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**The Angelology of the New Testament. A perspective of
Contemporary Biblical Theology**

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Scientific Adviser and coordinator: Priest Professor Doctor in Theology Stelian
Tofan

Doctoral candidate: Victor Constantin Mărușoiu

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Introduction

The discovery of the Holy Angels in the Holy Scripture and the continuity of their argumentation in the context of the Holy Tradition reveal the necessity of considering, reconsidering, revisiting and maintaining the angelology element at a place of highest and permanent importance in the realm of Christian faith. The presence of the Holy Angels in the Creation is discovered and presented by the showing of the angels, which actually represent real facts that are steeped in history. The angels are depicted as real forms of existence throughout the history of mankind in almost each of the books belonging to the Holy Scripture.

The existence of numerous biblical references to the angels stands as testimony of the fact that this subject bears a permanent and utmost importance in the biblical research in general. The angels are mentioned in several places in the books of the Old Testament, but also in the writings of the New Testament. There are 113 references to them in the Old Testament (Genesis, Exit, Numbers (Numerii), Judges, Kings, Chronicles (Paralipomena), Psalms, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Daniel, Osei, Zechariah). There are 154 references to the angels in the New Testament, out of which 52 are made in the four Gospels (Mathew, Marc, Lucas, John), another 32 references being made in the context of the Epistles and 75 in the Apocalypse.

The angels are spiritual, non-material, rational and free entities that obey God and willingly follow His will, being messengers and workers in the Creation. They are moral rapporteurs who guide the people towards the path of the Eschaton. There are cases when even certain humans are defined by using the determiner “angel”: the Holy Apostles (Lc. 9, 52), John the Baptist (Mt. 11, 10), Moses (Num. 20, 16), the prophets, and even certain priests (Apoc. 1, 20).

The term “angel” is to be found in the majority of religions, cultures as well as in the forms of manifestation of ancient beliefs, defining an intermediary that works in a multitude of ways, establishing various connections between the person, the universe and the Creator. The

reference to the person of the angel as a spiritual being who exists at a certain point between the Creator and Creation, fulfilling the role of mediator and intermediary has known a linear progression in the biblical conception, if we were to analyse it from the historical perspective. There are few thesis and documents referring to the angels in the Romanian, orthodox and biblical environment, hence our wish to elaborate a study that would also follow personal queries, rather than having the sole aim of a scientifically thorough, but objective research in these pages. The process of becoming closer to the notion of the angel was especially manifested in establishing a connection with the grand theological theses, such as the Holy Trinity, the creation of the visible world and the invisible one, the Church and so forth. The above mentioned references emphasized the role and mission of the angels, at times neglecting their person, their identity.

Our wish to conceive a PhD thesis on the subject of biblical angelology is due to a wish of further pursuing the Master's Degree studies, which were completed with the presentation of the dissertation thesis entitled "*The Role of the Holy Angels in the Christian Morality*", but also as a perennial propensity and personal wish to shape and identify the biblical model of the angel. This model might provide a constant and reliable alternative to the social contemporary discourse.

The main reason and drive at the basis of the present PhD thesis was determined by the vitally important necessity of a discourse focused on and determined by angelology within the study of the Bible, given the pluralism of beliefs and ideologies that exist in modern societies. We have chosen the Greek line of terminology related to the theme of the Holy Angels, thus using the terms of "*anghelologie, anghelologic, anghelofanii*" – translated by "angelology, angelology, showing and appearances of the angels" in an indirect manner – instead of the terminological variants used in other studies belonging to other authors, namely that of "*angelologie, angelologic, angelofanie*", which have the direct correspondents of "angelology, angelology, angels allowing themselves to be perceived as present" in translation; however, both lines of terminology cover the same linguistic expression and semantic denominators, the difference lying in the fact that the former line is of Greek origin, whereas the second is also found in other languages, having developed later in time. The debate on angelology is considered as one of the most controversial themes to be found in Biblical research. In spite of the fact that it has been minimized in importance and at times it has even been ignored, the presence of the

Holy Angels knows an undeniable, revealing importance through the essential role that they have in their acts of serving God and mankind.

By being directly and actively involved in the life of humans and by being profoundly involved in contemporary society, the presence of the Holy Angels presents itself as a challenge that the Orthodox Church and all the other Christian Churches ought to assume. Moreover, it is their responsibility to offer coherent answers and replies to the line of criticism which focuses on taking the idea of myth away from concepts, a line of thinking that developed during modernity. This line of criticism places the presence and the entity of the Holy Angels in the line of mythology, of superstition and of pre-Modernism. On the contrary, they are presented by the Holy Scripture and by the Holy Tradition as full entities that cannot be denied in the realm of Christian faith. The Holy Saints' mission is that of revealing the Law and of guiding people towards God, as it is shown in the Old Testament, while in the New Testament the angels are depicted as entities that help not only the Father, but also the Holy Son, in accordance with the Father's demand. Therefore, they also provide proof of the Messiahship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The present thesis is structured into four chapters:

- 1 The presence of the angel and its implications in the Holy Scripture
- 2 The Angelology of the New Testament. The angelology-based evangelical paradigm
- 3 The functions of serving and helping that characterize the Holy Angels
- 4 The Reporting to the Holy Angels as a form of guidance necessary for humanity in the eschatological plan.

The objectives we have planned to achieve in the present thesis are the following:

- 1 Addressing a topic that has not been amply researched in modern Biblical theology
- 2 Structuring the information so that it can form a compendium of biblical angelology
- 3 Covering a segment of exegesis and of verset interpretation that is as complex as possible and that refers to the presence of the Holy Angels in the New Testament
- 4 A synthetic approach of the bibliographic sources related to the entity and person of the angel in the Jewish-Christian realm

- 5 The use of modern informational materials which are specific to the Biblical research (Libronix, Bible Works).

