

ANGELS

by

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Introduction

In Christian Theology an Angel is a "Celestial Being"; and in post-canonical and apocalyptic literature, Angels are grouped into varying orders.

The hierarchy, thus constructed, was adapted for church use by the early Christian Fathers, and has been in use ever since.

The Nine Orders of Christian Angels

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (c.650 - c.725 AD) produced a list of nine distinct orders of Angels, which, in turn, fall under three major groups known as "Choirs".

Pseudo-Dionysius represented himself as St. Dionysius the Areopagite, an Athenian member of the judicial council, the Areopagus, who was converted by St. Paul (see Acts 17:34). Thus providing himself with impeccable Christian credentials, Dionysius acquired almost apostolic authority, giving his writings enormous influence in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Ps Dionysius was the author of three long treatises (*The Divine Names*, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*) one short treatise (*The Mystical Theology*), and ten letters expounding various aspects of Christian Philosophy from a mystical and Neoplatonic perspective.

The nine orders

1st Choir of Angels	2nd Choir of Angels	3rd Choir of Angels
1) Seraphim	4) Dominions	7) Principalities
2) Cherubim	5) Virtues	8) Archangels
3) Thrones	6) Powers	9) Angels

The First Circle, or Choir, of the Heavenly Hierarchy

- 1) **Seraphim** - these are the angels that come first and reside closest to the throne of God. They exist in the uppermost part of the hierarchy and their name means "ardour". The Seraphim encircle God's throne, and exist from the love emanated by God - they unceasingly chant the Trisagion, "Holy, holy, holy..."

Seraphim are also known as fiery serpents, and it is said that the light they give off is so intense, "that not even the other divine beings may look upon them". It is also said that there are four of these angelic beings, which are listed as the four holy beasts in the book of Revelation, and which are also described as angels with four faces and six wings.

"The name Seraphim clearly indicates their ceaseless and eternal revolution about Divine Principles, their heat and keenness, the exuberance of their intense, perpetual, tireless

activity, and their elevative and energetic assimilation of those below, kindling them and firing them to their own heat, and wholly purifying them by a burning and all-consuming flame; and by the unhidden, unquenchable, changeless, radiant and enlightening power, dispelling and destroying the shadows of darkness." (Ps Dionysius the Areopagite, The Celestial Hierarchy)

- 2) **Cherubim** - their name means the "fullness of knowledge", and the Cherubim have full insight into God's secrets and the fullness of the divine science of heaven. "It is also they who are often sent to earth with the greatest of tasks; the expulsion of Man from the Garden of Eden and the Annunciation of Christ were both performed by cherubim". The Cherubim also enlighten the lesser choirs of angels, and are the Voice of Divine Wisdom to them.

Contrary to popular depiction, the cherubim are not fat, winged babies. Instead, they are described as "sphinx like creatures" in Assyrian lore; or the angels mounted upon the Ark of the Covenant and Solomon's temple as described in the Bible.

The Cherubim are also known as the charioteers of God, who drive and steer the Ophanim.

"The name Cherubim denotes their power of knowing and beholding God, their receptivity to the highest Gift of Light, their contemplation of the Beauty of the Godhead in Its First Manifestation, and that they are filled by participation in Divine Wisdom, and bounteously outpour to those below them from their own fount of wisdom." (Ps Dionysius the Areopagite, The Celestial Hierarchy)

- 3) **Thrones** - they are also known as the Ophanim, and their primary function is to be God's "chariot". Their secondary function is to dispense God's judgement - they act with impartialness and humility to bring about the desires of God. Also, God's spirit is conveyed in a certain manner to these angels, who in turn pass on the message to men and the inferior angels.

The Thrones are described as great wheels, covered with a host eyes, and glowing with a bright and radiant light.

"The name of the most glorious and exalted Thrones denotes that which is exempt from and untainted by any base and earthly thing, and the supermundane ascent up the steep. For these have no part in that which is lowest, but dwell in fullest power, immovably and perfectly established in the Most High, and receive the Divine Immanence above all passion and matter, and manifest God, being attentively open to divine participations." (Ps Dionysius the Areopagite, The Celestial Hierarchy)

The Second Circle, or Choir, of the Heavenly Hierarchy

- 4) **Dominions** - "rule over all the angelic orders charged with the execution of the commands of the Great Monarch." They are also known as the Hashmallim, and their purpose is to oversee and regulate the duties of the lower angels. Dominions receive their orders from the seraphim and cherubim, and then make known the commands of God to man - the Dominions also ensure that the cosmos remains in order.

