



Zeus' Messengers, Angels, and Archangels in Porphyry of Tyre

Ewa Osek¹

Abstract: This article is to reconstruct, for the first time in the existing scholarship, the angelology in Porphyry of Tyre (233-305), the Neoplatonist who introduced angels and archangels into Greek philosophy. Angels were not found in any philosophical system before Porphyry. My philological analysis of the select fragments from Porphyry's writings: *Homeric Questions on the Iliad*, *Letter to Anebo*, *On Abstinence*, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, *On the Styx*, *On the Philosophy from Oracles*, and testimonies included in Augustine's *City of God* allows to make the following conclusions. Porphyry divided the angelic hierarchy into three orders and included them into the world soul structure, analogically to its trichotomy. He placed the supreme angelic order in the fixed stars, the second archangelic order in the planetary spheres, and the third order – the so-called ferryman – in Earth's atmosphere. The angels and archangels of the celestial spheres coincide with the cosmic gods, whereas the sublunary "ferryman" step into daemons' shoes, the so-called mediators in Plato's *Symposium*. The angels deliver messages from cosmic gods and good daemons, and this is their main function. Divine message, transmitted and echoed by angels, is received only by some chosen people: priests and prophets, to whom Porphyry referred the Homeric formula "Zeus' messengers". In constructing his angelology Porphyry might be influenced by esoteric texts of the second century he studied: Apollo's hexametric prophecies, the *Chaldean Oracles* by Julian the Theurgist, *On Nature* attributed to Zoroaster, besides *An Account of India* by Bardaisan of Edessa (218-222) he translated from Syriac into Greek.

Keywords: Porphyry of Tyre (233-305); angels; archangels; Zeus' messengers (Homeric formula); Neoplatonism (244-529)

Franz Cumont, in his article *Les anges du paganisme* (1915), noted that the first to introduce angelology into Hellenistic philosophy was the Neoplatonist Porphyry of Tyre (233-305)². Porphyry, actually Malkos ("King"), born into a Christian family with Phoenician roots, was initially educated

¹ Dr hab. Ewa Osek, prof. at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Department of Greek Studies, Institute of Literary Studies, Faculty of Humanities, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland; e-mail: ewaosek@kul.pl; ORCID: 0000-0002-9407-4435.

² F. Cumont, *Les anges du paganisme*, "Revue de l'histoire des religions" 72 (1915) p. 169-170.

(248-253) in Bostra and Caesarea Maritima under Origen of Alexandria. However, when he was later (253) beaten by Christians, Porphyry abandoned Christianity and went to Athens to study philology under Cassius Longinus (253-263) and to Rome to study philosophy under Plotinus (263-270)³. At the time, oriental cults prevailed in all the places in which he lived: the Roman provinces of Syria, Arabia, Judea, Achaëa or even in Italy. Cumont attributes the appearance of angels in Porphyry in the third century to these oriental religions, decades before the rise of Christian angelology in the fourth and fifth centuries⁴. However, although Cumont emphasized the momentous role of Porphyry, he did not seek to explore his literary legacy because of, as he wrote in the indicated article, philological difficulties. Cumont is somewhat right. Corpus Porphyrianum does indeed pose research problems. Most of Porphyry's writings in which he commented on angels have survived in fragments, and even these fragments are often distorted by the writers who passed them on: Iamblichus of Chalcis (c. 245-325), St. Augustine (354-430), Proclus Diadochus (412-485) and others. The philological effort that Cumont (1915) did not undertake has also not been taken up by the authors of the most recent studies: Aaron Johnson (2013)⁵, Michael Simmons (2015)⁶, Luc Brisson's team (2018)⁷, Ilaria Ramelli (2021)⁸. The aim of this study is to fill a gap in the current status quaestionis. I intend to reconstruct Porphyry's angelology on the basis of a philological analysis of passages and fragments extant from 270-302, as well as some later testimonies, and to propose a hypothesis about the genesis of Neoplatonic angels more accurate than Cumont's "oriental religions". I will be using the philological method, with particular emphasis on source criticism.

³ Porphyrius, *De Porphyrii magistris*, test. 12T, in: *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, ed. A. Smith, Lipsiae 1993, p. 16-17, tr. C.F. Cruse, Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6, 19, 5, Peabody 2004, p. 209.

⁴ E. Muehlberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity*, Oxford 2013, p. 29-57. In the early Christian literature before Origen, some mentions of angels were incidental. See S. Longosz, *Opiekunczą funkcja aniołów w nauce Ojców Kościoła*, in: *Księga o aniołach*, ed. H. Oleschko, Kraków 2002, p. 157-165.

⁵ A.P. Johnson, *Religion and Identity in Porphyre of Tyre*, Cambridge 2013, p. 86-88.

⁶ M.B. Simmons, *Universal Salvation in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2015.

⁷ *Neoplatonic Demons and Angels*, ed. L. Brisson et al., Leiden 2018.

⁸ I. Ramelli, *Conceptualities of Angels in Imperial and Late Antiquity*, in: *Inventer les anges*, ed. D. Lauritzen, Paris 2021, p. 115-172.

1. What this paper is and what it is not about

As a disciple of Origen, Porphyry was very familiar with the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, where the terms ἄγγελος – “angel” and ἀρχάγγελος – “archangel” (the latter only in the New Testament) occur. However, this study is not concerned with passages that contain the biblical phrases “angel of the Lord” (ἄγγελος κυρίου) and “with the voice of an archangel” (ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου), but with other passages in the Corpus Porphyrianum that refer to extra-biblical use of the indicated terms⁹. It also does not concern demonology, which was introduced into Hellenistic philosophy by Plato. When the middle Platonist Philo of Alexandria interpreted the Old Testament phrase οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ – “angels of God”¹⁰, he identified the “angels” of Moses with the “daemons” of other philosophers (i.e. Platonists), and then explained daemons as souls that fly in the atmosphere¹¹. His interpretation of the Old Testament angels was demonological, in line with the standard meaning of the Greek term δαίμων as a soul that is embodied or disembodied (and hence floating in the air), which is also present in Porphyry¹². Besides the daemon-soul, Porphyry recognized a number of other types of daemons. Most of them oversaw the incarnation process by supervising souls currently incarnating or already incarnated in humans or animals, as well as the vegetation of plants¹³. Wherever Porphyry wrote: “daemons”, known to him Origen wrote: “angels”¹⁴. Philo and

⁹ Porphyrius, *Adversus Christianos*, fr. 12, ed. A. von Harnack, Berlin 1916, p. 50, cf. Luke 1:11 (ἄγγελος κυρίου); fr. 35, ed. Harnack, p. 61, tr. R.J. Hoffmann, *Porphyry's Against the Christians*, New York 1994, p. 68, cf. 1 Thess 4:16 (ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου).

¹⁰ The phrase οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ – “the angels of God” occurs in the Greek Bible, but does not in the verses commented by Philo in *De gigantibus* 6. Cf. Gen 6:2 and 6:4 οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ – “the sons of God”.

¹¹ J. Dillon, *Philo's Doctrine of Angels*, in: *Two treatises of Philo of Alexandria: a commentary on De gigantibus and Quod Deus sit immutabilis*, ed. D. Winston – J. Dillon, Chico 1983, p. 197 “At Gig. 6, Philo declares, commenting on Gen 6:2: Those beings which other philosophers call ‘daemons’ Moses is accustomed to term ‘angels’. These are souls flying in the air”.

¹² L. Brisson, *What Is a Daimon for Porphyry?*, in: *Neoplatonic Demons and Angels*, ed. L. Brisson et al., Leiden, 2018, p. 99.

¹³ D.G. Greenbaum, *Porphyry of Tyre on the Daimon, Birth and the Stars*, in: *Neoplatonic Demons and Angels*, ed. L. Brisson et al., Leiden 2018, p. 102-139; N. Akcay, *Daimones in Porphyry's On the Cave of the Nymphs*, in: *Neoplatonic Demons and Angels*, ed. L. Brisson et al., Leiden 2018, p. 140-159.

¹⁴ Longosz, *Opiekuńcza funkcja aniołów*, p. 163-165.

Origen replaced the philosophical term “daemon” with the biblical term “angel”. Therefore, both Alexandrians were concerned with demonology, not angelology. Furthermore, Origen distinguished between fallen angels and angels, in other words: he divided daemons into good and evil, as all Platonists, including Porphyry, did. However, it is not certain whether the eminent Christian exegete accepted the opposite (and unbiblical) view, which occurred later in Porphyry: that angels are good daemons, that is: daemons who have become purer, better, more perfect. If Origen did in fact maintain what was alleged against him in the sixth century – that angels turn into daemons or into humans, and vice versa, that humans and daemons attain the rank of angels through moral progression – he could rightly be considered Porphyry’s predecessor in angelology. This is the view of Ilaria Ramelli¹⁵. However, Mark Edwards finds this idea debatable and rather questionable¹⁶.

The present study is concerned with angelology, but not with the entire demonology, which I have discussed in my recent book on reincarnation in Porphyry¹⁷.

2. The Homeric formulas “Zeus’ messenger” (Διὸς ἄγγελος) and “Zeus’ messengers” (Διὸς ἄγγελοι) in Porphyry’s scholia on the *Iliad*

In the fragmentarily preserved *Homeric Questions concerning the Iliad*, Porphyry commented on the Homeric formula Διὸς ἄγγελοι that occurs twice in the *Iliad*. In one passage (1, 334) Achilles, though angry, politely addresses the Agamemnon’s emissaries: χαίρετε κήρυκες Διὸς ἄγγελοι ἠδὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν – “Hail, heralds, messengers of Zeus and men!”, while in another (7, 274) the same formula εἰ μὴ κήρυκες Διὸς ἄγγελοι ἠδὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν – “but that the heralds, messengers of Zeus and men” was used in the context of the diplomatic intervention carried out by Idaeus, messenger of the Trojans, and Talthylus, messenger of the Achaeans. Therefore, it is apparent that the Homeric formula Διὸς ἄγγελοι – “messengers of Zeus” in Homer referred to humans¹⁸.

¹⁵ Ramelli, *Conceptualities of Angels*, p. 115-121.

¹⁶ M.J. Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, Aldershot 2002, p. 100-101.

¹⁷ E. Osek, *Reinkarnacja u Porfiriusza z Tyru*, Warszawa 2023.

¹⁸ R. Cline, *Ancient Angels: Conceptualizing Angeloi in the Roman Empire*, Leiden 2011, p. 3.

Firstly, Porphyry's scholion concerns the goddess Ossa ("prophetic voice"), who is referred to in *Iliad* 2, 93 as "the messenger of Zeus": μετὰ δὲ σφισιν ὄσσα δεδήκει ὀτρύνουσ' ἰέναι, Διὸς ἄγγελος – "Among them Ossa blazed, urging them to go, the messenger of Zeus"¹⁹. The scholiast explains the name Ossa as "divine voice" (ἡ θεία φήμη), and accordingly interprets "the messengers of Zeus and prophets" as humans that hear the voice of the gods, that is, that very prophetic voice (τῆς ὀπὸς τῶν θεῶν ἀκούουσιν, ἥτις ἐστὶν ὄσσα). The etymology of the name ὄσσα – "prophetic voice" from the noun ὄψ – "voice" is based on the phrase from *Iliad* 7, 53 quoted by the scholiast: ὡς γὰρ ὄπ' ἄκουσα θεῶν – "for thus did I hear the voice of the gods", put into the mouth of Helenus, the Trojan prophet; according to modern linguists, this etymology is correct²⁰. Ossa, the messenger of Zeus, is a divine voice, the voice of the gods that can be heard by humans: prophets, οἱ μάνταις, such as the prophet Helenus in *Iliad* 7, 53; heralds and messengers named Διὸς δὲ ἄγγελοι – "messengers of Zeus" in *Iliad* 1, 334 and 7, 274; and even ordinary soldiers such as the Achaeans camped at Troy in *Iliad* 2, 93.