The new aspects that we intend to present in this thesis are as follows :

- 1 The necessity of an angelological speech in the modern Biblical theology
- 2 Creating a temporal Biblical frame and context for modern angelology
- 3 Creating a space-governed context for the study of angelology in contemporary exegesis
- 4 Discovering the source of the verses In. 5, 3b-4 as compared to In. 5, 7 within the Johannine corpus of angelology
- 5 The Holy Angels – necessary Biblical models in today’s society
- 6 The uniqueness and unity of the Jewish-Christian angelological discourse
- 7 Emphasizing the existence and the important role played by the Holy Angels throughout the history of mankind
- 8 Revealing the importance of the actions of the Holy Angels in Biblical documents
- 9 The Holy Angels – models of Biblical pedagogy
- 10 The Holy Angels – models of angelology that reveal and testify the Law by means of the Eschaton

Cap. I. The presence of the Angel and its implication in the Holy Scripture

The presence of the Holy Angels in the writings of the Old Testament

The term that defines and denominates the Holy Angels in the Old Testament is that of *mal'ak*. This term refers to the reality of the messenger, but at the same time it involves the further development of a continuously developing and complex discourse. Therefore, the translations of the term in various languages highlight the multiple missions of the Holy Angels and determine the complex presentation of their actions. The term *mal'ak* is present in about 200 places in the writings of the Old Testament, with a certain and undeniable reference to the person of the angel. Moreover, as the writings of the Old Testament progress, the idea according to which the term of *mal'ak* best presents the role, mission and importance of the angel is increasingly developed. Therefore, it is through this lexical structure that the angel moves from the simple status of rapporteur, determined by his mission of saving and redeeming man, to a more complex status of a spiritual being created by God.

The Holy Angels are presented as the ones who bring the will of God in the proximity of people, presenting His will to them, as one can find in the writings of the Old Testament. They are presented as the divine messengers sent by the Creator, being the intermediaries and the ones who go between the divine and the human. Their presence is a complex and complete one in the Holy Scripture, and their discovery in the context of the Creation takes the form of the presentation of the angels in various documents.

„The Lord's Angel”

The presence of the angels in the Old Testament writings reveals the progression through several stages in the development of a real angelology. The period of the Pentateuch refers to the beings in the sky perceived as spiritual, existing and real beings that carry out the mission assigned to them by God. There are no specific names assigned to these entities, nor do they have specific characteristics, as their function is precisely that suggested by their denomination, namely that of messengers. There is, however, an exception, namely the phrase **מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה** (Mal'ak Yahwe - “The Lord's Angel”). This denomination, also available as The Angel of Yahweh, is somewhat different from the other denominations found in the Old Testament, as it has a further function of highlighting the importance of the person that sends the message, of the message itself and of its carrier.

מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה appears quite frequently, about 85 times in the Old Testament, especially in Genesis and Judges of the Old Testament. In the Book of Genesis, the Lord's Angel appears in moments of severe personal crisis, especially in the moments that seem impossible to solve, where there seems to be no escape for a certain person or for the ones who were chosen by God.

The person who was chosen as recipient of the message remains in the sphere of belonging to the One who sent the message, therefore they continue to belong to God and to be close to Him.

Mal'ak Yahweh is the one who shows himself to Hagar, Abraham and Jacob (Fac. 16, 7-14; Fac. 21, 17-19; Fac. 22, 11-18; Fac. 31, 11-13).

The Lord's Angel is also perceived as a manifestation of God, given the perspective of his role as intermediary, since the New Testament states that the people could not see God's face. However, the presence of this angel allowed them to see a reflection of His face.

Apparitions of the “Lord's Angel”

מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה represents a form of God's intervention in Genesis. This intervention has the purpose of fulfilling the divine wish. **מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה** is Yahweh's Angel, the one who fulfills the mission assigned to him by God.

The fact that the angel appeared in front of Hagar, Abraham and Jacob (Fac. 16, 7-14; Fac. 21, 17-19; Fac. 22, 11-18; Fac. 31, 11-13) has the purpose of revealing God's work in Creation. The identification of the name with God's will is the result of the identification and the sameness of the angel with his or her mission.

Angelology in the Jewish Mysticism – the Notion of Angel

The angels are not only the ones who transmit God's thoughts, but also His word (), "Melakha" (to work) opening the horizon of the angel's actions. As we have seen, *mal'ak* means God's messenger, but also the one who fulfills God's will. They are the first entities created by God, therefore they witnessed the entire process of Creation and Genesis. The fullness of their existence and of their entity is described by the Syriac term '*ira*, which presents the aspect of vigilance in their mission of forwarding God's will. Their mission is complex, involving permanent vigilance and attention in their close contact both with God and with humans. The Aramaic term of *shin'an* shows us the number of angels, while at the same time bearing the significance of their role and of the mission they carry through. This makes them spiritual beings that are still separate from God, having a free will, which left certain angels prone to sin, fall or temptation.

The term of *mal'ak*, or messenger, is visible in its translation in several languages, all these translations having the common designation of a spiritual being assigned to the same term. The term *mal'ak* is to be found in about 200 places in the books of the Torah, referring to various human persons with distinct denominations.

There are uncountable references to angels in Jewish mysticism, whereas various sources and oral tradition identify several archangels. There are four of them who reoccur in several places: Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Rafael. The name of the angels is given according to the function they fulfill. In the case of the Kabbalah, the discovery of the angel Metatron can reveal two divergent variants in the connection with the Shekinah: the case of Cain (when the angel

moves away from the divine power) and the Tubal-Cain case (the elevation of the angel towards the intra-divine context).

The Peniel and Mamre episodes

The angelology-based perspective comprises a wide range of definition, representation and importance, but also knows four different lines of questioning that reveal the blurred and sinuous borderline which separates Angelology and Theophany: the burning bush, the cloud kidnapping on Mount Sinai (the receiving of the Torah), the Mamre episode (Fac. 18, 1-6) and that of the fight between Jacob and the Angel (Fac. 32, 22-32). The four Biblical episodes progressively define themselves from the Mamre moment to the Peniel episode.

