1994, p. 304; F. Van Fleteren, *Angeli*, in: *Agostino. Dizionario Enciclopedico*, ed. A.D. Fitzgerald – L. Alici – A. Pieretti, Roma 2007, p. 187.

⁶ Cf. M. Simonetti, *Gli angeli e Origene nel “De civitate Dei”*, in: *Il “De civitate Dei”. L’opera, le interpretazioni, l’influsso*, ed. E. Calvalcanti, Roma 1996, p. 167.

⁷ Cf. H. Oleschko, *Angelologia św. Augustyna: zagadnienia metafizyczne*, in: *Księga o Aniołach*, ed. H. Oleschko, Kraków 2003, p. 206-220.

⁸ Cf. J.-L. Maier, *Les missions divines selon saint Augustin*, Fribourg 1960, p. 101.

Greek. "For the Greek word *αγγελος*, which in Latin appears as «angelus», means a messenger". Angelus means as much as the Latin word *nuntius*, meaning herald⁹. In the strict sense, therefore, it does not denote nature but an office, a function. The Bishop of Hippo refers to angels first of all as created heavenly spirits (*spiritus*)¹⁰. These creatures, and not the creators, "are called angels, that is, in Latin, messengers. It is the name of an office and not of a being. It lets us know that they worship this God they herald and want us to worship him too"¹¹. The Tagaste thinker uses the term "holy angels" (*sancti angeli*), who are also called "our angels" (*nostris angeli*)¹². Angels are holy by the gift of the Creator¹³. At other times, the early Christian thinker uses the term "good angels" (*angeli boni*)¹⁴. Above the angels are the archangels (*archangeli*)¹⁵. In the context of the word "angel", the term "demon" sometimes appears in the Bishop of Hippo's speeches, regarding which he will say emphatically that "the name «demons» is so unsightly that by all means, we should reject it when it comes to holy angels"¹⁶. Thus, there are two angelic communities, which the Tagaste thinker also calls angels of light and angels of darkness¹⁷.

This strong emphasis on the fact that angel is the name of an office, a function and not of a being (*per nomen non substantiae, sed officii*) means

⁹ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XV 23. Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XVIII 35, 3. See L. Dubois, *Angeli. Storia, teologia e mistero delle creature celesti*, Torino 2014, p. 36-37; Madec, *Angelus*, p. 304-305; Van Fleteren, *Angeli*, p. 187.

¹⁰ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI 11. See Dubois, *Angeli. Storia*, p. 13.

¹¹ Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 135, 3, PL 37, 1757. Cf. Z.J. Kijas, *Początki świata i człowieka*, Kraków 2004, p. 207; M. Kowalczyk, *Rola aniołów w dziele zbawienia i zagrożenia szatańskie*, Warszawa 2016, p. 27; S. Longosz, *Opiekuńcza funkcja Aniołów w nauce Ojców Kościoła (zarys problemu)*, in: *Księga o Aniołach*, ed. H. Oleschko, Kraków 2003, p. 152.

¹² Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XXII 29, 1. The name "holy angel" is sometimes the name of good gods. Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* VIII 24.

¹³ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 7.

¹⁴ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 16, 2; XII 6; XII 9, 1.

¹⁵ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XXII 30, 2. See M. Stanzione, *Gli Arcangeli. Michele il Guerriero. Gabriele il Messaggero. Raffaele il Guaritore*, Milano 2011, p. 9.

¹⁶ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* IX 23. Cf. V. Grossi, *La problematica del male-Maligno-peccato in S. Agostino*, in: *Dizionario di Spiritualità Biblico-Patristica*, v. 39, ed. S.A. Panimolle, Roma 2005, p. 366.

