



Epiphanius of Salamis' Polemic with Angelological Heresies

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Abstract: The article presents the polemic of Epiphanius of Salamis with angelological heresies. Its purpose is therefore not only to present errors but is also an apology of correct faith. The article consists of four parts: the first concerns the existence of angels, the second focuses on their origins, the third deals with the question of their operation, and the fourth analyzes the role of angels in the afterlife of man. The most important conclusions from the analysis include: (1) Angelology was of interest not only in pre-Christian heresies (derived from Judaism) but also in heresies that emerged from Christianity. However, this topic does not appear when discussing the Greek schools of philosophy. (2) The author of *Panarion* does not always clearly present errors related to angelology. He himself points out that it was often not easy for him to precisely indicate the nature of a given heresy. (3) Epiphanius criticizes the angelological heresies on the basis of biblical and rational arguments, undermining their sources and reducing some theses to absurdity. He also uses the argument from authority, referring to the fathers (Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Hippolytus).

Keywords: Epiphanius of Salamis; *Panarion*; heresy; angelology

The figure of Epiphanius of Salamis, and in particular his catalogue of heresies entitled the *Panarion*, has become the subject of careful scholarly research in the recent few decades. This has been primarily associated with the publication of translations of this work into modern languages (English, Italian, Polish). In their scholarly investigations, the most eminent experts on the *Panarion* have addressed either individual heresies³ or groups of

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³ Cf. J.F. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen*, Macon 1988; S. Blossom, *Straight Reading: Shame and the Normal in Epiphanius's Polemic against Origen*, JECS 3 (2013) p. 413-423; T. Scott Manor, *Epiphanius' Alogi and the Johannine Controversy. Reassessment of Early Ecclesial Opposition to the Johannine Corpus*, Leiden – Boston 2016.

heresies⁴. The largest patristic catalogue of heresies has become the subject of predominantly monographic studies. At the same time, there have been few cross-sectional studies analysing the entire *Panarion* from some specific angle⁵. It is difficult to find any synthetic studies⁶.

Among the articles discussing the catalogue of heresies developed by the bishop from Cyprus, none is devoted to angelology. Isolated mentions of angels appear in analyses by Aline Pourkier, Timothy Scott Manor and Andrea Mirto. The French researcher focuses on the presentation of the Gnostic heresies which involved an elaborate angelology⁷. T. Scott Manor, in turn, cites an example of the angelic heresy to demonstrate Epiphanius' method. The Cypriot bishop mentions a heresy about which, as he points out, he knows nothing⁸. A. Mirto, on the other hand, refers to angels in his doctoral dissertation when discussing the animal symbolism present in the pages of the *Panarion*⁹. In the publications by Pourkier, Scott Manor and Mirto, errors in the area of angelology mainly concern the question of the creation of the world by angels¹⁰. They therefore do not present the entire panorama of angelological heresies.

⁴ Cf. G. Vallée, *A Study in Antygnostic Polemics. Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius*, Waterloo 1981; A. Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Épiphane de Salamine*, Paris 1992.

⁵ Cf. Y.R. Kim, *Reading the "Panarion" as collective biography. The heresiarch as unholy man*, VigCh 64 (2010) p. 382-413; A. Jacobs, *Matters (Un-)Becoming: Conversions in Epiphanius of Salamis*, ChH 81 (2012) p. 27-47; Y.R. Kim, *Epiphanius of Cyprus: Imagining an Orthodox World*, Michigan 2015; A.S. Jacobs, *Epiphanius of Cyprus. A Cultural Biography of Late Antiquity*, California 2016; R. Flower, *Medicalizing Heresy: Doctors and Patients in Epiphanius of Salamis*, "Journal of Late Antiquity" 11 (2018) pp. 251-273; M. Gilski – M. Wysocki, *Ortodoksja jako droga twórczego rozwoju dziecka w "Panarionie Epifaniusza" z Salaminy*, VoxP 83 (2022) pp. 405-420.

⁶ On Mariology in Epiphanius, see: D. Fernandez, *De mariologia Sancti Epiphani*, Romae 1969. The trinitology of one of his works is discussed in: O. Köster, *Die Trinitätslehre des Epiphanius von Salamis. Ein Kommentar zum „Ancoratus“*, Göttingen 2003.