The first moment describes the arrival of the angel for the first time, followed by the theophany.

The second moment presents the distinction between angelology and theophany in the perspective of Jewish mysticism: the angels open Moses' path towards God only after they hear him uttering the sacred name of the Lord.

The third episode might present itself in a hermeneutical, exegetical and literal angelology-based perspective.

The fourth moment comprises the dialogue between the two characters named Jacob and the Angel. This envoy of God has no name in the beginning, but Jacob eventually names him Peniel, which signifies *God's face*, thus providing an explanation that can be seen as an exegetical expression „*I have seen the face of God and my soul has been saved !* ” (Fac. 32, 30). This controverted action bears a significant resemblance with the Enoch and Elijah episodes when they see angels and are assigned a similar mission themselves, which present the possibility of humans receiving the mission of playing a part that is close to that of an angel, including the attributes and responsibilities that go with it.

If one encounters a plurality of angels in the episode entitled the Oak Tree of Mamre, or a plurality of people receiving the attributes of angels, there is the singular to be found in the episode entitled Jacob's Ladder, where one is presented with the Angel par excellence.

The two biblical expressions of Mamre and Peniel determine the impossibility of tracing the difference or the clearly discernible borderline between the study of the angels' importance and the discovery of God, as most of them involve an imminent discovery of God.

Cap. II. The angelology of the New Testament. The angelology-based evangelical paradigm

The Holy Angels in the narrations of the synoptic Gospels

During the preaching of our Saviour, the Jewish space was split according to the belief in angels in the following way: the Essenes were not only a community that believed in the existence of the angels, but they even created several categories of angels, each with a certain role, while Sadducees denied their existence and the Pharisees often made direct references to the angels in their writings and teachings.

The period of the New Testament comprised several references with regard to the existence of angels, thus indicating a general belief in them and in the role that the Holy Angels played in the world of mortals.

Discovered by the synoptic Gospels, the issue of the Holy Angels reveals a revision of the themes in the Old Testament and also stands for a new expression of the angel observation manifestations. The demarcation between theophany and angelophany-centred places the accent on Christological reality. The presence of the Logos embodied in the Genesis, as God and as Person, allows the realization of the distinction between the two actions of revelation. In general, the Holy Angels are presented according to the Old Testament coordinates, with the sole permanent reporting established between themselves and the Person of Jesus Christ.

As an exception, the Birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ as it is presented in the synoptic paradigm, which reveals two exemplifications that are specifically related to angelology: the description made by Mathew and the Lucan descriptions. The latter also adds the proclamation of the birth of Saint John the Baptist, the Forerunner of the Lord. The Lucan perspective is the one that integrates Mathew's discovery: the Lord's Angel reveals its name; he is Gavriil, *the one that*

stands before God, so that he is the one who knows the will, the missions, the words and the actions pertaining to God, from the first moment in which these are manifested by the Creator.

It is with Lucas that the determining antithesis between the Living and the dead appears, while the latter are, from a certain perspective, the same that we call the living.

In the various narrations and descriptions of Christ's Resurrection, the presence of the angels next to the Living Tomb is detailed in different ways: it is either the form of "*a young man clad in white*", (Mc. 16, 5); "*an angel*" (Mt. 28, 2); or "*two men*" (Lc. 24, 4).

For the synoptic angelology written in a testamentary key, the moment of the Saviour's Inveiglement, of Jesus Christ's Messianic activity, of His Sufferings, of His Death and Resurrection as well as the moment of his Ascension represent the key elements and episodes. Only the revelation of the Resurrection is discovered through a comparative study that also focuses on the Johannine evangelical paradigm, in order to be able to exemplify the similarities, the differences and especially the perfect harmony of textual concurrence characterizing the four Gospels from the point of view of angelophany as testifying the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The angels are presented in the episodes of the Holy Scripture as always present in the acts of our Saviour, as the very words of Christ testify. They stand as testimony of their role, of their mission and their relationship towards God and mankind, which is also emphasized in the act of creation. They are always to be found in the proximity of God, of Jesus and of people as well. However, they are absent in the episode where the devil tries to lure Jesus away from faith. This episode discovers the factual necessity of Christ overpowering and conquering the devil's plots on a personal level, by himself. The three evangelical episodes that are described by the synoptic evangelists, (Mt. 4, 1-11; Mc. 1, 12-13; Lc. 4, 1-13), only mention the presence of the Holy Angels as an act of submission and support after Christ conquers the devil's threefold temptation, with the exception that Lucas does not testify the presence of the Holy Angels in the episode presented by the Gospel.

The angelology after Mathew's perspective

The episodes related to angelology that are defining in the Gospel after Mathew are the following:

- 1 The presence of the angel in the event of the Birth (Mt. 1, 20-24);
- 2 "The Angels" of the Magi (Mt. 2, 12);
- 3 The Lord's Angel and Joseph (Mt. 2, 13; 2, 19-20);
- 4 The Holy Angels – the messengers of the Son of God by means of the Eschaton (Mt. 13, 39-42; 13, 49; 16, 27; 22, 30; 24, 31; 24, 36; 25, 31);
- 5 The role of intermediaries played by the Holy Angels (Mt. 18, 10);
- 6 The report between the twelve legions of angels and the twelve apostles (Mt. 26, 53);
- 7 The presence of the Lord's Angel in the act of Our Saviour Christ's Resurrection (Mt. 28, 2-3; 28, 5-7).

The Saint Evangelist Mathew mentions the presence of the Holy Angels in his Gospel, from the perspective of the mission that they have in connection with God, with Creation, with the human person and with Jesus Christ. Their actions and entity is focused on the existence of the divine-human Person, namely around Jesus Christ. Their presence around the Son of God has a purpose, namely that of discovering His Messiahship.