¹⁷ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI 33. See A. Kasia, *O państwie Bożym przeciw poganom ksiąg XXII św. Augustyna*, "Przegląd Filozoficzny – Nowa Seria" 4 (1992) p. 178-179; Madec, *Angelus*, p. 313.

that the Bishop of Hippo uses the word to refer not only to heavenly spirits but also to specific people, including Jesus Christ¹⁸ and holy men such as John the Baptist (cf. Mark 1:2) and the prophet Malachi (cf. Mal. 2:7)¹⁹ or St. Paul²⁰. In view of the difference in the translation of some texts, such as Genesis 6:1-4, the early Christian thinker tries to remain objective by comparing all the translations available to him containing phrases: “angels of God” or “sons of God”²¹. Sometimes, as Marie-François Berrouard notes, the ascending and descending angels (cf. Gen. 28:10-19; John 1:51) signify the preachers of the Gospel²².

The term that Augustine uses to express the service, the ministry of angels to men, is, among other things, the noun *ministerium*, by which he refers to the handling or doing of affairs by God “by the ministry of angels” (*per angelicum ministerium*)²³. The Tagaste thinker sees God alone as the only Creator and Author of the angels, among others, by which he also confesses about their ministry: “Wherefore I know not what kind of aid the angels, themselves created first, afforded to the Creator in making other things. I cannot ascribe to them what perhaps they cannot do, neither ought I to deny them such faculty as they have”²⁴.

2. Creation of a Single City

The truth that men and angels have a close relationship is best confirmed by the formation of one City (cf. Ps. 86:3), the City of God or holy city by both. According to the Bishop of Hippo, this city consists of two parts. An important part, and more splendid in itself, are the holy angels who abide with God, dwelling in His light (*civitas caelestis*)²⁵. The second element, on the other hand, is the earthly city (*civitas terrena*) whose citizens make pilgrimage amidst the changing realities of the world, including

¹⁸ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XVIII 35, 3: “Christ Jesus is called the Angel of the Almighty God”. Cf. Augustinus, *In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus* 24, 7.

¹⁹ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XV 23, 1.

²⁰ Cf. Augustinus, *Sermo* 37, 19.

²¹ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XV 23, 3.

²² Cf. M.-F. Berrouard, *Saint Augustin et le ministère de la prédication. Le thème des anges qui montent et qui descendent*, *RechAug* 2 (1962) p. 448-457. See Madec, *Angelus*, p. 304-305.

²³ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XX 24, 2.

²⁴ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XII 26. See Madec, *Angelus*, p. 309.

²⁵ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI 9. See Kasia, *O państwie Bożym*, p. 179.

its part that holds the dead, who rest in secret hiding places. This city is destined to become one with the immortal angels. The city of God can be described as “the human part sojourning here below, the angelic aiding from above”²⁶.

The distinction between the two parts is fundamental for Augustine. Indeed, throughout the treatise, he demonstrates the differences between the earthly community (*civitas terrena*) and the divine community (*civitas Dei*). The early Christian thinker finds the very beginning of the division between the two cities in the schism that took place among spirits when some angels refused to obey God. An earthly city was then established, and men later inhabited alongside the demons. The city of God refers to the kingdom of God's Son, also known as the heavenly city²⁷.

3. Platonic Demons

Mostly thanks to Apuleius and Porphyry²⁸, Augustine was familiar with Platonic angels (*daemones*) considered minor gods (*dii minores*)²⁹. They were created by the supreme god, and it was by the authority or command of the god that they made all mortal beings. The Tagaste thinker's position towards them is clear: “And as for the angels, whom those Platonists prefer to call gods, although they do, so far as they are permitted and commissioned, aid in the production of the things around us, yet not on that account are we to call them creators, any more than we call gardeners the creators of fruits and trees”³⁰. The Platonists' attribution of an intermediate place to demons (*daemones*)³¹, especially by Apuleius and Porphyry, including

²⁶ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 7. Cf. Fortin, *Civitate Dei*, p. 413; Mondin, *Gli abitanti*, p. 44; Simonetti, *Gli angeli*, p. 170.

²⁷ Cf. Fortin, *Civitate Dei*, p. 413-414; M. Stanula-Boroń, *Zagadnienia etyczne w angelologii św. Augustyna*, in: *Księga o aniołach*, ed. H. Oleschko, Kraków 2003, p. 229.

