16 Angel (*Angelus*)

An angel, over and above the saints, is not a name of his nature, but of his office, according to that of Heb. 1[:14]: “Are they not all ministering spirits,” etc. Wherefore, Gregory in his *Homilia*,[[1]](#endnote-1) the spirits of the heavenly father are always spirits, but not always called angels. But then they are angels when through them some things are to be announced.

¶ Again, Bede, *Super Lucam,* first chapter,[[2]](#endnote-2) since they come to us as ministers, they take their names from these ministries, such that Gabriel[[3]](#endnote-3) announces powerful business of the incarnation. Gabriel by name because he heals, he allots the power of God. Thus, Raphael[[4]](#endnote-4) who was sent to cure Tobias [12:15], this name allots that the medicine of God is interpreted to be silent. According to Gregory,[[5]](#endnote-5) however often anything marvelous of virtue is done.

¶ Michael is said to be sent, which is interpreted as who as God, as is evident in the battle enjoined with the dragon. Wherefore also in angels three things can be considered. The dignity of nature or purity of condition, for since angels are spirits they are worth more than a body, Heb. [1:7]: “He that makes his angels spirits.”

In the second place, is the authority of the embassy or the activity of the operation, Act. 12[:11]: “Now I know in very deed, that the Lord has sent his angel.”

¶ In the third place, in these things the utility of the defense is considered, for this falls to us pilgrimaging in a triple inconvenience, namely, the error of deviation, the labor of fatigue, and the fear of attack. Therefore, alone and among other saints, an angel is given to man from the beginning of his nativity up to the end of death, as a leader to deviation, in consolation against fatigue, in protection against attack.

¶ In the fourth place, the clearness of knowledge is to be considered in an angel. On account of what has been said, an angel is compared to a star.[[6]](#endnote-6) For in the manner of a star, it has the purity of essence, the liveliness of power, the inclination or some roundness of obedience, Heb. 1[:14]: “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?” Where it is to be noted that angels are allotted to our custody, according to that of Exod. 23[:20-22], the Lord said, “Behold I will send my angel, who shall go before you, and keep you in your journey, and bring you into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned, for he will not forgive when you have sinned, and my name is in him. But if you will hear his voice, and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy to your enemies.”

Wherefore, also the angel took Lot by the hand, dissembling to go out of Sodom, and led forth, Gen. 19[:16-17]. Wherefore it is here to be noted that each of the lower order, each individual man, has an angel assigned with the superiors of the order of princes chosen for directing them in these ways which pertain to their office. Wherefore, Joshua 5[:13-14]: The angel ascended to that Joshua saying “I am prince of the host of the Lord.”

Therefore, Bernard says, book 5, *De consideratione ad Eugenium Papam*,[[7]](#endnote-7) and it seems through that one there, that each of the orders of angels are named from that gift to which they are ordained. Not only that in themselves they go out for this, but in order that they communicate with us, so that at the support of them with those gifts which we use well we arrive after this life. Wherefore, Gregory, *Homilia de centum ovibus*,[[8]](#endnote-8) says that men according to the diversity of merits are transferred to the diverse orders of angels, and to this Christ agrees, Matt. 22[:30]: That we men would be “as the angels of God in heaven.”

Wherefore note that Chrysostom says *Super Mattheum*, homily 5,[[9]](#endnote-9) that just as good angels withdrew themselves from Christ and gave place to temptation, thus invisibly it happens to every man. For there are two angels permanently with men, good and evil, and so long as the good angel is fixed, the evil angel cannot impel man into temptation. But according to the disposition of the matter sometimes the good angel withdraws so that he may give a line for tempting to the evil angel, awaiting in the meanwhile the outcome of the temptation.

Wherefore, Augustine, book 9, *De civitate*, chapter 21,[[10]](#endnote-10) just as angels have an eternity for subsisting, so also, they have a facility for knowing and reposing. And therefore just as a prince having two cities, one pacified and the other at war, he sends the soldiers from the pacified to that other which is at war to help. So Christ sends angels from the Church triumphant to the Church militant, according to that of Psal. [90:11]: “For he has given his angels charge over you to keep you.” Wherefore also the angel who for a while had in his custody all the militant church commanded Joseph that he flee with the child and the mother “into Egypt,” Matt. 2[:13]. Therefore the angel is given to us for helping against the fragility of falling and for leading against the ease of erring.

¶ Concerning the first, a man returning frail from the market day with a great treasure on a perilous way needs help, but a penitent man carries a great treasure, because Christ [2] Cor. 4[:7]: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” Certainly a man to the image of ivy weakly resists temptations, [1] Macc. 3[:53]: “How shall we be able to stand before their face, unless you help us?” As if saying, in no way, on the contrary, is man similar to a weather cock[[11]](#endnote-11) which is turned now with the east wind, that is, prosperity; now the west wind, that is, adversity; now the south wind of carnal concupiscence; now the north wind of torpid envy. Thus man is moved to sin, Isaiah 57[:13]: “The wind shall carry them all off.”