The Holy Angels in the Marcan Evangelical Tradition

The Marcan angelology builds a space of communication between God and man, which is a determining and defining space for the path of the Eschaton. The angel either presents his own testimony or is presented as being the witness of important events that were taking place in the path of human salvation. The presence of the angels is always centred around God and His Son, as they are constantly fulfilling their assigned missions.

The Marcan angelology knows four determining stages that define the angelology of synoptic writings and documents:

- 1 The Lord's Angel and the Path of Christ (Mc. 1, 2-3);

- 2 The Presence of the Holy Angels in the act of the second arrival of our Saviour Jesus Christ (Mc. 8, 38);
- 3 The Holy Angels – messengers of the Son of Man by means of the Eschaton, as it is presented in the Marcan tradition (Mc. 12, 25; 13, 27; 13, 32);
- 4 The young man standing by the Lord's grave: the presence of an angel? (Mc. 16, 5-7).

One can state the fact that the discovery of the angels existing in the presence of God and of His Son is defining for the affirmation and confirmation of Christ's holy nature, given the Marcan perspective.

The angels are the sign of the divine Revelation. The fact that they accompany God in the Holy gardens, that they accompany Jesus Christ on earth and the fact that they stand by Christ in his second arrival on earth during the Parousia proves that they permanently and eternally represent the signs of power of the Holy Trinity.

For Marc the Evangelist, if the Holy Angels are present as next to the Son of God at the Parousia, helping Him, and if they are present as witnesses of the judgement that Jesus will present, then this means that the Son of Man is also the Son of God and that the angels are also his messengers.

The presence of the Holy Angels in the Lucan work

The documents of the New Testament provide several testimonies referring to the mission, role and importance of the Holy Angels in the realm of Salvation and in the Genesis. Mathew's Gospel places more emphasis on the historical reality of the Holy Angels, whereas Lucas the Evangelist describes them as the beings that work according to God's plan for the Salvation of the world, with the mention that their role is clearly defined by Jesus Christ's enormous work of redeeming and of saving mankind. In this context, the angels are working with a view to fulfilling and completing the Messianic work of the Savior.

As compared to the Gospel of Mark and of Mathew, the Gospel written by Lucas presents the Holy Angels as existing as active presences in the dynamics of God's salvation work for the benefit of the entire world, which is His creation.

The Pauline epistles present, as we have seen, a certain reticence towards the person of the angel, some of the namings of the angels even being equivocal, as one cannot make a difference between angel, demon and the function of a person's messenger.

The Lucan work (the Third Gospel, the Apostle's Deeds), is the one that discovers the reality of the angels' presence in the works of Jesus Christ and of his helpers, explaining that this is an active reality that manages to succeed in its works and efforts without attempting to take credit for it. This is to say that there is a strict delimitation between the decisive role that each decisive factor (God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Angels) has to play in the work of saving the world, at least from the Lucan point of view.

The Johannine angelology is close to the Lucan one, as their common factor is the personal closeness of both authors towards the angels.

The presence of the Holy Angels in the narrative of the Third Gospel

The narrative of the Third Gospel reveals a special closeness of the author manifested towards the person of the Holy Angels. They are presented as testimony-providers for the Son of God and they bear the sign of recognition and revelation of the truth regarding the Son of Man, as testifying his Messiahship.

It is important to mention a certain aspect of the Lucan vision, namely that in the Deeds of the Apostles we find a presentation of the work carried out by the Holy Angels, who constantly accompany the work of the Holy Spirit.

The episodes that are closely connected to angelology in the Gospel of Lucas are the following:

- 1 The angel and the announcement of the birth of Saint John the Baptist (Lc. 1, 11-20). The presence of the angel as a messenger of the Annunciation in the Lucan tradition (Lc. 1, 28-39);
- 2 The Holy Angels announce the birth of Jesus Christ to the shepherds (Lc. 2, 9-15);
- 3 The Lord's Angel and Christ's Path in the Lucan writings (Lc. 7, 27; 22, 43);
- 4 Christ's Speech (Lc. 9, 26; 12, 8-9; 15, 7-10);

- 5 The presence of the Holy Angels in the episode of Lazarus the Pauper (Lc. 16, 22);
- 6 The resemblance between person and angel in the afterlife (Lc. 20, 36);
- 7 The vision of angels – the real presence of the testimony of Jesus Christ's Resurrection (Lc. 24, 4-7; 24, 23).

For Lucas the Evangelist, the angel becomes a paradigm of the narrative in his Gospel. His angelology bears the mark of the inter-testament influences. When reported to the Pauline documents, Saint Lucas the Evangelist does not accept the generic naming of the angels. In his view, there is no issue of possibly altering the culture of the angels *in extremis*. The Lucan writings describe them as always assisting and helping the Son of God.

In spite of the fact that the Third Gospel is written for the Roman community that believed in angels, Lucas does not present the problem of possible idolatry of the angels done by the Christians, as the believers were aware of the fact that the angels were not supreme deities, but spiritual ones that provided help in key situations. Therefore, there was no danger of wrongly admiring and praising the angels in the detriment of other Christian deities.

Lucas is keen to present the important role and status of defender of the humans that the angel is endowed with. If the New Testament tends to present the image of the angel as an entity that fulfills an entire, complex array of actions meant to help and to benefit all human beings by means of returning to that certain "home" of the Genesis, Lucas wishes to point out by accentuating the specific role of defender and protector that the angel has. This perspective is one of reporting oneself to both missions of the angel, one of helper and one of pedagogical surveillance. Therefore, the emphasis shifts from the angel's persona to the mission and role he or she fulfills, as one is more interested in the actions than in the personal existence of the angel, at least according to this specific source. All the angels do is subscribed to the mission of God and to helping the Messiahship actions of the Son of God, as the Lucan documents define the angels as the key factors that are capable of getting people close to God and to Christ.