⁷ Cf. Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Épiphane de Salamine*, pp. 172-180, 194-197, 212-218.

⁸ Cf. Scott Manor, *Epiphanius' Alogi and the Johannine Controversy. Reassessment of Early Ecclesial Opposition to the Johannine Corpus*, pp. 125, 128.

⁹ Cf. A. Mirto, *Eresie e animali velenosi nel Panarion di Epifanio di Salamina*, Tesi di dottorato di ricerca di filologia e letterature greca e latina, Pisa 2013, pp. 62, 66, 97, 99, 182, 233, 345, 381.

¹⁰ This is the most serious problem in the debates between the Church Fathers and Gnostic angelology. Cf. W. Myszor, *Stwórca świata i szatan w pismach gnostyków*, in: *Demonologia ojców Kościoła*, ŻMT 17, Kraków 2000, p. 23.

Heresies related to misconceptions about the nature, role and place of angels in the world have therefore not yet been discussed. This gap is addressed by the present article. It aims to answer the question: what heresies in the area of angelology does Epiphanius present in the *Panarion* and how does he respond to them? It is therefore as much about the presentation of angelological heresies as about the Cypriot bishop's arguments in his polemic against them. Thus, in addition to exposing errors, this will be an apologia for a correct presentation of the nature, place and role of angels¹¹.

Even a superficial analysis of the *Panarion* allows one to conclude that, in the case of this work, a full range of angelological heresies are involved. This theme appears in the vast majority of heresies presented by the Cypriot bishop.

At the outset, it is worth making two terminological remarks. In his polemic with the Arians, Epiphanius attempts to define the term "angel" (ἄγγελος). He points out that this is an ambiguous term. It can refer both to the people (Joshua's messengers who came to Rachab)¹² and to the Son of God, described as an "angel of a great counsel"¹³. In both cases, it refers to heralds. Joshua's messengers, however, were not angels, but only men who announced what concerned earthly matters. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is the herald of the will of the Father. Here the Bishop of Salamis provides an interpretative principle for terms that refer to Jesus Christ. All terms that could undermine His divinity are to be interpreted metaphorically¹⁴. The metaphorical nature of the term "angel" as referring to Jesus Christ and its inadequacy in relation to human beings means that the author of the greatest catalogue of heresies understands it in terms of nature and not in terms of function. Arguing with the Pneumatomachians, the author of the *Panarion* points out the fundamental difference between the angel of the great counsel and other angels who have a beginning and a purpose (ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος)¹⁵. Elsewhere, the Bishop of Salamis makes it clear that God in

¹¹ On this method of Epiphanius' writing, involving not only criticism but also positive interpretation, see: M. Gilski – M. Piątek, *Epifaniusz z Salaminy polemika z nurtami heterodoksyjnymi*, in: Epifaniusz z Salaminy, *Panarion. Herezje 34-46*, translated by M. Gilski – M. Piątek, ed. A. Baron, Kraków 2021, p. 6.

¹² Cf. Josh. 2:1.

¹³ Cf. Isa. 9:5.

¹⁴ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 69, 35, 2-3.

¹⁵ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 74, 8, 7. It seems that the term *telos* should be understood here as the goal of existence rather than its end. This is indicated by the further context in which Epiphanius emphasises that angels can heal created beings and impart graces to them. Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 74, 8, 7-8.

His wisdom did not send a herald, an angel or a prophet into the world, but Our Lord Himself came in person¹⁶.

The term “heresy” is understood in the present article in the sense in which Epiphanius of Salamis understands it. The Cypriot bishop uses it to refer to the Greek philosophical schools, to Jewish sects, as well as to views and practices that go against natural law, violating the original, God-created unity of humankind¹⁷.

The errors presented in the pages of the *Panarion* in the area of angelology are related both to the undermining of the existence of these beings, to a misconception about their nature, and to issues relating to creatology, anthropology or soteriology. The article is divided into four parts: (a) the existence of angels, (b) the origin of angels, (c) creation as the work of angels, and (d) the role of angels in the salvation of man.