To continue²¹, Porphyry etymologized ὄσσα – "prophetic voice" from the verb ὄσσομαι – "to predict"; this etymology – unlike the etymology of ὄσσα from ὄψ – has not received the approval of modern linguists²². The verb ὄσσομαι – "to predict" describes – according to the scholiast – the action of the goddess Iris in *Iliad* (24, 172-173): "I come to you, not κακὸν ὄσσομένη, but thinking kind thoughts, (that is), not fore-boding evil". Iris, similarly to Ossa, was referred to by Homer as "messenger of Zeus" (*Iliad* 24, 173: Διὸς δὲ τοι ἄγγελός εἰμι). The meanings of these names are related to conveying messages: Ossa means "prediction", Iris means "speaking"²³.

¹⁹ Porphyrius, *Quaestionum Homericarum ad Iliadem pertinentium reliquiae*, ed. H. Schrader, Lipsiae 1880, p. 319-320, tr. R.R. Schlunk, *Porphyry: The Homeric Questions*, New York 1993, p. 71 – "Since, in fact, ὄσσα means 'divine voice', which he also called 'the messenger of Zeus' [*Iliad* 2, 93-94]: 'Among them ὄσσα blazed, urging them to go, the messenger of Zeus' – and since prophets are also messengers of Zeus and hear the gods' voice (ὄψ), which is ὄσσα [*Iliad* 7, 53]: 'for thus did I hear the ὄψ of the gods' [...]"

²⁰ R. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, Leiden 2010, p. 1118, s.v. ὄσσα, p. 1138, s.v. ὄψ 1.

²¹ Porphyrius, *Quaestionum Homericarum ad Iliadem pertinentium reliquiae*, ed. Schrader, p. 320-322, tr. Schlunk, p. 73.

²² Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary*, p. 1118, s.v. ὄσσομαι.

²³ Porphyrius, *Quaestionum Homericarum ad Odysseam pertinentium reliquiae*, ed. H. Schrader, Lipsiae 1890, p. 124 "Ἰροϋς is derived from εἶρω – 'to speak', as transmitting messages, and he takes his name from message". According to Homer, the male name

The only difference is that Iris is a messenger of gods, while Ossa spreads among people, but both “messengers of Zeus” embody the divine voice (θεία φωνή) and divine omen (θείη ὁμομή). Even if Ossa is only a personification, she signifies the voice of the god himself, a message that has not been conveyed by any human being, despite being on the lips of all humans.

To sum up, in Porphyry’s scholia to Homer, the formulas “messenger of Zeus” (Διὸς ἄγγελος) and “messengers of Zeus” (Διὸς ἄγγελοι) do not mean the same thing. The former formula (“messenger of Zeus”) refers to the content of a message from god, while the latter (“messengers of Zeus”) refers to special humans who are able to hear the divine voice and transmit it to other people, acting as some sort of “conveyors” or “communicators”.

3. What is a difference between angel, archangel and daemon in Porphyry’s *Letter to Anebo*

Porphyry’s *Letter to Anebo* has survived in fragments. Judging from these fragments, it can be assumed that it was a treatise on theurgy (i.e. Chaldean magic) and theosophy (i.e. barbarian theology) in the form of a letter addressed to Anebo, an Egyptian priest. Anebo did not reply. However, Iamblichus did write back on his behalf in the treatise *On the Egyptian Mysteries*, which has survived to this day, and from which comes the vast majority of the passages of Porphyry’s *Letter to Anebo*. The problem is that Iamblichus, a student of Porphyry since around 280, had a worldview different from that of his teacher and worked under a different philosophical system. He quoted excerpted passages from the *Letter to Anebo* to subject them to a thorough critique. Thus, the transmission of the text significantly complicates the analysis of the *Letter to Anebo*, including the passage in which Porphyry spoke of angels and archangels: “For, you ask what is the sign of the presence of a god, an angel, an archangel, a daemon, or of some archon or a soul”²⁴.

“Iros” (Ἴρος) is derived from the female name “Iris” (Ἴρις). Iris, in turn, was etymologized by Plato as “speaking” (εἶπεν). See Homer, *Odyssey* 18, 6-7 “[...] the young men of the place called him Iros, because he used to run errands for any one who would send him”; Plato, *Cratylus* 408b “Iris also seems to have got her name from εἶπειν, because she is a messenger” (the Loeb translations).

²⁴ Porphyrius, *Epistula ad Anebonem*, fr. 28a, ed. H. Saffrey – A.-P. Segonds, Paris 2012, p. 16-17: Ἐπιζητεῖς γάρ, τί τὸ γνῶρισμα θεοῦ παρουσίας ἢ ἀγγέλου ἢ ἀρχαγγέλου ἢ δαίμονος ἢ τινοσ ἄρχοντος ἢ ψυχῆς.

The passage itself is very short. However, it is followed by a discussion in which Iamblichus extensively answers the question about the appearance of gods, angels, archangels, daemons, archons and souls in which they appear to the theurgists.

But I now proceed to their manifestations. In what way do they differ? For, you ask, "what is the sign of the presence of a god, an angel, an archangel, a daemon, or of some archon or a soul?". So, then, in brief, I declare that their manifestations are in accordance with their true natures, their potentialities and activities. For as they are, so they appear to those invoking them; they display their activities and manifest forms in agreement with themselves and their own characteristic signs. But to distinguish them individually: the appearances of the gods are uniform; those of daemons are varied; those of angels are simpler than those of daemons, but inferior to those of the gods. Those of archangels are closer to divine principles, but those of archons, if you take these to be rulers of the cosmos, who administer the sublunary elements, are varied, but structured in an orderly manner; and, if they preside over matter, they are more varied and more imperfect than archangels; and the appearances of souls come in all sorts of forms. And again, those of gods shine benignly in appearance; while those of archangels are solemn, though at the same time gentle, milder than those of angels; and those of daemons are frightening. And as for those of heroes, even if they have been omitted in your inquiry, let there be an answer for truth's sake, because they are indeed gentler than the daemonic; those of archons are striking if they are in authority over the cosmos, and actually harmful and painful to the viewers if they are involved with matter. The appearances of souls are rather like the heroic, except that they are inferior to them. Once again, these appearances of the gods are wholly unchanging in regard to size, shape, formation, and all things connected with them; while those of archangels, though very close to those of the gods, fall short of full identity with them. And those of angels are inferior in turn to these, but unchanging. And those of daemons appear to the view at different times in different forms, the same forms appearing great and small. And further, those of such archons as are administrative are unchanging, but the appearances of archons immersed in matter change into many forms. Those of heroes resemble daemons, and those of souls are inferior in no small degree to the changeability of daemons²⁵.

²⁵ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 2, 3, ed. H. Saffrey *et al.*, Paris 2021, p. 52-54, tr. E.C. Clarke *et al.*, Atlanta 2003, p. 87-89.

The author referred to his own views or to the views of someone else, without citing anyone by name. Iamblichus thus explained that all the mentioned beings: gods, angels, archangels, daemons, archons and souls are visible, and that they appear to the theurgists who summon them and can distinguish between them. The gods are a light that is bright, symmetrical, pleasing to the eye, unchanging in size and shape. Archangels are similar to gods, but less perfect, look intimidating and gentle at the same time. Angels, although standing lower in the hierarchy than archangels, appear luminous, unchanging and friendly. Unlike the aforementioned, daemons are characterized by changeability; they can sometimes appear large, other times small and, above all, they induce fear. The ghosts of souls, the ever-popular wraiths, are also diverse and changeable. Regarding the archons, Iamblichus is uncertain; he supposes that Porphyry was referring to the rulers of the world, *κοσμοκράτορες*, governing the sub-lunar zone²⁶.

Iamblichus' discussion with Porphyry corresponds to the lecture on Neoplatonic demonology given by Porphyry in his treatise *On Abstinence* (2, 37, 1-2, 43, 2). Although the term "angel" does not appear there at all, there is nevertheless much account on the appearance of gods and daemons. Thus, the cosmic gods; the universe, stars and planets, are visible, as they are composed of soul and body²⁷, and their bodies are characterized by symmetry²⁸. This statement is reminiscent of the opinion cited by Iamblichus that the gods appear as light: bright, symmetrical and unchanging. Unlike the cosmic gods, daemons do not have solid bodies, hence they have been described as invisible to the eye and elusive to the other senses²⁹. However, every daemon has a subtle body, *πνεῦμα*, which allows it to appear and disappear, and can manifest itself in many forms by imprinting

²⁶ L. Brisson, *The Angels in Proclus: Messengers of the Gods*, in: *Neoplatonic Demons and Angels*, ed. L. Brisson et al., Leiden 2018, p. 224-225.

²⁷ Porphyrius, *De abstinence* 2, 37, 3, v. 2, ed. J. Bouffartigue et al., Paris 1979, p. 103, tr. G. Clark, *Porphyry: On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, London 2014, p. 70: "To the other gods, the world and the fixed and wandering stars – visible gods composed of soul and body [...]".

²⁸ Porphyrius, *De abstinence* 2, 39, 3, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 105-106, tr. Clark, p. 71 (with modification): "In the good daemons this is in symmetry, as in the bodies of visible gods [...]".

²⁹ Porphyrius, *De abstinence* 2, 37, 4, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 103, tr. Clark, p. 70: "So there remains the multitude of invisible gods, whom Plato called daemons without distinction"; 2, 39, 1, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 105, tr. Clark, p. 71: "[...] are unseen and absolutely imperceptible to human senses".

any shape – whatever it imagines – on its subtle body. Thus the subtle body, although transparent, makes the daemon visible³⁰. Furthermore, the author adds the following clarification: the visible manifestations of good daemons are characterized by symmetry, just like the heavenly bodies, while the phantoms of evil daemons are characterized by asymmetry³¹. This description of daemons in Porphyry is reminiscent of Iamblichus' remarks about the diversity and changeability of daemoniac phantoms, which, each time, appear to the eye in a different form. In turn, the appearance of angels, especially archangels, was compared by the Iamblichus' source to the unchangeability of gods, and likewise Porphyry compared the constancy of the good daemons to the perfect symmetry of the heavenly bodies.

By comparing Iamblichus' discussion with Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* to Origen's lecture on Neoplatonic demonology in Porphyry's treatise *On Abstinence*, it can be seen that both texts deal with the same doctrine, although the words are different: in *On Abstinence* only "daemons" are found, while in the *Letter to Anebo* are mentioned both "daemons" and "angels" or "archangels". From this it can be inferred that Iamblichus in *On the Egyptian Mysteries* (2, 3) reported the views on angels cited by Porphyry.