The presence of the Holy Angels in the Lucan tradition from the Apostle's Deeds

Saint Lucas defines the angels as the sole entities that are able to keep alive and to preserve the connection between the human soul and man, while also rendering His missions possible. For Lucas, the angels are the ones that help people keep on the path of salvation,

making sure they do not fall into temptation. “The Deeds of the Apostles” no longer emphasize the three aspects of the angels (their presence, role and importance), but they reveal a new model, that of former and guider for the human person.

The angelology can be analysed in the following episodes of the Apostles’ Deeds:

- 1 The Angels of the Lord’s Ascension (F. Ap. 1, 10-11);
- 2 The Lord’s Angel frees the imprisoned Apostles; (F. Ap. 5, 19-20);
- 3 The likeness between “man and angel” as it is seen in the face of the archdeacon Stephen (F. Ap. 6, 15);
- 4 The presence of the angel in the speech held by Stephen the archdeacon in front of the Synedrion (F. Ap. 7, 35; 7, 38; 7, 53);
- 5 Philip’s Angel (F. Ap. 8, 26);
- 6 The mission of the angel is converting Cornelius (F. Ap. 10, 3-7; 10, 22; 10, 30-32);
- 7 The presence of the angel in the episode of freeing Peter from the gaol (F. Ap. 12, 7-17);
- 8 The punishment of Irodus by the angel sent by (F. Ap. 12, 23);
- 9 The Angel of the Law (F. Ap. 23, 8-9);
- 10 The Angel of the Saintly Apostle Paul (F. Ap. 27, 23-24);

The Holy Angels in the Johannine documents – The presence of the Holy Angels in the narrative of the Fourth Gospel

The angelology of the Fourth Gospel is different from the other three Synoptic Gospels. Saint John the Apostle presents us with a general approach of the subject constituted by the Angels, and the words he uses have a contemplative tone.

The synoptic documents presented the Holy Angels as a reconfirmation of the reality of our Saviour Jesus Christ, but they appear in three different roles in the writings of John the Apostle and Evangelist, having three different aims: they are an apparently unseen presence, they help the work and meanings of God and they testify the reality of the Resurrection of Our Lord. This proves that they gradually present the Messiahship of our Saviour by comparing it with the Old Testament Biblical event entitled “Jacob’s Ladder”. (In. 1, 51).

Another Biblical episode that is of reference in the Jewish writings depicting the reality of the days in which Jesus Christ lived is the episode of healing in which the Lord's Angel stirs the waters in order to heal and to improve the situation of mankind (In. 5, 4).

The resemblance between the Saviour's words and the ones dictated by the angel (In. 12, 29), as well as the episode of the complete testimony of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as a reality of the fulfillment of the Law and the prophecies about his divine and human nature, all make him stand as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, representing the Logos of the Father, the Son born out of eternity. All these are described and comprised in another two Johannine episodes of angelology.

The four places where angelology can be found and interpreted in John's writings are the following:

- 1 The Holy Saints as helpers, witnesses and announcers of Christ's awe (In. 1, 51);
- 2 The Bethesda episode – The Holy Angels as helpers of the Divine (In. 5, 4);
- 3 The presence of the Voice in the Sky –angelophany or teophany? (In. 12, 29);
- 4 The Holy Angels in dialogue with Maria Magdalena (In. 20, 12-13);

These four perspectives are to be contrasted and compared to the synoptic writings, complementing both of these.

These Biblical episodes define the following aspects of major importance: the Messiahship of the Saviour, the fulfillment of the law through His Person of divine and human nature and the opening of the Eschaton Path, when Christ Resurrected is the Eternal Judge. The presence of these angels in the given Gospel reveals itself as being reported to the Person of Jesus Christ.

One can observe that the Holy Angels do not receive individual names and do not have individual descriptions or traits other than those of angels, which shows the importance that John the Evangelist shows to the entity and *name* of the Saviour. In his writings, the name in absolute state is represented by Jesus Christ, giving the very notion of name its complete meaning and sense, while all the other characters of the Fourth Gospel only symbolically gravitate around Him. Even the apparitions of the angels receive a deeper, more complete sense when they are related to their link to Jesus, always in a deep, unitary connection with the Lord.

As a particular feature related to angelology, John's Gospel presents the four references to the Holy Angels as four Messianic symbols and metaphors. The link between Christ and the

angels is the one determined by the helper function fulfilled for the Embodied Christ as Messiah.

It is true that the synoptic writings presented the Holy Angels as a discourse of factual reality, this being meant to act like a testimony of the truths it refers to. However, these episodes where the angels appear in John's writings are more than a factual presence and reveal a superior state of a reality that is transfigured by the Embodiment, the Messianic Activity, the Sufferings and Resurrection of Christ. But these four episodes in John's Gospel are actually a personal discovery of the Holy Angels, revealing John's personal attitude towards their entity and existence and his own thoughts on the matter (In. 20, 12-14). There are two more episodes in which the naming and presentation of the angels is done by Christ Himself (In. 1, 51-52; 5, 4), while the people name and define the angels in another episode. (In. 12, 29). All of these together form the contour of a complementary space that helps in the understanding of the Holy Angels and of their mission.

The enigmatic dimension of the author's reference in the Johannine episodes

The Johannine writings have known a real problematic regarding the angelology references, which further on lead to more complex debates on the matter. There are four places in John's Gospel where the Holy Angels are mentioned: In. 1, 51; In. 5, 4 (which reveal a critique of the authenticity of the text); In. 12, 29; In. 20, 12-14. In the Johannine episodes there are only two places where their apparition is merely hinted at: I In. 4, 1-3; I In. 5, while the Apocalypse is filled with various references to the angels' existence, action and apparition.

The angels therefore appear in the Apocalypse in John's Gospel, and there is an undeniable angelology connotation in John's First Epistle.

The Holy Angels in the New Testament epistolary literature –The Holy Angels in the Pauline Writings

The presence of the Angel is presented in the Scriptures as a state of double assistance: towards God and towards humans.