1. The existence of angels

Only once in the pages of the *Panarion* is there any explicit mention of questioning the existence of angels¹⁸. This refers to the Sadducees who questioned the existence of these beings. In this context, Epiphanius does not cite any argument for the existence of angels. He only refers to the answer given by Jesus to the Sadducees’ question about the resurrection of the dead. In it, there is a statement that after death people will not marry or be given in marriage, but will be equal to the angels (ισάγγελοι)¹⁹. With this, Jesus confirms the existence of angels to whom humans will be similar after death.

The term ισάγγελοι appears three more times in the *Panarion*. Epiphanius refers to the answer Jesus gave to the Sadducees in a polemic with the Borobites, with the views of Origen and with the Appolinarians. Critical of sexual misconduct in the Borborite sect, the Cypriot bishop stresses that being on par with the angels means purity, holiness and bodily immaculateness²⁰. Arguing against the theses of Origen, he cites Methodius of Olympus to express the view that nature cannot be changed. Neither hu-

¹⁶ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 76, 39, 6.

¹⁷ Cf. Vallée, *A Study in Antygnostic Polemics. Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius*, pp. 75-77.

¹⁸ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 14, 2, 2.

¹⁹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 14, 3, 1-2. See Matt. 22:29-32.

²⁰ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 26, 15, 5-7.

mans will become angels, nor will angels become other beings²¹. Equality to angels does not mean becoming an angel but being able to dance with the Bridegroom²². In discussion with the Apolinarians, who question the completeness of Christ's humanity, Epiphanius defends the spiritual interpretation of Scripture, based on the authority of the Tradition of the faith of the prophets and apostles²³. He insists that bodily circumcision is irrelevant from the point of view of the resurrection because after death there will be a conformation to the angels²⁴.

The Cypriot bishop takes the existence of angels for granted. He frequently quotes Jesus' statements about angels and passages from Scripture showing their workings²⁵. However, there are no arguments in the *Panarion* for the existence of angels.

2. The origin of angels

The issue of the nature of angels is primarily related to their origin. Various answers to the question of the nature of angels can be found on the pages of the *Panarion*. The Valentinians saw the angels as beings borne by Achamoth²⁶ and the Ophites as borne by Ialdabaoth²⁷. They are therefore not created beings, but beings that have been conceived and born. The Marcosians saw the angels as aeons. They would therefore be emanations that have no substance and are not born, compared by the author of the heresy to sounds²⁸. The Basilides distinguished between different types of angels. Some originate from Abrasax²⁹ and others from other angels³⁰. Some of the angels would therefore be created beings and some would be both created beings and creators.

Epiphanius did not argue with every single view presented by Gnostic angelology. He focuses on fallacies that he considers crucial (e.g. Chris-

²¹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64, 41, 1-8; 64, 43, 1-8.

²² Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64, 69, 10. See Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64, 43, 4, where it is mentioned that being "like an angel" does not mean being an angel.

²³ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 77, 37, 1.

²⁴ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 77, 37, 4-5.

²⁵ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 51, 5, 5-10; 70, 7, 2-3; 74, 3, 6.

²⁶ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31, 19, 11.

²⁷ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 37, 4, 1.

²⁸ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 34, 4, 7.

²⁹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 24, 8, 3.

³⁰ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 24, 1, 8.

tology)³¹. In his polemic with Basilides and Valentinus, he omits issues of angelology, treating them as secondary to more serious errors.

The issue of the nature of angels differs across Gnostic systems. They are creators, created beings, born beings or emanations. A closer reading of the *Panarion* also reveals views that emphasise the relationship between angels and humans. Several times on the pages of the *Panarion* one finds the equation of the human soul to an angel. Epiphanius mentions this when presenting both the Heracleonites and the Origenists.

Heracleon's followers were given detailed instructions on how they were to behave when they would be departing from earthly life. The words passed on to them in the sect were intended to help them move on to higher heavenly realms. Not knowing the right formulas could keep their souls in the midst of powers and authorities and prevent redemption. The correct rituals and formulas thus made it possible, in the belief of the Heracleonites, to reach the right place after death. The moment of departure from this world, however, is described rather mysteriously as the abandonment of the shackles and angel, i.e. one's own soul (ρίψαντα τὸν δεσμὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν ἄγγελον τουτέστιν τὴν ψυχὴν)³². Such a situation is possible for those who perform the appropriate ritual and utter the formulas known to themselves.