The question in the heading: "What is a difference between angel, archangel and daemon in Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo*" can be answered

³⁰ Porphyrius, *De abstinencia* 2, 39, 1, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 105, tr. Clark, p. 71: "All these, and those that have the opposite power, are unseen and absolutely imperceptible to human senses. For they are not clad in a solid body, nor do they all have one shape, but they take many forms, the shapes which imprint and are stamped upon their *pneuma* are sometimes manifest and sometimes invisible, and the worse ones sometimes change their shape". Cf. Porphyrius, *Ad Gaurum quomodo animetur fetus* 6, 1, ed. T. Dorandi, Paris 2012, p. 162-163, tr. M. Chase, *Porphyry: On how the Embryo Is Ensouled*, Paris 2012, p. 326: "[...] like the demons who, as the story goes, manifest the forms of their representations on the airy breath that is associated with them or connected with them, not by coloring it, but by manifesting the reflections of their imagination, in some ineffable way, on the surrounding air, as in a mirror [...]". Cf. Porphyrius, *Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes* 29, 9-14, v. 1, ed. L. Brisson *et al.*, Paris 2005, p. 328, tr. J. Dillon, *Porphyry: Pathways to the Intelligible*, v. 2, Paris 2005, p. 806: "But since in consequence of its attraction to the body it has projected from itself a particular reason-principle, in virtue of which it has acquired a relationship to a body of a certain type in which it lives, from this attraction an imprint deriving from its imaging faculty rubs off on its pneumatic vehicle, and thus it comes to be dragging along its shade [...]".

³¹ Porphyrius, *De abstinencia* 2, 39, 3, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 105-106, tr. Clarke, p. 71 (with modification): "In the good daemons this is in symmetry, as in the bodies of visible gods, but in the maleficent it is out of balance [...]".

that an angel is a good daemon, while an archangel differs from an angel by a higher degree of perfection.

4. “Transmitters” (πορθμεύοντες) in Porphyry’s *On Abstinence*

A lecture on Neoplatonic demonology in Porphyry’s *On Abstinence* (c. 270) echoes, as Hans Lewy³² supposes, the Neoplatonic work *On Daemons* published before 253³³. The author of the work, Origen the Egyptian³⁴, together with Plotinus, studied under Ammonius Saccas in Alexandria in 232-243. Despite this, Plotinus did not like Origen³⁵. Possibly because of this animosity, Porphyry in *On Abstinence* (2, 47, 1) did not mention the name “Origen” and attributed his teaching to some “Egyptian”, without naming the author. Origen’s lost treatise *On Daemons* was widely read among Plotinus’ disciples. Porphyry used it in both, *On Abstinence* and his *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, which in turn was used by Proclus Diadochus when he was working on his own *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, which has survived to this day. Diadochus often referred to Origen, writings of whom he knew, presumably, through Porphyry.

The lecture cited after the “Egyptian” in *On Abstinence* (2, 37, 1-2, 43, 2) concerns, among other things, a myriad of daemons³⁶. Daemons are defined as souls originating from the world soul (non-identical to the God Above All) and roaming the entire sublunar zone in an aethereal, translucent subtle body. They differ from humans in that they do not incarnate, so that they do not have solid bodies. All daemons are divided into evil and good. Evil daemons succumb to emotions (e.g. lust or anger), so that their subtle bodies become polluted and irregular, whereas good daemons control their emotions, so that their subtle bodies acquire a luminosity and

³² H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, Paris 1978, p. 497-508. See also: Ramelli, *Conceptualities of Angels*, p. 170-171.

³³ Origenes, *Fragmenta*, frs. 1-2, ed. K.-O. Weber, München 1962, p. 4.

³⁴ I am not sure whether Origen the Platonist was identical with Origen of Alexandria. See *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, v. 4, ed. R. Goulet, p. 806. If they were two, Porphyry wrote about both of them: he met Origen of Alexandria in Bostra or Caesarea Maritima, and besides he heard from Plotinus in Rome about Origen the Platonist. See Porphyrius, *De Porphyrii magistris*, test. 12T, in: *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, ed. Smith, p. 16-17; Origenes, *Fragmenta*, frs. 1-2, ed. Weber, p. 4.

³⁵ Origenes, *Fragmenta*, fr. 3, ed. Weber, p. 4.

³⁶ Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 37, 1-2, 43, 2, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 103-109, tr. Clark, p. 70-73.

symmetry similar to heavenly bodies³⁷. Porphyry listed several classes of good daemons, the most important of which, for the topic under discussion, is the following.

Among them must be numbered the “transmitters” (*porhmeuontes*), as Plato calls them, who report “what comes from people to the gods and what comes from the gods to people”, carrying up our prayers to the gods as if to judges, and carrying back to us their advice and warnings through oracles³⁸.

Quoted Plato used a similar, but nevertheless slightly different word in the *Symposium* (202e): not πορθμεύοντας (Porphyry), but διαπορθμεύον (Plato). Porphyry used the word πορθμεύω – “to carry”, from which Plato formed the compound διαπορθμεύω – “to transmit”, but etymologized Plato’s διαπορθμεύον as the act of transmitting messages (διαγγέλλοντας) from humans to gods and from gods to humans. The verb διαγγέλλω used by Porphyry contains the stem -αγγελ-, which is the noun ἄγγελος. The class of good daemons named by Porphyry as πορθμεύοντες – “transmitters” therefore performs the activity described by the verb διαγγέλλω – “to convey a message,” which is performed by ἄγγελοι – “angels”.

The quoted text is well matched by another passage from *On Abstinence*, in which the author speaks of good daemons that warn us – like “transmitters” do – against evil daemons.

[...] they forewarn, so far as they are able, of the dangers impending from the maleficent daemons, by revelations in dreams, or through an inspired soul, or in many other ways. And everyone would know and take precautions, if he could distinguish the signs they send; for they send signs to everyone, but not everyone understands what the signs mean, just as not everyone can read what is written, but only the person who has learned letters³⁹.

Therefore, not every person understands the message from the good daemons. One could say that this gift is probably only possessed by the “messengers of Zeus” mentioned by Porphyry in the scholia to the *Iliad*.

Porphyry, writing after Plato about the “gods” (plural) with whom we communicate via the “transmitters”, may have had in mind one of the two

³⁷ Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 38, 1-2, 39, 3, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 104-106, tr. Clark, p. 70-71.

³⁸ Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 38, 3, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 105, tr. Clark, p. 71.

³⁹ Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 41, 3-4, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 108, tr. Clark, p. 72.

categories he distinguished after the “Egyptian”: the incorporeal gods (“the intelligible gods”), who are the descendants of the supreme God (“the First God”, “the God Above All”), or the cosmic gods (“the gods within the heavens”), which include the planets and stars, fire and the world. To either of them the following offerings are made: hymns, understood as both verbal and non-verbal prayers⁴⁰, are sung to the incorporeal gods, while the first-fruits of crops, flowers and other bloodless sacrifices are offered the cosmic gods, who have bodies⁴¹.

But there is also another possibility. The author may have had in mind not the gods in the strict sense, but rather other daemons. For in the same treatise Porphyry called the daemons “beneficent gods” (ἀγαθοεργῶν θεῶν)⁴². Similarly, in the *Letter to Marcella*, he identified the “divine angels and good daemons” (ἄγγελοι θεῖοί τε καὶ ἀγαθοὶ δαίμονες)⁴³ with gods, and in *On the Styx* he noted that it is customary to refer to daemons by the name “gods”, although they are not actually gods⁴⁴. People commonly regard them as gods, because the daemons’ powers include controlling atmospheric phenomena and plant vegetation, as well as the patronage of livestock, health and culture⁴⁵. As we always have a certain business to them, we often pray for weather, health, fertility and other good things, while making prayers and offerings⁴⁶. The worship of daemons, including the good ones, requires blood⁴⁷. Unfortunately, the author of the treatise *On Abstinence* shied away from saying more about making bloody offerings to good daemons, which include “transmitters”.

To sum up: the “transmitters” of Porphyry’s treatise *On Abstinence* constitute one of several classes of the constitutional scheme of sublunary daemons. The term πορθμεύοντες refers directly to the daemons in the

⁴⁰ Porphyrius, *De abstinence* 2, 34, 4-5, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 101, tr. Clark, p. 69.

⁴¹ Porphyrius, *De abstinence* 2, 34, 5; 2, 36, 3; 2, 37, 3, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 101-103, tr. Clark, p. 69-70.

⁴² Porphyrius, *De abstinence* 2, 40, 2, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 107, tr. Clark, p. 72.

⁴³ Porphyrius, *Epistula ad Marcellam* 21, ed. É. des Places, Paris 1982, p. 118, tr. K. Wicker, *Porphyry the Philosopher to Marcella*, Atlanta 1987, p. 65.

⁴⁴ Porphyrius, *De Styge*, fr. 377F, in: *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, ed. Smith, p. 454.

⁴⁵ Porphyrius, *De abstinence* 2, 38, 2; 2, 40, 1, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 104, 106, tr. Clark, p. 70-71.

⁴⁶ Porphyrius, *De abstinence* 2, 37, 5; 2, 40, 2, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 104, 107, tr. Clark, p. 70-72.

⁴⁷ Porphyrius, *De abstinence* 2, 36, 5-6; 2, 42, 3, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 103, 109, tr. Clark, p. 70, 73.

Symposium, whose role Plato described as “intermediary” (διαπορθμεῦον). It seems (for there is no clarity on the matter) that the role of the “transmitters”, described after Plato as “conveying messages from people to gods and from gods to people”, referred not to “gods” in the strict sense, but to the divine daemons to whom people pray for health and prosperity. “Transmitters” would thus be the angels of the sublunar zone, mediating communication between humans and good daemons. They convey messages to all humans, but only chosen few can understand them. The chosen ones could be the “Zeus’ messengers” from Porphyry’s scholia on the *Iliad*.

5. Archangels (ἀρχάγγελοι) in Porphyry’s *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*

Porphyry returned to the subject of the constitutional scheme of sublunary daemons in his *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, written decades later, around 290 or 300. The commentary is preserved in substantial fragments. The majority of the text is derived from Proclus’ extensive *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* (c. 440). In fact, it is to Proclus that we owe an interesting passage on the archangels. It is a commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus* (24a-b), a myth about the class division of Athenian society around 9600 BC, when ancient Athens confronted Atlantis in a murderous battle. The philosopher of Athens listed six social classes: priests, demiurges, pastors, hunters, farmers and warriors. The philosopher of Tyre interpreted “demiurges” as the daemons in the sublunary sphere, divided into five types: priests, pastors, hunters, farmers and warriors, and his interpretation – similar to the demonology in the treatise *On Abstinence* – may have been a reminiscence of Origen’s work *On Daemons*, mentioned in previous chapter.

But it is worth noticing in this case how and in what way these classes are to be taken as present in the All. For the philosopher Porphyry sets it out like this. The priests correspond to the archangels in the heaven which are turned towards the gods whose messengers they are. The military correspond to the daemons who come down into bodies. The pastors correspond to those stationed over the flocks of “animals”, which they secretly explain as being souls that have missed out on human intelligence and have a condition similar to animals – for of humans too there is a particular “protector” of their flock and certain particular daemons some of whom watch over tribes, some cities, and some individual persons. The hunters correspond to those that hunt down

souls and confine them in the body – for there are some who also enjoy the pursuit of animals, the type that they suppose both Artemis to be and another host of hunt-oriented daemons with her. The cultivators correspond to those stationed over fruits. The whole of this constitutional scheme of sublunary daemons, distributed into many groups, was said to be “manufacturing” by Plato because he was concentrating on influence resulting from the stars that was either in existence already or being generated⁴⁸.