The Saint Apostle Paul is the one who defines the purpose of the creation of the angels: "*Because all things were created by Him, the ones in the sky and the ones on land as well, the*

seen and the unseen, be they thrones, kingdoms, and lands. All were done through Him and for Him.” (I Col. 1, 16).

In Paul’s documents and in the Epistle towards the Jews, things become more systematic:

1. Acts of judgment (as they appear in the Pauline Epistles and in the Epistle towards the Jews)
2. Acts of charity (present in the above-mentioned sources)
 2. Acts of listening (in Jews and Corinthians 1)
 3. Acts of serving and helping Christ in the moment of the Parousia (in Thessalonians 1 and 2),
 4. Acts of submission in the form of Deaconship (in Jews and Galatians),
 5. Acts of witnessing the Messianic reality (in Ephesians).

As preliminary conclusions, the following can be stated: the Holy Angels are described both by the Apostle John and Paul as fulfilling a double serving and helping function towards God and towards Man, a mission that is fulfilled for the benefit of Jesus Christ. One can take the statement even further by stating that with the Apostle Paul, the acts of submission towards God and His Son are more systematic: they become acts of judgment, of charity, of listening and obeying and of confession.

Upon a closer examination of the texts comprised in the New Testament, the following aspect is to be discovered: the angels are perceived as an entity of intermediaries, their relationship to humans and to God becoming more personalized, and this conclusion can be drawn from the examination of both Paul’s and John’s Gospels.

The discourse in the first and second chapters from the Epistle for the Jews does not reveal a struggle between man and angel, culminating with the establishment of the superior nature of the angels over the humans, but with the superior nature of Christ, who is both human and divine in nature, as he is the Second Part of the Holy Trinity. Furthermore, these documents clearly state that Christ is superior not only to the angels and apostles, but also to Moses himself, for the above mentioned reasons.

Paul the Apostle expresses the strong wish to protect the Christians from falling into the sin of idolatry towards the angels. For this reason, he stresses the fact that everything that was transmitted by the angels ultimately became reality and that everything that was done according to the teaching of the angels was rewarded: “Because if the spoken word materialized thanks to the angels and because each breaching of the laws was punished fairly and accordingly ...” (Evr.

2, 2). In this sense, the Holy Angels deserve to be rightfully worshipped, but not adored in the act and context of the sermon, and they should not be omitted from the prayer of awe towards God. A cult of adoring the angels as an entity that is separated from God would represent an act of idolatry, heresy and blasphemy, since angelology stands as a key element of the cult for the divine. As a ladder, namely that of Jacob, the Holy Angels present and give voice to human existence and to the development of the evolution of Creation and Genesis. The angels are those who reunite mankind with its Creator, given their role as intermediaries. Their mission is to eternally guide and protect the people on Earth, while at the same time teaching them about God. A special role is played by the blessing granted to the Chosen People, this blessing being eventually given to the entire population of the world in the Christian community, which received Christ's Blessing, where every aspect is gathered into an indestructible connection between the angelology of the New and Old Testament. The Old Testament presented the idea of the angels as God's voice, while in the New Testament they become the idea and eventually the reality of the ones to witness and to stand by the Lord's Son.

In the writings of Apostle Paul, one insists on the fact that the Holy Angels judge together with Christ (II Tes. 1, 7), while at John the Apostle, one insists of the fact that the Holy Angels fulfill God's judgment by carrying through his blessings or punishments, according to His wish and rightful decision.

In both John and Paul's writings, the presence of the Holy Angels represents a deaconry for the assistance of the human person, with the purpose of teaching people right from wrong and of explaining why they should follow the precepts of the Law that was assigned to the Chosen People by God, according to the Old Testament. It is Christ that fulfills this function in the New Testament, guiding and helping the humans through each single act of His.

The intervention of the Angels as seen from the Lucan and Pauline perspective can have two dimensions, namely those of the seen and the unseen or invisible presence. In this respect, the Pauline conception reaches the point where it forms an entire Jewish-Christian thinking related to the angels.

A special perspective is discovered by the synoptic Gospels and by certain epistolary writings to be found in the New Testament. These form a space that encourages the research in angelology, forming a link between the Johannine and Pauline paradigm. There are many questions to be asked and issues to be explained in this domain. The most important one refers to

the role of the angel in his relationship with God and with people. The presence of the angels is discovered by the particularities of each New Testament piece of writing. Although not all these writings individualize the presence of the angel, all of them mention it in their Messianic discourse.

The presence of the angels as a generic title in the New Testament is to be attributed to Paul. His preparation and training determine him to write about angels in this way. His report to the Jewish mysticism is often visible in his writing. The border between assigning one angel to the Lord and one such entity to the devil highlights the influence that the Jewish writings have had on Paul the Apostle. In this way, he manages to determine a fine line of demarcation in assigning a representative of each part: the part of God and that of the devil.

For Paul the Apostle, the Holy Angels still play a very important role and they will situate themselves in absolute harmony with the other aspects that create Christ's Gospel.

The presence of the Holy Angels in the Synod epistles

The presentation of the angels in Peter's epistles is determined by the necessity to reaffirm certain key points related to them. At I Pet. 1, 12: "*They came to realize that they were helping thou humans and not themselves, as they preaches the Gospel to you as God had asked them to, and the angels themselves want to follow this book's teachings*". We are reminded of the importance of the Gospel for the spiritual advancement of people, with the ultimate aim of salvation and of eternal life. The wish of the angels to follow these teachings of the Gospel is meant to highlight the importance of this document perceived as the good news that mankind had been hoping for in order to be able to enter the Celestial Gates.

The angels are created beings meant to fulfill the Lord's indications for and during the process of the Genesis. Apostle Peter explains their wish to watch, to observe and to behold, as it represents their wish to understand humans and to help them, as they know the Genesis is entirely dedicated to the world. They watch with the purpose of knowing.