Epiphanius does not explore this issue further. It does not explain in detail the place angelology had in the Heracleonite system. The term ἄγγελος only appears when discussing this passage. Nor does Irenaeus of Lyon's analysis of the Heracleonite system help to clarify the issue at hand³³.

It seems that in the Heracleonite system, humans would be closely related to angels. The moment of death would be the moment of separation. The proponents of this heresy believed that human beings consisted not only of a soul and a body but of something more³⁴. Epiphanius, however, does not present their anthropology. One only finds in his work a statement about the inner man, who is deeper inside than the soul and body³⁵. However, since other Gnostic heresies show a number of similarities and

³¹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 24, 8, 6. The author of the *Panarion* presents Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, arguing against the thesis that it was Simon of Cyrene who was crucified. He emphasises that no man can save.

³² Epiphanius, *Panarion* 36, 3, 6.

³³ Cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I 21, 5.

³⁴ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 36, 3, 6. The doctrine of the Heracleonites is discussed in: A. Orbe, *Cristología gnóstica. Introducción a la soteriología de los siglos II y III*, vol. 1-2, Madrid 1976.

³⁵ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 36, 2, 8.

relationships between angels and humans, it seems that the Heracleonites are an example of such a close relationship.

The author of the *Panarion* does not engage in a detailed critique of the views of Heracleon's followers. He merely indicates that they are nonsense, more suitable for mime plays (μιμολογία)³⁶. He notes that this is a doctrine that is difficult to examine and present (ζητῆσαι ἢ ἐξειπεῖν)³⁷. In his further criticism of this sect, he raises a number of questions to show the absurdity of their way of thinking³⁸ and accuses them of negativity and evil intentions (λέγω δὲ τὴν ἐκ διανοίας φουομένην ῥυπαρὰν ἐνθύμησιν καὶ βορβορώδεις λογισμοὺς τῆς ἀμαρτίας)³⁹ referring to Heracleon himself as a "tramp" (τὰς μηχανὰς τοῦ ἀγύρτου)⁴⁰.

Some light is shed by Epiphanius when discussing the heresy of Origen on the understanding of man as a fallen angel confined in flesh⁴¹. The Cypriot bishop is critical of views that see the body as a prison for the soul⁴². His polemic takes the form of reducing such claims to absurdity. He refers in this context to a study of the issue by Methodius of Olympus. A series of questions, the starting point of which is the understanding of the role of prison as a place to restrain criminals from doing evil, leads to the conclusion that this is not the case with the body. It not only does not limit the possibility of committing evil but actually collaborates (συνεργόν) with the soul in doing it. So not only is the body not a prison, but it cooperates with the soul in both good and evil acts⁴³.

Epiphanius also addresses views that suggest the mortality of both angels and souls. Such theses were born out of the belief that there was a link between being begotten and mortality. Those who advocated that angels

³⁶ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 36, 4, 1.

³⁷ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 36, 4, 2.

³⁸ Epiphanius asks about the origin of the body, the soul, the inner man, about the interrelationship of the material and spiritual element, about the way in which the Demiurge acts to create something that has nothing to do with him, about his power in relation to matter. After asking a dozen questions, the author of the *Panarion* expresses his conviction that none of them can be answered. Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 36, 4, 3-7.

³⁹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 36, 4, 8.

⁴⁰ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 36, 6, 1.

⁴¹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64, 4, 5.

⁴² Various terms appear in the polemic to describe the soul as limited, enslaved and imprisoned by the body (δεσμὸν αὐτὸ καὶ φυλακὴν καὶ σῆμα καὶ ἄχθος καὶ πέδας). Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64, 22, 7.

⁴³ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64, 23, 1-18.

were born rather than created have consistently implied their mortality⁴⁴. The Bishop of Salamis is critical of such claims, stressing that God does not create anything just for a limited time. The end of the world will not, in his view, be a moment of its destruction, but of renewal and purification (κάθαρσιν καὶ ἀνακαινισμόν). This is because God created everything to exist and to last. Thus, both angels and human souls are immortal and will never cease to exist (ἀθάνατα καὶ ἀδάμαστα)⁴⁵. Epiphanius makes it clear that angels neither beget nor are begotten beings but were created by God⁴⁶.