²⁸ Vittorino Grossi mentions in particular his treatise *De regressu animae*, translated into Latin (*La problematica*, p. 367).

²⁹ Cf. Madec, *Angelus*, p. 305; Van Fleteren, *Angeli*, p. 186.

³⁰ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XII 25. Cf. M. Vannini, *Invito al pensiero di Sant'Agostino*, Milano 1989, p. 126-127.

³¹ According to Apuleius and his followers, as Augustine argues, demons are placed between gods and humans for this very purpose: to act as intermediaries for the transmission of requests and divine assistance. Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* VIII 22; VIII 24-25.

their division into good and evil³², the latter being defined, among other things, by the weakness of the minds, leads the early Christian thinker to doubt their favour with the gods and their ability to help people become paragons of good morals³³. Since the philosophers or those we might describe as “devil-worshippers” or “demon-worshippers” (*daemonicolae*) did not make a distinction between angels and demons, Augustine stresses that “never have we read in Scripture of good demons; but wherever this or any cognate term occurs, it is applied only to wicked spirits”³⁴. Demons are prideful and miserable. They demand worship not for God but for themselves³⁵.

4. Scripture on Angels

For Augustine, the primary source of Christian angelology is Scripture and its various interpreters, such as Philo of Alexandria³⁶. Even though God’s revelation conveys various truths about angels: “Where Scripture speaks of the world’s creation, it is not plainly said whether or when the angels were created”³⁷ or how many were created³⁸. Since the presence of angels is already mentioned in God’s creation of heaven and earth³⁹, the early Christian thinker sees their presence in the word “heaven” or “light”⁴⁰. The making of angels by God is confirmed by numerous later texts of Scripture (cf. Job 38:7; Ps. 148:1f; Dan. 3:57f)⁴¹.

³² Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* IX 2.

³³ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* IX 6.

³⁴ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* IX 19. Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* VI 4, 1. See Madec, *Angelus*, p. 305.

³⁵ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 16, 1. Manlio Simonetti draws attention to some of the theses developed by Origen, which the Bishop of Hippo refutes. These include one that discusses the devil and his angels, who would be saved and rejoin the holy angels after punishment proportionate to their trespasses. Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XXI 17.23. See Simonetti, *Gli angeli*, p. 174.

³⁶ Cf. Keck, *Angels and the Angelology*, p. 17; Madec, *Angelus*, p. 309.

³⁷ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI 9.

³⁸ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XV 1, 1. See Madec, *Angelus*, p. 306.

³⁹ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 8.

⁴⁰ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI 9; XI 11; XI 33. See Dubois, *Angeli. Storia*, p. 9; Madec, *Angelus*, p. 305-306. Augustine argues against an interpretation that sees angelic hosts referred to as “waters”. Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI 34.

⁴¹ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI 9. See Madec, *Angelus*, p. 305.

God created the angels from nothingness as eternal and happy⁴². The image of angels is not the same as the image of God⁴³. The division of angels into good and bad does not come from the Creator but is the result of the passion of some angels not for God, the good Author and Creator of all beings, but for themselves, in their own capacity⁴⁴. God, knowing that some angels would abandon true goodness due to their choice, nevertheless did not deprive them of this ability to reveal that He is also able to bring good out of evil. There is an essential difference between angels, who are intelligent and immortal creatures, and men living on earth, who are mortal⁴⁵.

The Tagaste thinker does not exclude the possibility that angels, with God's permission, probably assisted humans in transporting animals to even the most remote islands⁴⁶. Ultimately, he concluded that the animals on these remote corners of the earth came into being as the Creator called them into existence when He created the world.