The angels' gaze is transmitted by Jewish tradition, namely the one that reminded of the archangel who was watching the Earth, in Peter's epistles, they appear quite rarely with a stated,

concrete presence, and their purpose is no longer that of knowing, but that of making sure that the Lord's wish was carried out accordingly.

Another aspect of looking is determined by the fact that the angels know certain limitations, given the fact that in spite of their spiritual component, they were themselves created by an entity that is superior to them. Furthermore, they do not hold information and do not have knowledge of the Day to Come, as this day was not revealed to them, either. To conclude, these writings state that the angels work for God, they do not issue judgments and verdicts, but they look on and offer benevolent supervision and guidance.

Chapter 3. The functions of serving characteristic of the Holy Angels

The diaconal ministry of the Holy Angels

The angels are personal beings endowed with a persona, them being created by God before mankind. They are the ones who assist humans in their spiritual ascent towards salvation. The Church is an institution that presents the angels and their notion to people in the context of the Christian sermon ritual.

Orthodox theology offers its own answer to contemporaneity, through the exploitation and presentation and the beneficial results on humanity that angelology has had so far. If the Church could provide a coherent and complex discourse related to the existence of the Holy Angels, of their role and importance in the daily activities of people, then the necessity of salvation would become clearer, as would become the divine attempts to save the world. Their presence reveals new and diverse elements in the theology of the Gospels, thanks to their punctual presence and to the observation of their role in assisting God and ensuring that his perspective on the world is respected. At no point do the angels appear with the purpose of themselves alone being worshipped in the absence of God, as they are indissoluble and cannot exist apart from their creator. This is why the Holy Scripture does not develop their presence into ample descriptions and affirmations, but the Saintly Parents study the instances where the saints appear with attention. The Saintly Parents present the angels with awe and praise for their kindness and dedication to their mission.

The role of intermediaries played by the Holy Angels

The presence of the Holy Angels is clearly stated and reaffirmed explicitly, as it shows the truth about their activity and existence in the Genesis process: Lc. 1, 11-13; Mt. 1, 20; In. 20, 12; Fac. 1, 10; Fac. 10, 3-6; Fac. 27, 23; I Pet. 1, 12; I Tim. 5, 21; Evr. 1, 4-5; Apoc. 1, 19.

As we have already mentioned, the Holy Apostle Paul was determined to protect Christians from the sin of worshipping the angels in the wrong way and he meant to explain how to avoid idolatry in this respect. At the same time, he presents the fact that all that had been said

and announced by the Godly Father through the voice of the angels had actually become reality, which is further proof of their efficiency, dedication and ultimate reality. Also, the kindness and righteousness of the angels is to come to light in the fact that whenever people acted according to belief and faith and whenever they accomplished good deeds, the angels rewarded them, as God wanted them to (Evr. 2, 2). These stand as proof of the fact that angelology is constituted only as a *sine qua non* part of the divine cult.

Modernity and modern thinking usually associated the presence of the angels with an attempt to ruin the happiness of people, as the angels are associated with the Apocalypse and with doom, since their function of punishing is more highlighted in modern times. Modern works of literature and of other domains present the angels either as the ones to bring harsh punishments to mankind for its bad deeds, or as entities that were banished from heaven for their own misdoings, so that now they are lost souls looming between heaven and earth. On the other hand, the Orthodox Church believes that the angels are real presences that testify and transmit God's messages on Earth. This premise represents the main reason why a study of perspective needs to be carried out on angelology, in a perseverant and attentive way. Its answers ought to constitute a firm position against the new and old tendencies of maintaining nihilism, paganism and Satanism in the postmodern society.

Actually, this fight against the Holy Angels, this attempt to place them on secondary positions that lack importance in order to diminish the importance of their mission is aimed at loosening and finally destroying the link between God and people that was held together and facilitated by the angels. Like a fortress in days of yore used to have the water and food supplies cut out by its enemies, so this attempt to cut people off from their creator and from the Holy Angels renders mankind more prone to falling into the devil's temptation, as people become increasingly weak and amoral. What society needs is a firm answer and it is the duty of the Orthodox Church to provide the solution and the answers in accordance with the Scriptures, but presenting the information in a way that contemporary society might relate to.

Cap. IV. The reference to the Holy Angels, a guidance that is necessary to mankind in the Eschaton plan

The Holy Scripture presents the angels as appearing in different ways, with various appearances. Some of their images suggest and infuse fright, anguish, fear, amazement, surprise or a joy that cannot be identified, according to the people the angels were showing themselves to. For example, the rightful Zechariah was overwhelmed and left speechless (Lc. 1, 20-22) when the Angel arrived and spoke to him, while in Ezekiel's and Isaiah's vision (Ez. 10) and (Is. 6), the angels are perceived as odd beings with a complex nature that simply cannot be described. There are times when they appear as clouds and fire (Exodus 13, 21-22; 23, 20-23), or as faceless voices. (Fac. 21, 17).

As far as the angel's nature is concerned, a Scripture based definition presents them as being made of fire and wind (Ps. 103, 5), which is a definition taken from Apostle Paul in the Epistle towards the Jews: *“And he says about the angels: the One who makes His angels as spirits and His helpers as soul of the fire”* (1, 7). This revelation has become the exegetic basis of Christian angelology, and also of patristic thought dedicated to the angels.

The research into the problematic realm posed by the angels has known a continuous growth up to the times of Renaissance and Enlightenment. These social and historical periods have caused a return to the concept of man, a sort of anthropocentrism that is somehow opposed to theocentrism. The result of these new ways of thinking and of perceiving the world were the restraining of the theandric vision and its transformation into a vision that was purely and solely focused on man, while at the same time any spiritual influence was removed from people's daily lives in the religious sense. This implied that the angels were gradually moved to a second plan that lacked importance, in a territory that was parallel and had no common point with the history of mankind. They were considered to only be part of the surreal, of the dimensions of myth and legend. Furthermore, they were placed in the space and time of the tradition of the peoples, at the level of the fantastic component of fairytales. At this point, the angels were removed from the daily thoughts of the masses and from their spiritual existence as well, which meant that they were excluded from the social and historical life of the human community.