3. Creation as the work of angels

Many times in the pages of the *Panarion*, Epiphanius quotes the thesis of various Gnostic denominations that maintain that the world was created by angels⁴⁷. This is how they were attempting to explain the existence of evil in the world. Since it was not created by the good God but by angels, it therefore has defects⁴⁸. In this way, the Gnostics removed the responsibility for the existence of evil in the world from the good God.

Epiphanius attacks attempts to blame the evil in the world on the angels who supposedly created it from the beginning with a defect. In a polemic with Saturnilus, he finds that the full responsibility lies with the power from above that created the angels. Yet they were merely a tool in the hands of the greater power that gave them existence. And a tool cannot be held responsible in any way⁴⁹. In this context, the author of the *Panarion* cites a number of arguments suggesting either ignorance and unawareness of the power from above, or its limited power. An image of power that would be limited in both its knowledge and ability to act would be incoherent and illogical. Such an understanding of power from above would imply that the creator is weaker than the angels he has made⁵⁰. Not only does the Cypriot

⁴⁴ Epiphanius questions the existence of a link between being begotten and mortality. As an example, he cites man who is immortal. Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64, 39, 3.

⁴⁵ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64, 39, 1-6.

⁴⁶ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 76, 48, 4.

⁴⁷ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 21, 2, 4; 21, 6, 3; 22, 1, 1-2; 23, 1, 3-4; 27, 2, 4; 27, 3, 2; 27, 5, 4-5; 28, 1, 2.

⁴⁸ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 21, 4, 4; 21, 6, 3.

⁴⁹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 3, 1-5.

⁵⁰ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 4, 1-8; Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Épiphane de Salamine*, pp. 194-197. Similar theses by Carpocratians and analogous argumentation by the Cypriot bishop: Epiphanius, *Panarion* 27, 7, 2-4.

bishop reduce Saturnilus' theses to absurdity, but he also takes the liberty of mocking and deriding the founder of the heresy himself, asking him whether he himself witnessed or observed what he preaches⁵¹. A similar type of criticism is levelled at the Ophites. This time it relates to cognitive issues. Epiphanius asks the rhetorical question of how man can attain higher knowledge than the angels who created him⁵².

The Gnostics believe that not only the world itself but also everything in the world was created by angels⁵³. Also, man is not the work of God, but of angels. They gathered and, upon reflection, together they created a human being⁵⁴. The author of the *Panarion* accuses the Gnostics of distorting the text of Scripture. Quoting the words from Genesis (Gen. 1:26) about the creation of man in God's image, Saturnilus' followers omitted the pronoun "our". In this way, they implied that man was created not by God but by other beings⁵⁵.

The Cerinthians went even further, maintaining that also the Law and the Prophets were given by angels⁵⁶. Thus, not only the world and man, but also the revelation known from the pages of the Old Testament are not the work of God, but of angels. In this way, the Gnostics were able to challenge the validity of the principles given in the Old Covenant. This was not an isolated or unique view. The questioning of the Old Testament texts was also undertaken by the Gnostics by propounding the thesis that the God of the Jews was not God but an angel. Such theses were advocated by Saturnilus, a second-century Gnostic⁵⁷. In his view, there is an unknowable Father who created the Dominions, Virtues and Powers, which include the angels.

⁵¹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 4, 5. According to the author of the *Panarion*, the work cannot be more perfect than its creator, and the creator cannot be weaker than the angels he has made.

⁵² Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 37, 6, 4. The Ophites considered themselves as having higher knowledge than the angels.

⁵³ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 27, 2, 1.

⁵⁴ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 21, 2, 4; 23, 1, 4. Cf. Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Épiphanes de Salamine*, pp. 177-178.

⁵⁵ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 1, 6-7. Epiphanius questions not only the thesis of the creation of man by angels but also the claim that the creation of man was accomplished with the counsel of the angels. God has made everything of His own good pleasure. Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 4, 8-23, 5, 1.

⁵⁶ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 28, 1, 2. On prophecies being the work of angels: Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 2, 5.