The Book of Genesis often speaks of angels in action. Very often, angels are emissaries or represent God Himself: the confusion of tongues at the tower of Babel (cf. Gen. 11:7)⁴⁷; Abraham meeting three men (cf. Gen. 18:2), and then Lot meeting two men who came to Sodom in the evening (cf. Gen. 19:1). For the Bishop of Hippo, it is clear that these men encountered by Abraham "were undoubtedly angels"⁴⁸. The early Christian thinker also rules out the possibility that angels, while in the hospitality of humans, only ostensibly take meals (cf. Gen. 18; Tob. 11:20)⁴⁹. He is further convinced that they were angels by the remarks in Heb. 13:2⁵⁰. With the help of angels, Moses led God's people out from under the yoke of slavery in Egypt⁵¹.

An important chapter of the biblical truth about angels is their transmission of the law. The promulgation of the law through angels (*in edictis*

⁴² Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* IX 22; XI 16; XIII 1. See Mondin, *Gli abitanti*, p. 44.

⁴³ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XVI 6. See Kasia, *O państwie Bożym*, p. 180-181.

⁴⁴ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XII 1, 2. Henry Chadwick notes that in attempting to answer the question of why some angels fell while others did not, as a mature thinker, Augustine turns to the doctrine of predestination. Cf. H. Chadwick, *Augustine*, Oxford 1986, p. 39.

⁴⁵ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI 16.

⁴⁶ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XVI 7.

⁴⁷ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XVI 5.

⁴⁸ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 8; Augustinus, *De Trinitate* II 12, 22.

⁴⁹ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIII 22.

⁵⁰ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XVI 29.

⁵¹ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 8.

angelorum) is mentioned in the Old and New Testaments (cf. Deut. 33:2; Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2-3), and Augustine, like the other Fathers of the Church⁵², refers to individual statements and comments on them: “And so it has pleased Divine Providence, as I have said, and as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, that the law enjoining the worship of one God should be given by the disposition of angels” (cf. Acts 7:53)⁵³. These pronouncements, written on two stone tablets, were kept in the Ark of the Testimony⁵⁴.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews strongly emphasizes the superiority of Christ over the angels, whose presence in salvation history is irreplaceable. With reference to Hebrews 1:13-14, it should be noted that “all those things were not only wrought by angels, but wrought also on our account, that is, on account of the people of God, to whom is promised the inheritance of eternal life”⁵⁵.

5. The One Mediator between God and Men

The Bishop of Hippo is in no doubt that “Good angels, therefore, cannot mediate between miserable mortals and blessed immortals, for they themselves also are both blessed and immortal”⁵⁶. Indeed, what is most alluring about the immortality of demons is misery, and eternal misery must be guarded against. The evil mediator always separates the friends, and the unfortunate mob of evil angels is deprived of participation in the One God. Demons do not deserve to be called mediators, for they have become miserable because of their malice and thus could envy men’s blessedness instead of lending it to them⁵⁷. On the way to the goodness of making us happy, the only true mediator between God and men is Jesus Christ, not by being the Word, but by being a man (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5)⁵⁸. Indeed, this

⁵² For example, Hilary of Poitiers, Origen, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite or Melito of Sardis. Cf. J. Daniélou, *The Angels and their mission*, tr. D. Heimann, Allen 1957, p. 3-13.

⁵³ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 15. Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 13; Augustinus, *De Trinitate* III 11, 26. See Madec, *Angelus*, p. 309; Mondin, *Gli abitanti*, p. 46.

⁵⁴ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 17.

⁵⁵ Augustinus, *De Trinitate* III 11, 22.

⁵⁶ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* IX 15, 1. Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* IX 23.

⁵⁷ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* IX 23, 3.

⁵⁸ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI 2.

blessed and beatific God, having Himself become a partaker of our humanity, has afforded us ready access to the participation of His divinity. For in delivering us from our mortality and misery, He does not lead us to the immortal and blessed angels, so that we should become immortal and blessed by participating in their nature, but He leads us straight to that Trinity, by participating in which the angels themselves are blessed⁵⁹.