With regard to the above quotation, let us focus on the first class: the “priests”, about whom the Greek text says: τοὺς μὲν ἱερέας ἀναλογεῖν τοῖς ἐν οὐρανῷ ἀρχαγγέλοις τετραμμένοις πρὸς θεοῦς, ὧν εἰσιν ἄγγελοι (“The priests correspond to the archangels in the heaven which are turned towards the gods whose messengers they are”).

The phrase “in the heavens” (ἐν οὐρανῷ) means planetary spheres, so the “gods” (θεοῦς) towards whom the archangels are turned would be the cosmic gods – the seven planets. I base this interpretation on Nicomachus of Gerasa’s account (2nd century) in his work *Arithmetic* that, according to the Babylonian mages Hostanes and Zoroaster, the governors of the seven planetary spheres bore the titles of “angels” and “archangels”, even though they were – strictly speaking – daemons⁴⁹. Nicomachus referred specifical-

⁴⁸ Porphyrius, *In Platonis Timaeum commentariorum fragmenta*, fr. 17, ed. A.R. Sodano, Naples 1964, p. 10-11; Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, v. 1, ed. G. Van Riel, Oxford 2022, p. 229, tr. H. Tarrant, *Proclus: Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus Book I*, v. 1, Cambridge 2006, p. 249-250 (with modification).

⁴⁹ Ostanès, *Fragmenta*, fr. 10, ed. J. Bidez – F. Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés: Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspe d’après la tradition grecque*, v. 2, Paris, 1973, p. 283-284, tr. R. Waterfield, *The Theology of Arithmetic*, Grand Rapids 1988, p. 88: “It is called ‘forager’, because its structure has been collected and gathered together in a manner resembling unity, since it is altogether indissoluble, except into something which has the same denominator as itself; or because all things have brought their natural results to completion by its agency; or rather (what is more Pythagorean) because the most eminent Babylonians, and Hostanes and Zoroaster, authoritatively call the heavenly spheres ‘flocks’, either in so far as, alone among corporeal magnitudes, they are completely drawn around a single center, or because their connections are decreed even by scientific savants to also in a sense be called ‘clusters’; and they for the same reason call these clusters ‘flocks’ in their holy writings, and also ‘angels’ by insertion of the lost ‘g’; hence the heavenly bodies and spirits which are outstanding in each of these flocks are likewise called angels and archangels, and they are seven in number, with the consequence that the hebdomad is in this respect most truly a message”. See also: Cumont, *Les anges du paganisme*, p. 163-164.

ly to Zoroaster's books *On Nature*⁵⁰, which are otherwise known to have been four in number and dealt with Chaldean astrology and transmigration of souls⁵¹. These books were well known to Porphyry; he proved that they are pseudepigrapha, not written by Zoroaster in the sixth century BC, but faked much later, in the second century⁵².

The expression "which are turned towards the gods" (τετραμμένοις πρὸς θεούς) may mean that the archangels reflect the light of the heavenly bodies. According to Iamblichus, the archangels look similar to the cosmic gods, shining with a bright, constant, symmetrical light⁵³.

Similar views on angels were also contained in the *Chaldean Oracles* (Χαλδαϊκὰ λόγια), which have not survived beyond a number of excerpts in quotations in later Neoplatonists. The only thing known is that they were composed in hexameters, to imitate the style of Apollo's oracles, by Julian the Theurgist, son of Julian the Chaldean, author of the tractate *On Daemons*. Both Julians were active in Syria during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (121-180). Porphyry was the first philosopher to comment on Chaldean literature. He wrote a commentary on Julian-father's tractate *On Daemons* and was familiar with Julian-son's *Chaldean Oracles*⁵⁴.

One of the passages from the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 137) says: θέει ἄγγελος ἐν δυνάμει ζῶν – "shines as an angel, living in power"⁵⁵. The quotation concerns an authentically priestly life, which brings to mind the archangels in Porphyry's *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*. The Chaldean angel "shines" because his aetheric body resembles the heavenly body, which the angel heralds.

The second passage from the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 138): ἀγγελικῶ ἐνὶ χώρῳ – "in angelic space" is more difficult to interpret⁵⁶. The quotation was introduced into a discussion about priests that practice theurgy, who do not remain in the afterlife forever, but are born again into a human body. John Finamore links this passage to a legend passed down by the Byzantine occultist Michael Psellos about Julian the Theurgist, whose soul was "archangelic" (ἀρχαγγελικὴν) before he was born in Syria in the second

⁵⁰ Zoroastres, *Fragmenta*, fr. O 84, ed. Bidez – Cumont, p. 228.

⁵¹ Zoroastres, *Fragmenta*, fr. O 13, ed. Bidez – Cumont, p. 159-161.

⁵² Porphyrius, Πρὸς τὸ τοῦ Ζωροάστρου βιβλίον, fr. 369T, ed. Smith, p. 440-441.

⁵³ See chapter three above. See also: Cumont, *Les anges du paganisme*, p. 174-175.

⁵⁴ Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, p. 449-456.

⁵⁵ *Oracula Chaldaica*, fr. 137, ed. and tr. R. Majercik, Leiden 2005, p. 100-101.

⁵⁶ *Oracula Chaldaica*, fr. 138, ed. and tr. Majercik, p. 100-101.

century as the son of his father – Julian the Chaldean, as a priest and magus, and as the inspired author of the *Chaldean Oracles*⁵⁷. The most plausible explanation of “angelic space” would perhaps be a quotation from Plato’s *Timaeus* (42b), according to which every good person, after death, is given an abode in their star, that is, a planetary god, and spends the period between incarnations there. The use of the word *χωρος* – “space” or “place” in the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 138) was perfectly justified. The archangelic soul, just like the archangel, occupies a place in space because of having a subtle body⁵⁸, and all body – according to the well-known phrase of Porphyry – “is in a place”⁵⁹.

The accuracy of my analysis is confirmed by two excerpts from Iamblichus’ treatise *On the Soul*, which Andrew Smith included in his edition of Porphyry’s fragments. Unfortunately, both texts are damaged, and it is not clear who in fact supported these views (in one passage it is the “ancients” and “Platonists”, in the other it is not stated). One excerpt talks about rewards for the souls of dead people who are to be born again. The reward for souls is to be with gods, angels and other souls who are angelic (*ἀγγελικὰς ψυχὰς*)⁶⁰. The meaning of the passage, according to Finamore, fits with the “angelic space” interpretation above⁶¹. The second excerpt, which is even more complex, refers to what the rewarded souls do when they reside with gods and angels. These souls, according to the “ancients”: (a) administer the universe together with the gods, and (c) help the angels with the creation of the

⁵⁷ J.F. Finamore, “*In angelic space*”: *Chaldaean Oracles fr. 138 and Iamblichus*, in: *Unione e amicizia*, ed. M. Barbanti et al., Catania 2002, p. 426-427.

⁵⁸ *Oracula Chaldaica*, fr. 120, ed. Majercik, p. 94-95: *ψυχῆς λεπτὸν ὄχημα* – “delicate vehicle of the soul”; Porphyrius, *Sententiae* 29, 22-28, ed. Brisson, p. 328-330, tr. Dillon, p. 806: “For in fact it is in accordance with its disposition that it finds a body of a definite rank and assigned to areas proper to it: that is why, when its condition is sufficiently pure, it gravitates naturally to a body close to the immaterial, that is, an aetherial one, while if it proceeds down from reason to the projection of imagination, it inclines naturally to a solar body; and when it becomes feminine and subject to passion a lunar one is standing ready for it as suitable to its form [...]”.

⁵⁹ Porphyrius, *Sententiae* 1, 1, ed. Brisson, p. 308-309, tr. Dillon, p. 795: “All body is in a place [...]”.

⁶⁰ Porphyrius, *De anima*, fr. 454F, ed. Smith, p. 522; cf. Iamblichus, *De anima*, fr. 47, tr. J. Finamore – J.M. Dillon, Leiden 2002, p. 73, 207: “Concerning the souls’ reward, which they attain subsequently, when they depart from the body, «that they depart» to angels and angelic souls; this in general is the opinion of the ancients”.

⁶¹ Finamore, “*In angelic space*”, p. 430.

universe (ἀγγέλοις [...] συνδημιουργοῦσι τὰ ὅλα), while according to the “Platonists” these souls: (b) contemplate the gods’ order, and (d) rotate together with the angels or accompany them (συμπεριπολοῦσιν) – the verb συμπεριπολέω has both meanings: “to rotate with” and “to accompany”⁶². The souls of the distinguished dead reside in heaven, and although they are not angels, they belong to their order (τάξις) and perform the typical angelic functions⁶³.

“The ancients” portrayed the role of souls as more active, perhaps Iamblichus had in mind what Plato in the *Phaedrus* (246b) called the soul’s care of all things inanimate. It seems that the creation of the universe (συνδημιουργοῦσι τὰ ὅλα) is to be understood as shaping fate or influencing the fate of beings living in the world, as suggested by the analyzed quotation from Porphyry’s *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* (“[...] on influence resulting from the stars that was either in existence already or being generated”). On the other hand, the “Platonists” saw eschatological reward in contemplating the divine order and rotating with the angels, or planets. “Platonists” most likely means Porphyry. According to Porphyry, the soul resides in the planetary spheres after death and rotates with the planets due to the fact that it has an aetheric body (a type of subtle body), and the purpose of these rotations is to gradually reduce the density of the subtle body until it dissolves into the planetary spheres from which the subtle body originated⁶⁴. Elsewhere in the *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, Porphyry called this process “salvation” and a “return to the gods”⁶⁵. According to Proclus, a similar doctrine of the purification and illumination of souls by angels was contained in the *Chaldean Oracles*⁶⁶. Perhaps this doctrine inspired Porphyry.

⁶² Porphyrius, *De anima*, fr. 451F, ed. Smith, p. 520; cf. Iamblichus, *De anima*, fr. 53, tr. Finamore – Dillon, p. 75: “After the souls have been freed from generation, according to the ancients they administer the universe together with the gods, while according to the Platonists they contemplate the gods’ order. According to the former, in the same way they help the angels with the creation of the universe, while according to the latter they accompany them”.

⁶³ Finamore, “*In angelic space*”, p. 429.

⁶⁴ Porphyrius, *De anima*, fr. 453F, ed. Smith, p. 521.

⁶⁵ Porphyrius, *In Platonis Timaeum commentariorum fragmenta*, fr. 28, ed. Soda-no, p. 19.

⁶⁶ N. Spanu, *Proclus and the Chaldean Oracles*, London 2021, p. 152. Cf. *Oracula Chaldaica*, frs. 122-123, ed. and tr. Majercik, p. 94-97: τὴν ψυχὴν φέγγουσα πυρί – “By making the soul bright with fire”; πνεύματι θερμῷ κουφίζουσα – “lightening (the soul)

The inconsistency in the above passage from the *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* concerns the location of the archangels. The archangels are “in the heaven”, which means the planetary spheres, and at the same time belong to this “constitutional scheme of sublunary daemons”, which is below the planetary spheres. It is possible that we are dealing with some error resulting from the fact that the text was transmitted over a long period of time (Origen: 253, Porphyry: 290/300, Proclus: 440). The constitutional scheme of sublunary daemons certainly includes the “transmitters” but not the archangels.