⁵⁷ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 2, 2. Basilides also propounded similar theses to Saturnilus. Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 24, 2, 3.

However, there was a conflict between the angels and their Creator⁵⁸. Saturnilus does not state the reasons behind it. The unknowable Father, however, only created spiritual powers. The visible world and man are the result of the actions of angels⁵⁹. This understanding of creation allows Saturnilus not to question the veracity of the texts of the Old Testament equating God with the Creator. The God known from the pages of the Old Testament, however, is only an angel who, together with the other six angels, created the visible world and everything in it⁶⁰.

Epiphanius does not evaluate individual theses proposed by Saturnilus, but after collectively presenting his doctrine, he first raises *ad personam* arguments, calling the Gnostic an “oaf” (κτηνώδης)⁶¹, “supreme fool” (ὁ πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἀβέλτερε)⁶², and then defends the truth of man’s descent from the Holy Trinity⁶³.

Basilides’ system goes even further, indicating that both the various heavens and some angels are derived from other angels⁶⁴. By the same token, not only the visible world but also some spiritual beings would be the work of angels. Epiphanius does not carry out a detailed critique of individual theses. He refers to the entire system as “crazy nonsense” (τῆ μανιώδει αὐτοῦ φλυσάρια) and calls the doctrine a “mischief” (ληρώδης)⁶⁵.

There are even views described in the pages of the *Panarion* that Jesus was created by angels. This Carpocratian thesis is described by Epiphanius as an absurdity and a made-up story⁶⁶. It is in line with the beliefs of various heresies depreciating the divinity of Jesus Christ⁶⁷. The Cypriot bishop repeatedly polemicises against such views⁶⁸. He asks questions as to who raised Lazarus, the young man from Nain, and the daughter of the synagogue leader from the dead, and in whose name the Apostles raised the dead. The divine power of Jesus is revealed in His reign over death⁶⁹.

⁵⁸ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 1, 3; 23, 2, 2.

⁵⁹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 1, 3-4.

⁶⁰ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 1, 3.

⁶¹ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 3, 1.

⁶² Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 4, 7.

⁶³ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 23, 5, 1-5.

⁶⁴ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 24, 1, 7-8; 24, 8, 3.

⁶⁵ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 24, 2, 1.

⁶⁶ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 27, 8, 3.

⁶⁷ Cf. J. Daniélou, *Teologia judeochrześcijańska*, Kraków 2002, pp. 175-204.

⁶⁸ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64, 4, 2-3; 69, 59, 1-2; 69, 71, 1-9.

⁶⁹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 69, 59, 1-10. Epiphanius quotes Jesus’ words that He has the power to give His life and take it back (John 10:18) as a key argument for His divinity.

Theses about angels as creators are presented more than once in the pages of the *Panarion*. Epiphanius treats them somewhat contemptuously, mocking such views, demonstrating their absurdity and incoherence and using numerous invectives against both the originators of heresy and their doctrines. He also points to the distortions of the biblical text made by the Gnostics. It is only in the context of Origenism that the Bishop of Salamis explicitly states that there is no creator other than God⁷⁰. Angels were intended by God to govern the world and ensure order in it. Although it is God who rules the world by means of His wisdom, individual functions are performed by angels. However, not all of them remained faithful to the tasks assigned to them by God⁷¹.

4. The role of angels in the salvation of man

The Gnostic systems took a variety of approaches to the role of angels in human salvation. The Valentinians saw salvation as marrying an angel. This form of salvation was reserved for the pneumatics. It was they, as rational spirits, who were to be given to the angels as brides (νύμφας)⁷². In presenting Valentinus's views, Epiphanius appeals to the authority of Irenaeus of Lyons, quoting a long section from his *Adversus haereses*. The criticism of the Cypriot bishop is very limited in this context. He cites the authority of Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria and Hippolytus. He himself does not criticise Valentinian angelology, but, in addition to arguing from the authority of the Fathers, he cites several general reasons against their doctrine. First, he draws attention to doctrinal differences within the sect itself (διάφορα παρ' αὐτοῖς τὰ φρονήματα καὶ ἕτερος τὰ τοῦ ἑτέρου καταλύειν ἐπαγγέλλεται)⁷³. Second, he emphasises the lack of support for these theses in Scripture (οὐτε που γραφῆς εἰπούσης)⁷⁴. Third, he cites several examples of their faulty exegesis⁷⁵.