The social area that was mostly affected by this change of perspective was definitely the one belonging to the religious and cultural climate. The angels and their study are regarded as a

surreal extravagance in postmodernism. This means that the Church is the only institution of our times that is still interested in the study and preservation of the notion of the angels. The Church tries to preserve righteous faith and the testimony of faith in an intact mode, as these were transmitted by our forerunners and ancestors and as they ought to be transmitted to future generations with the purpose of a moral and religious continuity to be preserved by the Holy Scripture and by the Holy Tradition.

The importance and role of the Holy Angels in the Modern World

The perception of the angel by the people of today's society still constitutes a reality that does not remain indifferent and passive, in spite of the fact that the perception was flawed by past wrong interpretations. In the turmoil of modern existence, the angels are still perceived as a trustable source of support, of love and faith. The demeanors of the guiding angel that each person has are composed of influences that have the supreme and primary source in God. They manifest themselves in the active life of each person and the angels provide the moral support necessary to become fulfilled in Creation as the permanent Eschaton-based aim.

The evangelic discourse discovers the world of the angels as representing a space that escapes our human perception. Being conditioned by a common method of perception and of experimentation, the angels coexist in a secret world that cannot be completely understood by the human mind, as the latter is marked by the sin after the fall from heaven. The angels populate the space between God and people, as we find out from the alegorical language of the New Testament. They will stand at the side of God and of Christ until Judgment Day, as they have done from the very moment of Genesis.

Conclusions

1. Contemporary Biblical angelology tries to redefine the place, role and importance that the angels occupy in a society that is determined by relativism and secularization, meaning to offer a Biblical image that is well defined by what the angel truly represents in Christian faith.

2. The speech of the angels reveals the fact that they know the secret of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are helpers of the people and they constantly guide them towards Jesus, as paradigms of the Eschaton. The ascent and descent of the Holy Angels on the spiritual ladder does not represent an allegorical structure and affirmation, but especially a structural one: this is translated by the double action of ascent and descent in the permanent mission of helping and supporting the Creator and His Creation.

3. The presence of the Holy Angels in the key moments of the existence of Christ is very real, and therefore it is expressed in a more or less indirect way. They are present indirectly in certain special moments such as the Temptation, the Sufferings and the Crucifixion of the Savior.

4. The fact that the angels are described in the Holy Scripture and further on maintained in the context of the Holy Tradition reveals the reality of the existence of the angelology-focused element in Christian faith. The necessity of an angelological speech is becoming more and more stringent in the context of a society marked by pluralism. This discourse could provide the balance our society needs in these days when history is marked by secularism and overpowering nihilism.

5. In the theology of John's Gospel, the Holy Angels are presented as the ones who witness and testify Messiahship and the divinity of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. They are the ones to represent and to maintain the permanent connection between heaven and earth, between people and the divine.

6. The Lucan writings develop an angelology of the Angel, thus ensuring the transition from the mission of annunciation carried out by the Lord's Angel to the work of supervising and vigil by means of salvation of both the Gospel and of man, which is achieved and completed by the Guardian Angel.

7. The necessity of studying the angelological elements in the context of the testament writings, especially to be found in the pages of the New Testament, as well as the necessity of elaborating an angelology of the New Testament that would concentrate all the teachings and elements of the New Testament which are useful in the Biblical mission of establishing the Messiahship of Jesus Christ.

8. The Pauline epistles reveal a structure with an ascending semanticism related to the notion of angel, starting with the dual sense of the name. On one side, this denomination refers to the angels that remained faithful to God, while the same word defines the angels that fell from the heavens (Rom. 8, 38-39). Then the term develops up to the point where it only refers to the Holy Angels as announcers of the Second Arrival of Jesus Christ (I Tes. 4, 16; II Tes. 1, 7). They also announce the Messianic nature of Christ because they are the ones to have witnessed it (I Tim. 3, 16; I Tim. 5, 21). In this sense, the Pauline angelology determines the support of the canon of the New Testament as a reality of its structure, by means of the systematization of the sense of Angel of God in the canonical corpus of the New Testament.

9. The Epistle addressed to the Jews provides the most systematized angelology of the New Testament. Its author manages to formulate a definition of the Angel (Evr. 1, 14: "*Are not the angels serving spirits that are sent to serve the ones that are going to be the inheritors of Salvation?*"), a definition of the creation, nature, serving actions and aim of the angels. This naming is argumentative and not speculative in nature. The angel is directly presented, but he is named by means of his report to Christ. No angel is described in these writings in terms of appearance, as the way they look escapes the human vision and perception, as presented in the Apostle's Deeds, in the Pauline Epistles, in Jude's Epistle and in the Apocalypse.

10. The presentation of the angel in report to Jesus Christ determines the special structure of angelology in the Epistle for the Jews, this construction emphasizing the person of the angel

as being the ultimate being in report to the Son of God, a being determined and created during Genesis.

11. The existence of the Angels is a fact that was revealed by the Holy Scripture, which testifies their eternal and permanent presence in the history of mankind. The existence of the Holy Angels is more than a literary expression with subjective references or accounts provided by popular sources. Biblical angelology has been and still remains a reality of Christian theology for ever and for always.

Key words:

- 1 Angel
- 2 The Lord's Angel
- 3 Creation
- 4 Anghelofanie/ the appearance of angels
- 5 Angelology
- 6 Cherub
- 7 Seraphim
- 8 Archangel
- 9 Heavenly powers
- 10 Revelation
- 11 The Old Testament
- 12 The New Testament
- 13 Eschaton
- 14 Messenger
- 15 Mission

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