To sum up: the archangels from the *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* serve the cosmic gods and are similar to the heavenly bodies. Presumably, there were supposed to be seven archangels, one for each of the seven planets. In the planetary spheres, along with the archangels, the souls of theurgists reside in the periods between incarnations. The theurgists, one of whom was Julian the Theurgist – the inspired author of the *Chaldean Oracles* – are in turn the conveyors of the archangelic message from the cosmic gods. The archangels (ἀρχάγγελοι) from the *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* resemble the “transmitters” (πορθμεύοντες) from the treatise *On Abstinence*, but should not be identified with them, as they operate in different regions of the cosmos (archangels – in the planetary spheres, “transmitters” – in the sublunary zone) and serve different superiors (archangels to the cosmic gods, “transmitters” to the good daemons).

6. “A number of angels” (ἀγγέλων ἀριθμός) in Porphyry's *On the Styx*

The treatise Περὶ Στυγός – *On the Styx*, possibly written in Sicily in 270, is preserved in excerpts in Johannes Stobaeus (5th century). One of these excerpts includes the author's translation from Bardaisan's *An Account of India*. Bardaisan of Edessa (154-222) wrote only in Syriac, but Porphyry who was born in Tyre in the Roman province Syria knew Syriac and was able to translate from Syriac into Greek. Bardaisan did not travel to India, but gained his knowledge of this faraway country from conversations with Indian envoys who arrived in Emesa during the reign of Emperor

with a warm breath”. In both sentences, implied subject is ἡ δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων μερίς – “the order of angels”.

Elagabalus (218-222). The envoys, referring to the Brahmins, told Bardaisan that on the highest mountain in the centre of their country – presumably the sacred Mount Meru (Sumeru) – there was a cave and a statue of a deity over five metres high inside. The statue is an upright standing figure with arms outstretched in the figure of a cross. The Indian deity – possibly Ardhanarishvara – is androgynous and cosmic. The left half of the statue is a female and has the Moon on its chest (“Selene” is feminine) and the right half is male and has an image of the Sun on its chest (“Helios” is masculine). The deity’s entire body is covered with bas-reliefs depicting parts of the universe, the sky and the earth, and in general everything that exists. A number of angels (ἀγγέλων ἀριθμὸν) are carved on the outstretched arms of the statue; unfortunately, the middle of the sentence about angels is damaged.

[...] about which Bardaisan writes the following (for I will put down what he says word for word): “They used to say that there is also a great natural (*automaton*) cave nearly at the middle of the earth in a most lofty mountain. In this cave there is a statue (*andrias*), which they guess [to be] ten or twelve cubits, standing upright and holding its hands outstretched in the figure of a cross. The right side of its face is masculine, while the left is feminine; and similarly the right arm, right foot and entire right side is masculine and the left is feminine, so that someone looking at it is struck by the mixture and how it is [possible] to see without separation the unlikeness of the two sides in a single body. On this statue, they say that a sun has been carved around the right breast and a moon around the left, and down the two arms «***» has been carved skillfully a number of angels and as many things as are in the world: heaven, mountains, the sea, rivers, ocean, plants, and animals, and simply as many things as exist”⁶⁷.

Despite the damage to the text, one may be tempted to attempt interpretation. The figure of the cosmic deity with the outstretched arms symbolizes the world soul which, according to Plato’s *Timaeus* (34b), is shaped like a cross inscribed in a circle: \circ . The expression “a number of angels”, without specifying this number, may refer to the number of individual souls which are parts of the world soul and which, according to the same dialogue, are equal to the number of stars (41d: ψυχὰς ἰσαρίθμους τοῖς

⁶⁷ Porphyrius, *De Styge*, fr. 376F, in: *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, ed. Smith, p. 448-449, tr. Johnson, *Religion and Identity*, p. 332.

ἄστροις). However, Plato did not specify the exact number. Later commentators on Plato wrote about a fixed number of souls and a perfect number, again without specifying which particular number they meant⁶⁸. The phrase ἀγγέλων ἀριθμὸν may thus refer to the astral angels who accompany the stars, just as the archangels in the *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* are the heralds of the planetary gods.

7. Three orders of angels (τρῆς τάξεις ἀγγέλων) in Porphyry's *On the Philosophy from Oracles*

Porphyry's work *Περὶ τῆς ἐκ λογίων φιλοσοφίας* – *On the Philosophy from Oracles* was, and still is, controversial. It was originally an anthology of oracles in three books. Excerpts, the attribution of which is debatable, have survived. The aim of this anthology may have been to attack Christianity in 302⁶⁹, to show that the detested religion brings nothing new to theology, as both monotheism and angel worship already existed in paganism⁷⁰. Ironically, the excerpts of the anthology were preserved actually due to Christian writers: Eusebius of Caesarea, St. Augustine, and the anonymous Monophysite who, in the fifth century, compiled *Theosophy*, known as *Theosophy of Tübingen*. To the latter we owe the excerpt, which begins:

Because Porphyry, in the second book of his *Philosophy from Oracles*, presents an oracle about the immortal god, which runs thus:
 “Unspeaking Father of immortals, eternal one, mystic one,
 Lord who rides upon the aetherial backs of revolving worlds,
 Where the strength of might has been established for you,
 Beholding all things and hearing with fair ears,
 Attend to your children, whom you yourself planted in season. (5)
 For your strength, great and golden, blankets over
 The world and starry heaven forever;
 Beyond which you have raised yourself, stirring with light,
 Stretching out your well-balanced Intellect in ever-flowing channels,

⁶⁸ Iamblichus, *De anima*, fr. 25, ed. and tr. Finamore – Dillon, p. 52-53.

⁶⁹ Simmons, *Universal Salvation*, p. 137.

⁷⁰ P.F. Beatrice, *Anonymi Monophysitae Theosophia: An Attempt at Reconstruction*, Leiden 2001, p. xxv-xxx.

Who the Intellect then conceives all of this, fashioning imperishable matter, (10)
The birth of which has been supposed, since you bound it with marks"⁷¹.

Much has been said about the god-aether who created the universe and the gods inside the sky: stars, planets, sun, moon, fire out of matter⁷². The oracle then moves on to the subject of angels, and the text seemed so compelling to Porphyry that he saw fit to comment on it briefly⁷³.

“Thence the generations of sacred rulers flow in
Around you, most regal and sole Sovereign of mortals
And father of blessed immortals; but those distant generations
Have arisen from you, and under your messages they pervade (15)
Each thing by your elder-born mind and might.
And besides, having made another third race of rulers
Who daily lead you, praising you with songs
Wanting to do your will, they sing hither”.

This oracle makes clear that there are three orders of angels: those ever present with God, those separate from him and sent for the purpose of bearing messages or doing acts of service, and those ever bearing his throne. The phrase “Who daily lead you”, means that they continually carry his throne. And the phrase, “They sing hither”, is used for “They sing until now”⁷⁴.

The oracle is composed of 19 hexametric verses, and it is not stated where they originated from. Perhaps the quoted oracle belonged to the collection of oracles of Apollo, since a similar oracle of Apollo from Oracles of Claros has been preserved, which is believed to have once been included in Porphyry's *On the Philosophy from Oracles*⁷⁵. Below I quote an oracle of Claros based on an inscription from Oenoanda (2nd century).

⁷¹ Porphyrius, *De philosophia ex oraculis*, fr. 325F, ed. Smith, p. 373. Cf. *Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, §27, ed. H. Erbse, Stuttgartiae 1995, p. 18-19, tr. Johnson, *Religion and Identity*, p. 340.

⁷² Porphyrius, *De abstinencia* 2, 36, 3, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 102, tr. Clark, p. 69-70: “But for the gods within the heaven, the wandering and the fixed (the sun should be taken as leader of them all and the moon second) we should kindle fire which is already kin to them”.

⁷³ Johnson, *Religion and Identity*, p. 87-88.

⁷⁴ Porphyrius, *De philosophia ex oraculis*, fr. 325F, ed. Smith, p. 373-374. Cf. *Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, §27, ed. Erbse, p. 19-20, tr. Johnson, *Religion and Identity*, p. 340.

⁷⁵ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, p. 21, 30, 32.

Self-generated, untaught, without-mother, un-moveable,
 not using a name, many-named, in-fire-dwelling,
 this is God. We angels are a small part of God.
 This [reply] to those who inquired about God, who he actually is:
 All-Seeing Aether is God, [the oracle] said, looking to him
 At dawn, pray, gazing towards the east⁷⁶.

The oracle of Claros is put into the mouths of angels (ἄγγελοι ἡμεῖς – “we angels”), who consider themselves “a small part of God” (μικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερίς). The God they are part of and on whose behalf they speak is the aether, the eternal fire. Angels are also aethereal, but they do not reveal more about themselves. The Oracle of Theosophy reveals more about angels by discussing, in turn, their nature (who they are), hierarchy (three ranks) and function (what they do).

The angels – nota bene: this term occurs not in the oracle but in Porphyry’s commentary on it – are the sons of the king (v. 12 and v. 17: ἀνάκτων), saints (v. 12: ἀγίων), born of a god (v. 15: ἐκ σέο μὲν γεγαῶσαι), the only father of the mortal and immortal (v. 13-14: μόνε θνητῶν ἀθανάτων τε πάτερ), whom he himself planted in season (v. 5: οὐς ἤρσας αὐτὸς ἐν ὥραις). Since their god and father is aether (v. 3: νότοις αἰθερίοις, v. 8: φωτί), they are aether too, or a “particle” of aether.

There are three generations (v. 12: γοναὶ) or types (v. 17: γένος), which the commentator calls “three ranks of angels” (τρεῖς τάξεις ἀγγέλων).

The first ones stay around god (v. 13: ἀμφὶ σέ), i.e. they surround the world, which is explained in the commentary as eternal being with the god (τῶν ἀεὶ τῷ θεῷ παρεστώτων). The second ones are far away from god (v. 14: αἱ δ’ εἰσὶν ἄτερθεν) and the god uses them as gophers (v. 15: ὑπ’ ἀγγελίαισι) for missions in the world that he has always ruled and about which he constantly thinks (v. 16: πρεσβυγενεῖ διάγουσι νόω καὶ κάρτει τῷ σῷ). Aether is an all-seeing and all-knowing god (v. 4: πάντ’ ἐπιδερκομένω καὶ ἀκούοντ’ οὔασι καλοῖς, cf. the oracle of Claros πανδερκ[ῆ θε]όν), thanks to the fact that he is constantly informed by messengers. Through them, he hears the prayers of his all children (v. 5: κλυθὶ τεῶν παιδῶν). An anonymous commentator described the function of messengers as that of typical angels, sent with messages and orders (εἰς ἀγγελίας καὶ διακονίας ἀποστελλομένων). The third generation stays “within” (v. 19: ἐσῶδε),

⁷⁶ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, p. 20. In the quoted text of inscription there is left an original spelling, for example unorthographic μικρὰ instead of orthographic μικρά.

where they constantly carry their god (v. 18: οἱ σε καθ' ἡμᾶρ ἄγουσιν) according to his own will (v. 19: βουλόμενόν ῥ' ἐθέλοντες) and sing laudatory hymns in praise of him (v. 18: ἀνυμνεῖοντες αἰοδαῖς, v. 19: αἰοιδιάουσι). The commentator interpreted this as them eternally bearing his throne (τῶν φερόντων ἀεὶ τὸν αὐτοῦ θρόνον).

Could the quoted oracle have expressed Porphyry's own views or partially agreed with them?