⁷⁰ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64, 28, 7.

⁷¹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64, 29, 1-5.

⁷² Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31, 21, 12.

⁷³ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31, 34, 1.

⁷⁴ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31, 34, 1-4.

⁷⁵ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31, 35, 1-6. The author of the *Panarion* is critical of the interpretation of numbers presented by the Valentinians in the context of their theory of the lost aeon of matter. He considers the analogy between the twelfth aeon, which was in a state of deficiency and fell out of the number twelve, and Judas, who fell out of the

The Carpocratians perceived the role of angels in the salvation of the soul completely differently. This is because in order to achieve it, one had to liberate oneself from their rule. Only then could one approach God. Angels appear in this context as an obstacle to salvation⁷⁶, which is linked to the need to flee from those among them who created the world⁷⁷. Epiphanius criticises the Carpocratians for their arrogance, blindness and fallacious exegesis⁷⁸. Explaining the words of Jesus about the need to be reconciled with one's opponent while on the way with him in order not to be handed over to the judge⁷⁹, they interpreted them from the perspective of the relationship with the angel who created the world. It is the angel named "devil" who is this opponent⁸⁰. The repayment of debts to this opponent is done through magic and promiscuity⁸¹. The author of the *Panarion* does not hide his surprise that not only in the civilised world but even among peoples living together with wild animals and following the example of wild animals, someone can behave like Carpocratians⁸². He does not, however, undertake a critique of individual aspects of their angelology.

The issues concerning the role of angels in human salvation occupied a prominent position in Gnostic doctrine and were situated between the idea of being wed to an angel and having to struggle with angels who created obstacles to salvation. The theme of the role of angels in the afterlife of man is not elaborated upon by Epiphanius. He critically examines erroneous ideas without any positive argument.

5. Conclusions

The analyses carried out allow the following conclusions to be drawn.

(1) Apart from the Sadducees known from the pages of Scripture, no heresy is to be found in the pages of the *Panarion* that questions the exist-

group of twelve, to be inappropriate, since Judas died and the aeon was not deprived of existence. An analogous fallacy applies to the exegesis of the parable of the ten drachmas – the lost drachma was not lost forever.

⁷⁶ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 27, 2, 6-9.

⁷⁷ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 27, 2, 4.

⁷⁸ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 27, 2, 9; 27, 3, 2; 27, 5, 4.

⁷⁹ Cf. Matt. 5:25-26.

⁸⁰ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 27, 5, 5.

⁸¹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 27, 4, 1-7.

⁸² Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 27, 5, 1.

tence of the world of angels. No one else among the heresiarchs questioned the existence of these beings.

(2) Angelology was of interest not only to pre-Christian heresies (originating in Judaism) but also to heresies that emerged from Christianity. This theme, on the other hand, does not arise in the discussion of the Greek philosophical schools.

(3) The array of angelological heresies discussed in the *Panarion* is wide. They involve fallacies related to the nature of angels, and their role and place both in this world and in the afterlife.

(4) The author of the *Panarion* does not always present angelological errors clearly. Indeed, he himself points out that on numerous occasions it was not easy for him to pinpoint the precise nature of a particular heresy.

(5) Epiphanius criticises angelological heresies with the use of biblical and rational arguments, questioning their sources and reducing some theses to absurdity. He also resorts to arguments from authority, citing the Church Fathers (Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Hippolytus).

(6) If one wishes to gain a complete picture of the angelological heresies and a complete argument against them, there is a need to read the *Panarion* in its entirety. Epiphanius, while referring to some errors, does not immediately enter into a polemic with them. Many times it is only when discussing other heresies, as if in passing, that he criticises the fallacious angelology.

(7) The final conclusion is not only strictly theological but also pastoral. The analyses carried out reveal that an excessive focus on issues related to angels can lead to in some way "obscuring" the image of God. There must be a proper balance between emphasising spiritual realities, which are rather scarcely described in the Bible, and the person of Jesus Christ – the fullness of revelation. This is the lesson to be derived from the *Panarion*.

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