6. Characteristics of the Angels' Actions for of Men

The company of angels was longed for by philosophers, for "in this friendship we have indeed no fear that the angels will grieve us by their death or deterioration"⁶⁰. The primary task of the immortal and blessed angels is "to announce the will of God to men"⁶¹ in an infallible manner⁶². While God speaks to the angels without words, the angels speak to people, or God Himself speaks to people through them⁶³. The angels not only proclaim God's message to men, but they also hear them, and more specifically, the Lord Himself hears us in them "as in His true temple not made with hands, as in those men who are His saints"⁶⁴. Even though God uses angels, acts through them, and sends them to men, "He does not for all that beatify men by the good inherent in the angels, but by Himself, as He does the angels themselves"⁶⁵.

The thing that makes it possible for men to be friends and be close to angels, even if angels do not interact as men do⁶⁶, is the likeness of goodwill⁶⁷. The goodwill of the angels is a model for men to emulate, and through this, they can participate in performing one great song of praise to God Himself.

⁵⁹ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* IX 15, 2.

⁶⁰ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIX 9.

⁶¹ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* IX 23. Cf. Madec, *Angelus*, p. 308.

⁶² Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* IX 22.

⁶³ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XVI 6, 1. St. Augustine interprets the role of the angel as a hagiographer and tool with reference to St. Paul's 2Cor. 13:2. Cf. B. De Margerie, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'exégèse. III. Saint Augustin*, Paris 2009, p. 111.

⁶⁴ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 12.

⁶⁵ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* VII 30. Cf. Longosz, *Opiekuńcza funkcja*, p. 193.

⁶⁶ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIX 9.

⁶⁷ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* VIII 25.

The relationship of the holy angels to men is best expressed by the word love. For it is the angels who compassionately, honestly and sincerely love men⁶⁸. The Bishop of Hippo, deeply convinced of the love of angels and their concern for men, seeks to present this attitude of angels more closely. Thus, he stresses that “the holy angels, towards whose society and assembly we sigh while in this our toilsome pilgrimage, as they already abide in their eternal home, so do they enjoy perfect facility of knowledge and felicity of rest. It is without difficulty that they help us; for their spiritual movements, pure and free, cost them no effort”⁶⁹. Like God Himself, no weakness of feeling can be attributed to the angels. For this reason, “the holy angels feel no anger while they punish those whom the eternal law of God consigns to punishment, no fellow-feeling with misery while they relieve the miserable, no fear while they aid those who are in danger”⁷⁰. The existence of angels and men is oriented towards the glory of God. To the One God is due the highest honour, “which the Greeks call λατρεία”⁷¹. The angels lead men to the full glory of the One God in Three Persons without feeling any jealousy on this account. In essence,

all these blessed and immortal spirits, who do not envy us (for if they envied they were not blessed), but rather love us, and desire us to be as blessed as themselves, look on us with greater pleasure, and give us greater assistance, when we join them in worshipping one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, than if we were to offer to themselves sacrifice and worship⁷².

In a tradition dating back to the time of Cain and Abel, the sacrifices to the true God were effectively helped by angels. By offering a visible sacrifice to God, and even more, by becoming in one’s heart an invisible sacrifice to Him, Augustine says that: “the angels, and all those superior powers who are mighty by their goodness and piety, regard us with pleasure, and rejoice with us and assist us to the utmost of their power”⁷³. The angels demand neither services for themselves nor sacrifices⁷⁴. Failure to offer

⁶⁸ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 7; X 12. See Mondin, *Gli abitanti*, p. 46.

⁶⁹ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI 31.

⁷⁰ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* IX 5.

⁷¹ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* V 15. Cf. Madec, *Angelus*, p. 314.

⁷² Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 25. Cf. Longosz, *Opiekuńcza funkcja*, p. 193; Madec, *Angelus*, p. 314.

⁷³ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 19. Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIX 23, 5.

⁷⁴ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 16, 1. See Kasia, *O państwie Bożym*, p. 179.

sacrifices to immortal and happy spirits serving God can in no way offend them⁷⁵. The steadfastness of the attitude of the holy angels was emulated by such holy men of God as Paul and Barnabas⁷⁶.