In Porphyry's system, the father of angels was not aether, but the world soul (ἡ τοῦ κόσμου ψυχῆ), distinct from the First God. The world soul was incorporeal, took charge of and moved the cosmic body, viz. the universe; therefore, it was divided into three parts based on the division of the universe into an outer sphere of fixed stars, seven inner planetary spheres and a central sublunar zone⁷⁷. Fate was divided in an analogous way, which is why the Middle Platonists identified the world soul with fate in the sense of substance⁷⁸. The children of the world soul were, inter alia, the daemons, i.e. the souls inhabiting the region below the moon, including the "transmitters" discussed above⁷⁹. The "transmitters" from the treatise *On Abstinence* identify with the second sons, distant from the god-aether, but used by him for missions in the world and to bring him news from the world, including news about people. In his *Letter to Marcella*, Porphyry called the good daemons following people "divine angels" (ἄγγελοι θεῶν)⁸⁰. The third generation of "the sons of the king", who are "within" so that they lift

⁷⁷ Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 37, 2, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 103, tr. Clark, p. 70: "Nor does the soul of the world, which by nature has three-dimensionality and self-movement; its nature is to choose beautiful and well-ordered movement, and to move the body of the world in accordance with the best principles. It has received the body into itself and envelops it, and yet is incorporeal and has no share in any passion".

⁷⁸ Pseudo-Plutarchus, *De fato* 2, 568E, ed. J. Hani, *Plutarque: Oeuvres morales*, v. 8, Paris 1980, p. 19, tr. P.H. de Lacy, *On Fate*, Cambridge 1959, p. 313-315: "Fate as a substance appears to be the entire soul of the universe in all three of its subdivisions, the fixed portion, the portion supposed to wander, and third, the portion below the heavens in the region of the earth [...]".

⁷⁹ Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 38, 2, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 104, tr. Clark, p. 70: "All the souls which, having issued from the universal soul, administer large parts of the regions below the moon [...]".

⁸⁰ Porphyrius, *Epistula ad Marcellam* 21, ed. des Places, p. 118, tr. Wicker, p. 65: "[...] divine angels and good daemons are overseers of events, and it is impossible to elude them. And as a result, since they have been persuaded that this is so, they are on guard to keep from stumbling in the events of life and always have in view the gods' inescapable scrutiny".

“his throne” is similar to the “archangels in heaven” of the *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*. “The sons of the king” eternally singing the praises of their father-aether, and similarly the “archangels in heaven” address the seven planetary gods of which they are heralds. “Within” is thus explained as “inside the sky”, while the eternal singing of hymns corresponds to the music of the planetary spheres, which produce harmonious sounds inaudible to human ears during their rotation⁸¹. This leaves the first generation of “the sons of the king” who are around their father and eternally stand by him. Their static nature (“perpetually standing”) contrasts with the dynamism of the third generation (“floating”, “singing”). The planets move in their proper orbits, while the stars do not move, but are attached to a moving sphere and rotate with it. The first rank, which “always stands” (τῶν ἀεὶ τῷ θεῷ παρεστῶτων), would therefore correspond to the sphere of fixed stars. Porphyry wrote about astral angels, following Bardaisan, in the work *On the Styx*⁸². Perhaps the fragment from *Against Christians* about angels (ἄγγέλους) who stand beside God and are not experiencing, immortal, indestructible by nature (τῷ θεῷ παρεστάναι ἀπαθείς καὶ ἀθανάτους καὶ τὴν φύσιν ἀφθάρτους) also refers to them, so that they may be considered gods (θεοὺς)⁸³.

The “three ranks of angels” in *On the Philosophy from Oracle* correspond to the trichotomy of the world soul in *On Abstinence*, which is divided into three parts and, according to the division, divides the universe into stars, planets and the atmosphere. The first rank of angels rotates along with the sphere of the fixed stars, the second rank accompanies the rotation of the planets and generates the music of the spheres. The third and lowest rank monitors everything that happens on the Earth and reports it to the spheres above the Moon.

⁸¹ In antiquity, the Pythagorean concept “music of the spheres” was commonly accepted, by Porphyry too. See Porphyrius, *Vita Pythagorae* 31, ed. É. des Places, Paris 1982, p. 50, tr. K.S. Guthrie, *The Life of Pythagoras*, Grand Rapids 1987, p. 129.

⁸² See chapter 6 above.

⁸³ Porphyrius, *Adversus Christianos*, fr. 76, ed. Harnack, p. 92, tr. Hoffmann, *Porphyry’s Against the Christians*, p. 84: “The immortal angels stand before God, those who are not subject to human passion, and these we speak of as gods because they are near the godhead”.

8. Angels (*angeli*) and daemons (*daemones*) in *De regressu animae*

At the end I will discuss seven testimonies from *The City of God* by St. Augustine despite their questionable source value. The bishop of Hippo repeatedly quoted Porphyry, whom he considered adept at theurgy, in the context of a Christian polemic against theosophy. These quotations are rather free paraphrases that the Father of the Church made up based on some Latin translation. It is unlikely, although often reported, that Augustine memorized Latin translations by the Roman philosopher Marius Victorinus (d. 363), which he read in Milan before his conversion to Christianity (386), and used that content 30 years later when working on *The City of God* (412-427). If this was really the case, the source value of those quotations would be even lower than it is generally believed. Moreover, Augustine was unsure which work of Porphyry formed the basis of the Latin translation: whether it was *Letter to Anebo* (10, 11: *ad Anebonem*), *Philosophy from Oracles* (10, 23: *divinis oraculis*, 10, 27: *oracula*, cf. 19, 23: ἐκ λογίων φιλοσοφίας) or the books “on the return of the soul” (10, 29: *de regressu animae*, 10, 32: *in primo iuxta ad finem de regressu animae libro*). The first two titles: *Letter to Anebo* and *On the Philosophy from Oracles* are well known from elsewhere, but no one apart from Augustine has heard of Porphyry’s work *On the Return of the Soul*. Perhaps Pier Franco Beatrice is correct in his view that all quotations in *The City of God* by St. Augustine come from only one work by Porphyry: *On the Philosophy from Oracles* and a new edition of the Greek and Latin fragments Περὶ τῆς ἐκ λογίων φιλοσοφίας is necessary⁸⁴.

All the relevant quotations can be found in the 10th book of *The City of God* in connection with Chaldean daemon worship (10, 9; 10, 26), the use of daemons in theurgy (10, 10), and the universal path of soul liberation as an alternative to Christianity (10, 32)⁸⁵. Augustine, like contemporary Christians (e.g. Origen of Alexandria) and non-Christians (e.g. Porphyry of Tyre), considered daemons to be real beings who influenced our lives, could contact us, help or harm us. Through black magic (here: theurgy) the assistance of evil daemons was used to perform spells. Augustine accused the Chaldean theurgists and their apprentice Porphyry of such condem-

⁸⁴ P.F. Beatrice, *Quosdam Platoniorum libros: The Platonic Readings of Augustine in Milan*, VigCh 43/3 (1989) p. 248-281; J.J. O’Meara, *Porphyry’s Philosophy from Oracles in Augustine*, Paris 1959.

⁸⁵ R. Russell, *The Role of Neoplatonism in St. Augustine’s De civitate Dei*, in: *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*, ed. H.J. Blumenthal, London 1981, p. 160-170.

nable practices. From the words of condemnation and contempt, one senses the concern of the bishop of Hippo for the faithful people not to convert from Christianity into theosophy like Porphyry, the infamous “sorcerer’s apprentice”, who was Christian when young, then a philosopher and theosophist, and a fierce enemy of the Good News towards the end of his life, a highly popular author after his death.

Let me discuss first the content of the relevant passages from *The City of God* without adding my own comments, and then assess their value for this study.

The most well-known and oft-quoted passage (fr. 293F Smith)⁸⁶ is about the difference between angels and daemons. Augustine answers for Porphyry that angels and daemons (*a daemonibus angelos*) differ in their place of occurrence: daemons inhabit the atmosphere, literally: “aerial places” (*aeria loca*), while angels stay in some “aethereal or empyrean zones” (*aetheria vel empyria*). All of them stay in zones: angels in higher ones and daemons in lower one, closer to the Earth, therefore we are able to make contact with daemons. However, this should under no circumstances be done – this is the common position of Porphyry and Augustine. In turn, the assistance of angels, although highly recommended, is beyond the reach of ordinary mortals.

The second passage (fr. 285F Smith)⁸⁷ concerns the division of angels, allegedly done by Porphyry himself. Angels are divided into those

⁸⁶ Porphyrius, *De regressu animae*, fr. 293F, ed. Smith, p. 332-333, tr. D. Zema *et al.*, *Saint Augustine: The City of God*, v. 2, Washington 1952, p. 133: “Thus, although he distinguishes demons from angels, explaining that the natural place of the former is in the air and that of the latter in the aether or empyrean, and, although he advises us to cultivate the friendship of some demon who can help us to rise at least a little from the earth after –death (without, of course, admitting that in any such way we can reach the heavenly company of the angels), nevertheless, he explicitly warns us to avoid the society of demons in a passage where he says that the soul undergoing punishment after death dreads to recall the worship of demons by whom it was ensnared”.

⁸⁷ Porphyrius, *De regressu animae*, fr. 285F, ed. Smith, p. 321-323, tr. Zema, p. 164-165: “I do not know but, somehow, it seems to me that Porphyry felt a little ashamed of his friends, the theurgists. For, he had glimpses of much that I have been saying, yet he never came out frankly against polytheism in defense of this faith. In fact, he declared that there are two kinds of angels: those who come down to earth to announce divine truths to theurgists; and others who reveal on earth such truths as the will and majesty and mystery of the Father. But how in the world, then, can we believe that those angels whose ministry it is to declare the will of the Father should desire us to be subject to anyone but Him whose will they announce to us? No wonder that even our Platonist himself rightly counsels us

who descend from heaven and reveal divine things to priests (*qui deorsum descendentes hominibus theurgicis divina pronuntient*), and those who are already on the Earth and proclaim the attributes and dimensions of the Father: height and depth (*qui in terris ea, quae patris sunt, et altitudinem eius profunditatem que declarent*). The former are emissaries who announce the will of the Father (*qui patris adnuntiant voluntatem [...] declarare voluntatem patris*). The emissaries were of particular interest to Augustine, probably because he associated them with biblical angels. Therefore, he added that Porphyry divided emissaries into those sent by God the Father and those brought by theurgists through black magic. There are, in total, three categories of angels: the first that permanently stays on the Earth, the second that occasionally visits theurgists on the Earth, and the third that comes down to the Earth only at the command of God the Father. Rangar Cline⁸⁸ believes that the second category is evil daemons who pretend to belong to the third category – the real angels sent by God – before theurgists.

Cline's interpretation is confirmed by another passage in which Augustine clearly states that the daemons engaged in all kinds of magic like to appear "using the names of angels" (*sub nominibus angelorum*), which means that they are not real angels⁸⁹. The three subsequent passages⁹⁰ concern theurgy as a nobler form of magic that seeks to establish contact with

to imitate rather than invoke them. [...] Why, then, are you still afraid, you a philosopher, to speak frankly against these powers that are jealous of true virtues and of the gifts of the true God. You have taken a first step by distinguishing between angels who announce the will of the Father and those angels who can be induced by I know not what magic to come down to the theurgists".

⁸⁸ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, p. 10.