Again, the devil fights against us, [1] Macc. 3[:20]: “They come against us with an insolent multitude to destroy us.” Therefore it is necessary to have an angel as a helper, Isaiah [63:9], but “the angel of his presence,” that is, assisting God in person, “saved them.” In the sign of this matter Michael[[12]](#endnote-12) is depicted standing over the dragon having in his hand a sword or lance for designating the angelic help for us against the devil, Dan. 10[:13]: “Behold Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me.” And Dan. 12[:1]: “But at that time shall Michael rise up, the great prince, who stands for the children of your people,” not against the sons as it happened before the time of grace. For then it is read [1] Paral. 21[:16]: “And David lifting up his eyes, saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand, turned against Jerusalem.” And Num. 22[:31]: “The Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel standing in the way holding in his hand a drawn sword.” And Gen. 3[:23]: “And he cast out Adam; and placed before the paradise Cherubim, and a flaming sword.”

In these three places the angel stands against man on account of his sin, but for the good he stands for helping, Apo. 12[:7]: “And there was a great battle in heaven,” that is, in the church, and “Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, neither was their place found any more in heaven,” that is, among the celestial powers. Psal. [33:8]: “The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear him, and shall deliver them.” Because man often sins on account of his fragility, Wis. 9[:5]: “For I am a weak man, and of short time.” Therefore, it is easily worked if it is helped by an angel, about which Apo. 12[:7]: “And there was a great battle in heaven,” etc. Heaven is the church, the fight is the daily temptation which is overcome by angelic strength, earth is the earthly habitation where the devil is the host.

¶ In the second place, an angel is given to man for leading against the ease of erring by man. The broad way is more quickly chosen by man for advancing than the narrow way and in the usual way, but the way going down is broad, to heaven in truth narrow, Matt.7[:13-14]: “Broad is the way that leads to destruction…few there are that find it!” Therefore it is necessary to have an angel leader which is figured, Gen. 19[:15]. Where the angel leads Tobias [3:25] on the right way to Gabriel, and leads him safely back, and prohibits the devil from him. These two, Lot [Gen. 18:2] and Job [33:23] designate the good whom the angels lead to heaven, Mark 1[:2]: “Behold I send my angel, who shall prepare the way before you.”

Note also, that angels do not minister unless to those who take the inheritance of salvation. For a man existing under mortal sin is left by the good angel in the meanwhile, Jer. 51[:9]: “We would have cured Babylon,” as much to us as it is for the angel, according to the *Gloss* there,[[13]](#endnote-13) “but she is not healed, let us forsake her.” For man sinning is in a vile state because he serves the devil, Rom. 6[:16]: “His servants you are whom you obey,” and thus more vile than every creature. But concerning man existing in the state of innocence it is said, Eccli. 26[:20]: “No price is worthy of a continent soul.”

¶ Concerning a man in the state of guilt that is said in Prov. 6[:26]: “For the price of a harlot is scarce one loaf.” But when man repents his condition is improved, and immediately the good angel comes to him, Matt. 4[:11]: “Then the devil left him; and behold angels came and ministered to him.” On account of what has already been said, angels are called watchers of the foreseeing. For, they are watchers by circumspection, guardians by governing, and reapers by rooting out.