Augustine, like his contemporaries, was greatly impressed by the miraculous things that the Lord either performs Himself or through His servants, i.e. the souls of martyrs and of those still in the body, "or effects all these marvels by means of angels, over whom He exerts an invisible, immutable, incorporeal sway, so that what is said to be done by the martyrs is done not by their operation, but only by their prayer and request"⁷⁷. Extraordinary and marvellous things which, through the mediation of angels or otherwise by the power of God, have been foretold or performed serve to increase God's glory and faith in God⁷⁸.

Invaluable, according to Elizabeth Klein, is the help of angels in the Christian's spiritual battle, especially against pride⁷⁹. Through the ministry of the angels, the assembly of the righteous on Judgement Day will take place. The vision of Doomsday, during which each man's actions will be placed before the eyes of the soul, makes Augustine think of guardian angels. Thus, in reference to St. John's vision of the opening of the books (cf. Rev. 20:12), the Bishop of Hippo remarks: "Shall there be present as many angels as men, and shall each man hear his life recited by the angel assigned to him? In that case there will be not one book containing all the lives, but a separate book for every life"⁸⁰. Ultimately, however, for Augustine, the book is synonymous with the power of God to read the hearts of men.

7. Equality with Angels after the Resurrection

It may come as a bit of a surprise, as Elizabeth Klein notes, that Augustine has essentially little to say about the angels at the parousia, that is, the second coming of Christ⁸¹. The fullness of future life with God means, according to the Lord Jesus' announcement, the equality (*aequal-*

⁷⁵ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 26.

⁷⁶ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 19.

⁷⁷ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XXII 9.

⁷⁸ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* X 12. See Vannini, *Invito al pensiero*, p. 140.

⁷⁹ Cf. E. Klein, *Augustine's Theology of Angels*, Cambridge 2018, pp. 159, 172.

⁸⁰ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XX 14. Cf. Klein, *Augustine's Theology of Angels*, p. 138.

⁸¹ Cf. Klein, *Augustine's Theology*, p. 136.

itas) of human beings with angels in their immortality and blessedness (cf. Matt. 22:30; Luke 20:36)⁸². The promise is truly remarkable, for “in that city [of God] all the citizens shall be immortal, men now for the first time enjoying what the holy angels have never lost”⁸³.

In this way, the society of angels and the society of mortals will come together⁸⁴. This equality refers neither to the body nor to age but to the love of God shed into their hearts⁸⁵.

The Tagaste thinker refers to the category of proportion, the hierarchy of beauty, and firmly asserts that “the children of the resurrection and of the promise shall be equal to the angels of God, if not in body and age, at least in happiness”⁸⁶. That which has been the good of the angels from time immemorial and in a special way, that is, the love of God and abiding with God, and which is also now experienced by holy men, constitutes one holy fellowship, one city of God⁸⁷. The fellowship of redeemed men with angels is also confirmed by the idea of them taking the place of fallen angels. The Bishop of Hippo admits: “We do not know the number either of the saints or of the devils; but we know that the children of the holy mother who was called barren on earth shall succeed to the place of the fallen angels, and shall dwell for ever in that peaceful abode from which they fell”⁸⁸.

As a fellowship united in love, the city of God will experience joy and enjoy a happy life because a happy and eternal life will be described by righteous, and not perverse, sentiments such as love and joy. Love united with joy will be unwavering and free from fear and anxiety⁸⁹.

⁸² Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI 13; XXII 17; XXII 30, 2. See A. Eckmann, *Przebóstwienie człowieka w pismach wczesnochrześcijańskich*, Lublin 2003, p. 220.

⁸³ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XXII 1. Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XXII 29.

⁸⁴ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* V 17, 2.

⁸⁵ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XII 9, 2. According to Eckmann, Augustine invokes the Christological argument here in support of man's hope. The One who is not only the Creator of angels but also superior to them called Himself man. Cf. Eckmann, *Przebóstwienie człowieka*, p. 223.

⁸⁶ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XXII 20, 3.

⁸⁷ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XII 9, 2.

⁸⁸ Augustinus, *De fide spe et caritate liber unus* XXIX. Cf. Kasia, *O państwie Bożym*, p. 189; Mondin, *Gli abitanti*, pp. 46-47.