⁸⁹ Porphyrius, *De regressu animae*, fr. 286F, ed. Smith, p. 323, tr. Zema, p. 131-132: "These miracles, and many others of the same kind which would take too long to recall, occurred in order to encourage the worship of the one true God and to put a stop to polytheistic practices. Moreover, they were wrought by simple faith and pious trust, not by spells and incantations inspired by the sacrilegious curiosity of the art of magic-vulgarly called goetia and, more politely, theurgy. The pretense here is that we should distinguish between those whom ordinary people call sorcerers, and who are to be condemned because they deal in illicit arts connected with necromancy, and those others whom we are supposed to praise as theurgical experts. The fact is that both are slaves of the same deceitful rites of demons passing under the name of angels".

⁹⁰ Porphyrius, *De regressu animae*, fr. 290F, ed. Smith, p. 328-330, fr. 290aF, ed. Smith, p. 330, fr. 294F, ed. Smith, p. 334-335, tr. Zema, p. 132-135.

gods and angels (rather than daemons), a sort of link between people, angels and gods. Much has been said about the purification of the soul as a necessary condition for the contemplation of angels and gods. Augustine admits that Porphyry did not consider theurgy to be a suitable method of soul's purification.

The last passage (fr. 302F Smith)⁹¹ is about the cult of angels by certain nations, which, however, have not entered the "universal path of liberation of the soul" (*animae liberandae universalem viam*), unknown in the history of humanity so far. It is not stated which nations are referred to and why the worship of angels was not sufficient for their salvation.

Moving on to assessing the substantive value of those passages, let me emphasize once again that the original Greek text was not known to Augustine and has not survived to this day. Therefore, the evaluation of those fragments is necessarily conjectural.

The passage where there is the division between daemons and angels (fr. 293F Smith) is a good testimony to Porphyry's demonology and angelology, despite some confusion of terms. In the *Letter to Anebo*, Porphyry wondered what was the difference between a daemon and an angel in terms of visible manifestation. The differences in their appearance are because daemons have subtle bodies made of air, so they are translucent and changeable, while angels have aetheric bodies that shine with a pure, bright, constant glow – like the celestial bodies. In simple terms, one can state, as Augustine did, that daemons inhabit the atmosphere while

⁹¹ Porphyrius, *De regressu animae*, fr. 302F, ed. Smith, p. 347, tr. Zema, p. 179-180: "This religion constitutes the single way for the liberation of all souls, for souls can be saved by no way but this. This is, if I may so speak, the King's highway which alone leads to a kingdom, not tottering on some temporal height, but secure on the firm foundations of eternity. Porphyry, however, says, toward the end of the first book of his *Return of the Soul*, that he has not yet come across the claim, made by any school of thought, to embrace a universal way for the liberation of the soul – certainly, not one taken from any genuine philosophy, or from the code or creed of India, or from the initiation rite of the Chaldeans, or from any other religion. And so far, he adds, no historical research has brought any such universal way of his attention. [...] How, in fact, can it be the truest philosophy if it does not include this way? For, what does a universal way for the liberation of the soul mean except a way by which all souls are liberated and without which, therefore, no soul is liberated? When he adds: 'Or from the code or creed of India, or from the initiation rite of the Chaldeans, or from any other religion', he testifies explicitly that neither in what he learned from the Indians nor in what he learned from the Chaldeans did he find this universal way for the liberation of the soul; yet he had to tell us that it was from the Chaldeans that he got those divine oracles which he keeps mentioning so frequently".

angels stay in the higher regions of the cosmos: the heavenly spheres. The division into daemons staying in the atmosphere and angels in the aether and the empyrean realm corresponds to Porphyry's division of angels into three ranks in his *On the Philosophy from Oracles*: one in the atmosphere, another in the planetary spheres, and other in the sphere of the fixed stars. Although the use by Augustine of the Chaldean term *empyria* (Greek ἐμπύριον) is not correct⁹², the expression *aetheria vel empyria* – “aethereal or empirical” makes it clear that the writer did not mean the noetic, suprasensory sphere (which is what the Chaldean term ἐμπύριον meant), but the sphere of the fixed stars, higher than the planetary spheres. The warning not to make contact with daemons found in this passage corresponds to the following excerpt from Porphyry's *On the Philosophy from Oracles* (not yet quoted in this article): “Turn your mind to the divine king, nor converse with lesser spirits upon the Earth; this I have told you”⁹³. The term πνεύματα used in the oracle – “spirits”, which is the plural of πνεῦμα – “air”, “whiff”, “breath”, “waft”, “spirit”, refers precisely to daemons in aerial places (*aeria loca*), as formulated by the bishop of Hippo.

The second passage that contains the division of angels (fr. 285F Smith) seems to apply also to daemons. Angels proclaiming the glory of God in the world are good daemons (since, according to the above division, daemons, not angels, dwell in our world). Similarly, the angels brought to the Earth by theurgists are not real angels but evil daemons who pretend to be angels or gods. Porphyry wrote a lot about good and evil daemons found in the sublunar zone in his treatise *On Abstinence*. However, the emissaries who herald and announce the Father's will seem to be real angels. Hans Lewy⁹⁴ attributes to Porphyry's *On the Philosophy from Oracles* the following oracle by Apollo, included by Erbse in the *Theosophy of Tübingen* but not found in the fragments in Smith's edition.

⁹² Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, p. 137-138, 222 with note 188. According to the *Chaldaean Oracles* and related literature such as Proclus' commentaries, the universe was divided into three concentric spheres: ἐμπύριον αἰθέριον ὑλαῖον – “empyrean, aethereal, material”, of which “material” was to denote sublunary world, “aethereal” sublunary world, planetary world, and stellar world, and “empyrean” all worlds and intelligible gods above.

⁹³ Porphyrius, *De philosophia ex oraculis*, fr. 325aF, ed. Smith, p. 375. Cf. *Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, §30, ed. Erbse, p. 21, tr. Johnson, *Religion and Identity*, p. 341.

⁹⁴ Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, p. 29-30.

We are the swift helpers of the pious mortals,
 we whose lot it is always to abide scattered in the drifting world.
 Quickly we hasten towards the afflicted men,
 obeying the perdurable resolutions of our Father⁹⁵.

The text describes the planetary angels – the same who lift the throne of God in Porphyry’s *On the Philosophy from Oracles* and who are called “archangels” in his *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*. Based on the oracle quoted above, it appears that the Father could also use the archangels as his emissaries bringing comfort to pious people. Pious people are very similar to Augustine’s “priestly men” (*hominibus theurgicis*), to whom angels descend from above (*qui deorsum descendentes*). The division of angels in this testimony is thus associated with the division between angels and daemons in the previous one. The angels proclaiming God’s glory on the Earth and the angels contacting the theurgists are the good and evil daemons living in the atmosphere, while the angels descending to the priests at God’s command are the angels from the aether.

The last passage (fr. 302F Smith) concerns the worship of daemons, not angels. There is enough reference material to come to such a conclusion, including the already quoted passage from Porphyry’s *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*: “[...] for of humans too there is a particular ‘protector’ of their flock and certain particular daemons some of whom watch over tribes, some cities, and some individual persons”. There are also other texts that can be quoted to support the above, including Celsus’ *On the True Doctrine*, dating from around 178⁹⁶. Adopting this conjecture allows us to understand Augustine’s text correctly. The national cult of daemons could not become a universal path to salvation of the soul for any nation.

Despite my reservations about *De regressu animae*, I rate Augustine’s Latin paraphrases in *The City of God* quite highly. These testimonies are consistent with the original Greek writings and fragments of Porphyry’s works. The bishop of Hippo, following some Latin translation of Porphy-

⁹⁵ *Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, §34, ed. Erbse, p. 23, tr. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, p. 29. The phrase *περὶ κόσμον ἀλήμονα* – “in the drifting world” stands for the planetary world, see Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, p. 30 with note 79.

⁹⁶ Celsus, *Verbum Verum* 5, 25, ed. R. Bader, *Der Alethes Logos des Kelsos*, Stuttgart 1940, p. 130, tr. E.J. Hoffmann, *Celsus, On the True Doctrine*, Oxford 1987, p. 87: “[...] from the beginning of the world different parts of the earth were allotted to different guardians, and, its having been apportioned in this manner, things are done in such a way as pleases the guardians”. See also: Johnson, *Religion and Identity*, p. 87 with note 192.

ry's writings, articulated a division of angels and daemons based on their place in the universe into daemons in the atmosphere and angels in the heavenly spheres. Furthermore, he confirmed that, according to Porphyry, angels from the planetary spheres could be sent by God the Father to priests and pious people on the Earth. All Augustine's testimonies about Porphyry's angelology occur in the context of theosophy and theurgy, viz. Chaldean theology and magic, which brings them closer to such writings of Porphyry as *On the Philosophy from Oracles* and *Letter to Anebo*. Their titles were familiar to Augustine.

9. Conclusions

This article is an analysis of selected passages from the writings by Porphyry of Tyre dated to the years 270-302: *On Abstinence*, *On the Styx*, *Letter to Anebo*, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, *On the Philosophy from Oracles*, and his scholia to the *Iliad*, which I am not able to date, as well as the testimonies by St. Augustine known under the title *De regressu animae*. The study of those texts allows to reconstruct the angelology of Porphyry within his philosophical system. The system on which the Phoenician philosopher worked was standard for Neoplatonism in the third century, similar to those adopted by the Egyptian philosophers: Origen and Plotinus.

Porphyry taught that reality consisted of three levels: God Above All, his descendants – the intelligible gods and the world soul, which governed the cosmic body⁹⁷. In his system, angels and archangels were found at the level of the world soul and, in turn, the world soul was identified with fate in terms of substance and was divided into three parts: the sphere of the fixed stars, the planetary spheres, and the atmosphere around the Earth. By analogy, the angels were also divided into three orders: the divine angels, the archangels, and the so-called “transmitters”. The latter, as occupying places in the atmosphere, belonged to the great scheme of sublunary daemons, thus they were daemons. There was no difference in essence between angels and daemons as both were partial souls, that is: parts of the world soul.

⁹⁷ Porphyrius, *De abstinence* 2, 37, 1-2, 38, 4, ed. Bouffartigue, p. 103-105, tr. Clark, p. 70-71. See also: *Filosofia tardoantica: storia e problemi*, ed. R. Chiaradonna, Roma 2012, p. 259-261; Osek, *Reinkarnacja u Porfiriusza z Tyru*, p. 521-523; E. Osek – M.A. Komsta, *Porfiriusz z Tyru: Sentencje czyli drogi do świata ponadzmysłowego*, Lublin 2023, p. 103-111.

The hierarchy of angels in Porphyry's system literally occupies a place in the universe, as all angels are endowed with subtle bodies and all body is in a place. The subtle bodies of the two higher orders resemble the heavenly bodies: the stars and planets, since they are made from aether. The aetheric bodies of the angels are bright and symmetrical, and the radiance with which they shine is constant. In contrast, sublunary angels: "ferryman" daemons, whose subtle bodies are made of air, tend to change shape and size, appear in any form, appear and disappear.

All angels are partial souls, just like daemons, gods, and humans. They differ from daemons in their place of occurrence (angels live in the heavenly spheres, whereas daemons in the atmosphere), from cosmic gods in that they do not have solid bodies (stars and planets have solid bodies, but daemons do not), and from humans in that they do not reincarnate (humans souls return to the Earth every millennium, while daemons fly in the atmosphere). The human souls, as they wander the universe in the long periods between incarnations, differ little from daemons, angels, and archangels, and can join daemons in the atmosphere or archangels in the planetary spheres.