1. Gregory, *Homilia* 34.8 (PL 76.1250): Sciendum quoque quod angelorum vocabulum, nomen est officii, non naturae. Nam sancti illi coelestis patriae spiritus semper quidem sunt spiritus, sed semper vocari angeli nequaquam possunt, quia tunc solum sunt angeli, cum per eos aliqua nuntiantur. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Bede, *Homiliae* 4 (PL 94.151): Apostolo attestante, qui ait: Nonne omnes administratorii sunt spiritus in ministerium missi propter eos qui haereditatem capient salutis (Hebr. I)? Maxime tamen angelici nobis spiritus adesse credendi sunt, cum divinis specialiter mancipamur obsequiis, id est, cum ecclesiam ingressi vel lectionibus sacris aurem accommodamus, vel psalmodiae operam damus, vel orationi incumbimus, vel etiam missarum solemnia celebramus. Unde monet Apostolus mulieres in ecclesia velamen habere super caput propter angelos. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Bede, *Homiliae* 1 (PL 94:9): Raro autem **[Col.0009C]** legimus quia apparentes hominibus angeli designantur ex nomine. Verum quotiescunque fit, ideo utique fit ut etiam nomine ipso quod ministraturi veniant, insinuent. Gabriel namque fortitudo Dei dicitur. Et merito tali nomine praefulget, quia nascituro in carne Deo testimonium perhibet. De quo Propheta in **[Col.0010A]** Psalmo: Dominus, inquit, fortis et potens, Dominus potens in praelio **(Psal. XXIV).** Illo nimirum praelio, quo potestates aereas debellare, et ab earum tyrannide mundum veniebat eripere. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Augustine, *De Tobiae Libro* (PL 34:969-970): Tunc Raphael dixit eis occulte: Benedicite Deum coeli, et coram omnibus viventibus confitemini illi, quoniam fecit vobiscum misericordiam suam. Etenim sacramentum regis abscondere bonum est: opera autem Dei revelare et confiteri, honorificum est. Bona est oratio cum jejunio, et eleemosyna magis quam thesauros auri recondere. Quoniam **[Col.0970]** eleemosyna a morte liberat, et ipsa est quae purga peccata, et facit invenire vitam aeternam. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Gregory, *Homilia* 35.9 (PL 76.1251): Michael namque, quis ut Deus; Gabriel autem, fortitudo Dei; Raphael vero dicitur medicina Dei. Et quoties mirae virtutis aliquid agitur, Michael mitti perhibetur, ut ex ipso actu et nomine 1605 detur intelligi quia nullus potest facere quod facere praevalet Deus. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Anonymi, *Liber de Rebaptismate* 8 (PL 3:1192): et quod pastoribus ab Angelis, quoniam Salvator illis natus esset eodem momento fuisset annuntiatus; quod in oriente visa ejus stella sollicitissime fuisset a magis requisitus et adoratus, et illustribus donis et insignibus muneribus honoratus; [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Bernard, *De consideratione* 5.4.8 (PL 182.792): Putemus Angelos dici (nisi ut convenientius aliquid considerasti) qui singuli singulis hominibus dati creduntur; missi in ministerium, secundum Pauli doctrinam, propter eos qui haereditatem capiunt salutis (Hebr. I, 14): [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Gregory, cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In Sententiarum* 2, Dis. 9, qu. 1, art. 8, Sed contra: Gregorius etiam dicit in homilia de centum ovibus, quod homines secundum diversitatem meritorum ad diversos ordines transferuntur. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum*, Homilia 5 ex cap. 4:11 (PG 56:671): Praecipiente Domino, recesserunt ab eo, ut locus diabolo adversus Christum daretur, ne forte angelo videns circa eum, non appropinquaret ad eum. Sic enim invisibiliter fit omni homini Christiano. Duo enim sunt angeli permanentes cum hominibus, scilicet bonus et malus. Quamndiu circa nos est angelus bonus, numquam nos in tentationem potest impellere angelus malus. Secundumn dispensationem autem Dei recedit aliquantulum angelus bonus; magis autem non recedit, sed abscondit se, invisibilem se reddens ante diabolum: quoniam nisi voluerit angelus bonus, a diabolo non videtur. Subtrahit ergo se, ut det diabolo licentiam tentandi, et stans expectat tentationis eventum. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Augustine, *De civitate* 11.31 (PL 41.345): Sancti vero Angeli, ad quorum societatem et congregationem in hac peregrinatione laboriosissima suspiramus, sicut habent permanendi aeternitatem, ita cognoscendi facilitatem et requiescendi felicitatem. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Alexander Neckam, *The Treatis De utensilibus* ed. Thomas Wright, *A Volume of Vocabularies* (Privately printed, 1857), (p. 115): Cheruca tamen proprie dicitur ventilogium [veder-coc], quod in Gallico dicitur *cochet* [Note: An early Latin-French vocabulary, cited by Ducange (sub v. *aventilogium*), has “*Ventilogium*, le coichet, qui est sur le mostier.” *Cochet* was the old French name for a weathercock.] [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Cf. Archangel Michael defeats the Dragon depicted in the Romanesque antependium (altar frontal), known as the Antependium of the Archangels dated from the second quarter of the 13th century painted probably by Master of Sant Pau de Casserres (Mestre de Sant Pau de Casserres) painted also murals in the church of Sant Pau de Casserres in the town of Casserres (Berguedà) in Catalonia, Spain, now on display in the National Art Museum of Catalonia (Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya) in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Glossa, cf. Jerome, *Homiliae in Jeremiam* 2 (PL 25.605): Curavimus Babylonem, et non est sanata. Relinquamus eam. Vide autem, homo, ne quando angelis praecipiat Deus, ut ad languorem animae tuae medicaminum emplastra conficiant, si quomodo possis ab aegrotatione sanari, et respondeant angeli: Curavimus Babylonem, istam ostendentes a passionibus confusam animam suam, et non est sanata. Non scientiam artis suae, neque resinae vim criminantur; sed te, qui praeceptis eorum obsequi noluisti, dicentes: Curavimus Babylonem, et non est sanata. Relinquamus eam. Steterunt medici sub magno medico angeli Dei, volentes curare imbecillitates nostras, volentes animam liberare de vitiis, sed nos ipsi repellimus eos, dum consiliis eorum non acquiescimus. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)