⁸⁹ Cf. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIV 9, 6. See Stanula-Boroń, *Zagadnienia etyczne*, p. 230; Vannini, *Invito al pensiero*, p. 140.

8. Conclusion

Although the philosophers have long extolled the company of angels and valued their friendship, especially for no risk of causing sorrow to men either by death or moral decline, it is undoubtedly St. Augustine, the leading representative of patristic angelology, who must be credited with an eminently Christian portrait of angels. The fundamental background to this portrait is the story of salvation unfolding in the pages of Scripture, in which many heavenly spirits, despite the fact that men are unable to see them with their bodily eyes, come into very human contact with him. Through the presence of angels and their service, salvation history highlights the features of God's fatherly love (*divina providentia*).

Even though the Bishop of Hippo did not dedicate his luminous work to the angels but to the City of God (*De civitate Dei*), the angels are an indispensable, i.e. constitutive element of it. The Tagaste thinker uses the term "angel" to refer to both the heavenly spirits and the function they exercise, the office of heralding, of sending, thus also being a proper name for a herald, a messenger. The latter usage is employed by Augustine to refer to holy men, i.e. to Jesus Christ himself, as well as to prophets like Malachi and John the Baptist or St. Paul. With certain fondness, the early Christian thinker uses the terms: "holy angels" (*sancti angeli*), "our angels" (*nostri angeli*) or "good angels" (*angeli boni*). Their opposite are the evil angels, also called "demons", whose Christian understanding of existence and nature the Tagaste thinker seeks to separate from the beliefs of pagan philosophers.

In the portrayal of the ministry (*ministerium*) of angels to men in the teaching of the Bishop of Hippo, two stages are distinguished: the earthly and the heavenly. They are linked to two parts of the City of God. The first is essentially dominant and is a preparation for the second, which will also be permanent. The primary source from which the early Christian thinker draws inspiration and certainty is Scripture.

It is difficult to discern any single "catalogue" of ministries in the numerous statements of the Bishop of Hippo, and any such enumeration involves the risk of being incomplete. In the first place, angels bear witness to the events of salvation history, and their place in it is predicated from the beginning. So essential for angels, heralding or proclaiming is, in the first place, the infallible communication of a message – the will of God, the law or the Gospel. The Tagaste thinker pays close attention to the many important elements of this process of communication: without and with words; preaching and listening; giving something that is ac-

tually given by God Himself; imitating the goodwill of the angels; the compassionate, honest and sincere love of men. Angels are, by their very nature, as it were, predisposed to offer help and service to people. They are marked by ease of cognition or happy leisure and are strangers to the weakness of feeling (e.g. anger, compassion, fright, jealousy). The angels are also completely immune to the offering of any sacrifice by men, and together with them, they strive to ensure that worship is offered to the One God in Three Persons. Many extraordinary and marvellous things took place with the participation of the angels, including those for which the souls of the martyrs interceded. The assistance of angels is truly invaluable in the Christian's spiritual struggle. This struggle is particularly evident in the widespread struggle against demons and pride as the root of all evil.

In the context of eschatological issues, the early Christian thinker recalls the assembly of the righteous by angels on Judgement Day, and in the vision of judgement itself, he alludes to the idea of the guardian angel.

Angels serve men in this way that, until Doomsday, they help them not to lose sight of the purpose of their pilgrimage, that is, to participate with each other in the glory of heaven. The sojourning part of the City of God, which in the future is to be united with the immortal angels, are mortal men who are still sojourning on earth or are already resting in refuges and abodes of souls known only to God. The Bishop of Hippo describes this second stage by, among other things, the word "equality" (*aequalitas*). It does not signify a resurrected body or age but immortality and eternal happiness. With the future one fellowship of holy angels and men, Augustine also links the idea of the latter taking the place of fallen angels. Co-citizenship in the City of God means for men that, together with the angels, they will rest, see, love and praise God forever.

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