It remains to say a few words about the tasks and functions of angels in Porphyry's system. Angels, like daemons, take care of souls incarnating or coming out of incarnation. Daemons, especially those with the epithet "evil", supervise incarnations into human or animal bodies, and thus perform a "catagogic", transporting function. In contrast, angels help the souls of the dead to purify their subtle bodies and return to the planetary spheres, where the souls spend their time between incarnations. The function of angels can be called anagogic, soteriological. Moreover, angels and archangels help living people in dangerous situations, but only some: priests and prophets can notice and interpret angelic signs. In his scholia to the *Iliad*, Porphyry described such people using the Homeric formula "Zeus' messengers", as if they were angels on the Earth. Only they are able to understand the divine message, metaphorically called "Zeus' messenger".

Porphyry's angels seem to be part of the Medioplatonic model of the universe, which, like the cosmic soul, is divided into stars, planets, and the scheme of sublunary daemons. In Platonism and Medioplatonism, there were no angels in the celestial spheres occupied by the cosmic gods. In the third century, Neoplatonists added divine angels to the astral gods and archangels to the planetary gods. The surviving texts clearly indicate Porphyry as the creator of that concept. Therefore, the thesis by Cumont that Porphyry,

a Phoenician by origin, was the father of Neoplatonic angelology seems fully justified. The analysis of the related texts in this article makes it possible to formulate a hypothesis about the genesis of Neoplatonic angels. Porphyry did not borrow them from the Old and New Testaments, but from the Syriac story *An Account of India* by Bardaisan (3rd century) and, above all, from Greek esoteric writings (2nd century), such as *On Nature* by Zoroaster, Apollo's prophecies in hexameters, and the *Chaldean Oracles* composed by Julian the Theurgist in the style of Apollo's oracles. Porphyry was fascinated by that type of literature and was the first to collect, comment on, and publish those works. It seems that Porphyry's double education (he was both a philologist and philosopher) determined the introduction of angelology into Neoplatonism of the third century, and also inspired Christian theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries to become more interested in angels and oracles. It can be stated that Porphyry's angels come not so much from oriental religions, but from the esoteric literature of the Roman period.

Bibliography

Sources

- Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei libri XXII*, v. 1-2, ed. B. Dombart – A. Kalb, CCSL 47-48, Turnholti 1955, tr. D. Zema et al., *Saint Augustine: The City of God*, v. 1-3, Washington 1950-1954.
- Celsus Philosophus, *Verbum Verum*, ed. R. Bader, *Der Alethes Logos des Kelsos*, Stuttgart 1940, tr. E.J. Hoffmann, *Celsus, On the True Doctrine: A Discourse against the Christians*, Oxford 1987.
- Eusebius Caesariensis, *Historia ecclesiastica*, v. 1-4, ed. G. Bardy, SCh 31, 41, 55, 73, Paris 1952-1960, tr. C.F. Cruse, *Eusebius: Ecclesiastical History*, Peabody 2004.
- Iamblichus Chalcidensis, *De anima*, ed. and tr. J. Finamore – J.M. Dillon, Leiden 2002.
- Iamblichus Chalcidensis, *De mysteriis*, ed. H. Saffrey et al., Paris 2021, tr. E.C. Clarke et al., Atlanta 2003.
- Oracula Chaldaica*, ed. and tr. R. Majercik, Leiden 2005.
- Origenes Platonicus, *Fragmenta*, ed. K.-O. Weber, München 1962, p. 3-12.
- Ostanes, *Fragmenta*, ed. J. Bidez – F. Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés: Zoroastre, Ostanes et Hystaspe d'après la tradition grecque*, v. 2, Paris, 1973, p. 264-356.
- Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, ed. A. Smith, Lipsiae 1993.
- Porphyrius Tyrius, *Ad Gaurum quomodo animetur fetus*, ed. T. Dorandi, Paris 2012, p. 121-211, tr. M. Chase, *Porphyry: On How the Embryo Is Ensouled*, Paris 2012, p. 317-343.

- Porphyrius Tyrius, *Adversus Christianos: Fragmenta*, ed. A. von Harnack, Berlin 1916, tr. R.J. Hoffmann, *Porphyry's Against the Christians: The Literary Remains*, New York 1994.
- Porphyrius Tyrius, *De abstinentia ab esu animalium*, v. 1-3, ed. J. Bouffartigue *et al.*, Paris 1977-1995, tr. G. Clark, *Porphyry: On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, London 2014.
- Porphyrius Tyrius, *De philosophia ex oraculis*, ed. A. Smith, *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, Lipsiae 1993, p. 351-407, tr. A.P. Johnson, *Religion and Identity in Porphyre of Tyre: The Limits of Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2013, p. 338-341.
- Porphyrius Tyrius, *De regressu animae*, ed. A. Smith, *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, Lipsiae 1993, p. 319-350.
- Porphyrius Tyrius, *De Styge*, ed. A. Smith, *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, Lipsiae 1993, p. 442-461, tr. A.P. Johnson, *Religion and Identity in Porphyre of Tyre: The Limits of Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2013, p. 331-338.
- Porphyrius Tyrius, *Epistula ad Anebonem*, ed. H. Saffrey – A.-P. Segonds, Paris 2012.
- Porphyrius Tyrius, *Epistula ad Marcellam*, ed. É. des Places, Paris 1982, p. 87-127, tr. K. Wicker, *Porphyry the Philosopher to Marcella*, Atlanta 1987.
- Porphyrius Tyrius, *In Platonis Timaeum commentariorum fragmenta*, ed. A.R. Sodano, Naples 1964.
- Porphyrius Tyrius, *Quaestionum Homericarum ad Iliadem pertinentium reliquiae*, ed. H. Schrader, Lipsiae 1880, tr. R.R. Schlunk, *Porphyry: The Homeric Questions*, New York 1993.
- Porphyrius Tyrius, *Quaestionum Homericarum ad Odysseam pertinentium reliquiae*, ed. H. Schrader, Lipsiae 1890.
- Porphyrius Tyrius, *Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes*, v. 1, ed. L. Brisson *et al.*, Paris 2005, p. 305-379, tr. J. Dillon, *Porphyry: Pathways to the Intelligible*, v. 2, Paris 2005, p. 795-835.
- Porphyrius Tyrius, *Vita Pythagorae*, ed. É. des Places, Paris 1982, p. 36-86, tr. K.S. Guthrie, *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, Grand Rapids 1987, p. 123-135.
- Proclus Diadochus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria librum primum*, v. 1, ed. G. Van Riel, Oxford 2022, tr. H. Tarrant, *Proclus: Commentary on Plato's Timaeus Book 1*, v. 1, Cambridge 2006.
- Pseudo-Iamblichus, *Theologoumena arithmeticae*, ed. V. de Falco, Lipsiae 1922, tr. R. Waterfield, *The Theology of Arithmetic: On the Mystical, Mathematical and Cosmological Symbolism of the First Ten Numbers Attributed to Iamblichus*, Grand Rapids 1988.
- Pseudo-Plutarchus, *De fato*, ed. J. Hani, *Plutarque: Oeuvres morales*, v. 8, Paris 1980, p. 3-35, tr. P.H. de Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia*, v. 7: *On Fate*, Cambridge 1959, p. 301-359.
- Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, ed. H. Erbse, Stutgardiae 1995.

Zoroastres, *Fragmenta*, ed. J. Bidez – F. Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés: Zoroastre, Ostanes et Hystaspe d'après la tradition grecque*, v. 2, Paris 1973, p. 7-263.

Studies

- Akcaý N., *Daimones in Porphyry's On the Cave of the Nymphs*, in: *Neoplatonic Demons and Angels*, ed. L. Brisson et al., Leiden 2018, p. 140-159.
- Beatrice P.F., *Quosdam Platoniorum libros: The Platonic Readings of Augustine in Milan*, "Vigiliae Christianae" 43/3 (1989) p. 248-281.
- Beatrice P.F., *Anonymi Monophysitae Theosophia: An Attempt at Reconstruction*, Leiden 2001.
- Beekes R., *Etymological Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, Leiden 2010.
- Brisson L., *What Is a Daimon for Porphyry?*, in: *Neoplatonic Demons and Angels*, ed. L. Brisson et al., Leiden, 2018, p. 86-101.
- Brisson L., *The Angels in Proclus: Messengers of the Gods*, in: *Neoplatonic Demons and Angels*, ed. L. Brisson et al., Leiden 2018, p. 209-230.
- Cline R., *Ancient Angels: Conceptualizing Angeloi in the Roman Empire*, Leiden 2011.
- Cumont F., *Les anges du paganisme*, "Revue de l'histoire des religions" 72 (1915) p. 159-182.
- Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, v. 1-8, ed. R. Goulet, Paris 1989-2018.
- Dillon J., *Philo's Doctrine of Angels*, in: *Two treatises of Philo of Alexandria: a commentary on De gigantibus and Quod Deus sit immutabilis*, ed. D. Winston – J. Dillon, Chico 1983, p. 197-205.
- Edwards M.J., *Origen against Plato*, Aldershot 2002.
- Filosofia tardoantica: storia e problemi*, ed. R. Chiaradonna, Roma 2012.
- Finamore J.F., "In angelic space": *Chaldaean Oracles fr. 138 and Iamblichus*, in: *Unione e amicizia*, ed. M. Barbanti et al., Catania 2002, p. 425-432.
- Greenbaum D.G., *Porphyry of Tyre on the Daimon, Birth and the Stars*, in: *Neoplatonic Demons and Angels*, ed. L. Brisson et al., Leiden 2018, p. 102-139.
- Johnson A.P., *Religion and Identity in Porphyry of Tyre: The Limits of Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2013.
- Lewy H., *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism, Magic, and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*, ed. M. Tardieu, Paris 1978.
- Longosz S., *Opiekuncza funkcja aniolow w nauce Ojcow Kosciola*, in: *Ksiega o aniolach*, ed. H. Oleschko, Krakow 2002, p. 150-238.
- Muehlberger E., *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity*, Oxford 2013.
- Neoplatonic Demons and Angels*, ed. L. Brisson et al., Leiden 2018.
- O'Meara J.J., *Porphyry's Philosophy from Oracles in Augustine*, Paris 1959.
- Osek E., *Reinkarnacja u Porfiriusza z Tyru: z dodaniem traktatu Do Gaurosa, czyli jak dusza ozywia embriony, oraz fragmentow*, Warszawa 2023.
- Osek E. – Komsta M.A., *Porfiriusz z Tyru: Sentencje czyli drogi do swiata ponadzmyslowego*, Lublin 2023.

- Ramelli I., *Conceptualities of Angels in Imperial and Late Antiquity: Nature and Bodies of Angels, Degrees of Corporeality, and Comparative Angelologies/Daemonologies in 'Pagan' and Christian Platonism*, in: *Inventer les anges*, ed. D. Lauritzen, Paris 2021, p. 115-172.
- Russell R., *The Role of Neoplatonism in St. Augustine's De civitate Dei*, in: *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*, ed. H.J. Blumenthal, London 1981, p. 160-170.
- Simmons M.B., *Universal Salvation in Late Antiquity: Porphyry of Tyre and the Pagan-Christian Debate*, Oxford 2015.
- Spanu N., *Proclus and the Chaldean Oracles: A Study on Proclean Exegesis, with a Translation and Commentary of Proclus' Treatise On Chaldean Philosophy*, London 2021.