"The name given to the holy Dominions signifies, I think, a certain unbounded elevation to that which is above, freedom from all that is of the earth, and from all inward inclination to the bondage of discord, a liberal superiority to harsh tyranny, an exemptness from degrading servility and from all that is low: for they are untouched by any inconsistency. They are true Lords, perpetually aspiring to true lordship, and to the Source of lordship, and they providentially fashion themselves and those below them, as far as possible, into the likeness of true lordship. They do not turn towards vain shadows, but wholly give themselves to that true Authority, forever one with the Godlike Source of lordship." (Ps Dionysius the Areopagite, The Celestial Hierarchy)

- 5) **Virtues** - these are also known as the Malakim and the Tarshishim, and they carry out the orders issued by the Dominations. Further, Dominions have two tasks; to maintain the aspects of the natural world, and to bestow blessings upon the material world.

"The name of the holy Virtues signifies a certain powerful and unshakable virility welling forth into all their Godlike energies; not being weak and feeble for any reception of the divine Illuminations granted to it; mounting upwards in fullness of power to an assimilation with God; never falling away from the Divine Life through its own weakness, but ascending unwaveringly to the superessential Virtue which is the Source of virtue: fashioning itself, as far as it may, in virtue; perfectly turned towards the Source of virtue, and flowing forth providentially to those below it, abundantly filling them with virtue." (Ps Dionysius the Areopagite, The Celestial Hierarchy)

Abbe Boudon says: *"It is through them also that God governs the seasons, the visible heavens and the elements in general, although angels of the lower hierarchy have charge of them."*

- 6) **Powers** - These hold one of the most dangerous tasks, maintaining the border between Heaven and Earth. The powers are on guard for demonic attacks, and they act like a heavenly defence force. They are appointed and set apart to fight against the evil spirits and to defeat any wicked plans.

During heavenly warfare the Powers are a major line of defence. They are responsible for the guarding of the "celestial byways between the two realms", and for ensuring that souls which leave the mortal world will safely reach the heavenly realms.

It is interesting to note that there are more angels from the ranks of the powers listed as fallen than from any of the other hierarchies.

"The name of the holy Powers, co-equal with the Divine Dominions and Virtues, signifies an orderly and unconfined order in the divine receptions, and the regulation of intellectual and super-mundane power which never debases its authority by tyrannical force, but is irresistibly urged onward in due order to the Divine. It beneficently leads those below it, as far as possible, to the Supreme Power which is the Source of Power, which it manifests after the manner of Angels in the well-ordered ranks of its own authoritative power." (Ps Dionysius the Areopagite, The Celestial Hierarchy)

Abbe Boudon says of Powers: *"When we see storms gathering either in the Church or in the State, machinations to resist those who are working for the glory of God, extraordinary conspiracies to defeat some great good which is being planned for some diocese, city or country, then it is that we ought to perform frequent devotions in honour of these Powers of heaven, that they may overturn and destroy all the might and miserable plotting of hell."*

The Third Circle, or Choir, of the Heavenly Hierarchy

- 7) **Principalities** - These guide and protect the world's nations and cities, and, directly watch over the mortal world and are "executive" regarding the "visible world" of men. Religion and of politics are also protected by them and, consequently they are given more freedom and authority to act than the lesser angels below them. Additionally, the Principalities have the task of managing the duties of the angels.

"The name of the Celestial Principalities signifies their Godlike princeliness and authoritativeness in an Order which is holy and most fitting to the princely Powers, and that they are wholly turned towards the Prince of Princes, and lead others in princely fashion, and that they are formed, as far as possible, in the likeness of the Source of Principality, and reveal Its superessential order by the good Order of the princely Powers." (Ps Dionysius the Areopagite, The Celestial Hierarchy)

St. Thomas says of Principalities: *"The execution of the angelic ministrations consists in announcing divine things. Now, in the execution of any action there are beginners and leaders; this-the leadership-belongs to the Principalities."*

- 8) **Archangels** - These are commissioned with the more important missions to men. Archangels act as leaders in the divine army during battle and in the protecting of the Church (such leadership has been by St. Michael). Archangels serve as guardians (or appoint other

guardians) over great personages, such as the Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Rulers of States, and others with special work to do for the "glory of God upon earth". Additionally, Archangels have the responsibility of overseeing the duties of the lesser angels.

"The choir of the holy Archangels is placed in the same threefold Order as the Celestial Principalities; for, as has been said, there is one Hierarchy and Order which includes these and the Angels. But since each Hierarchy has first, middle and last ranks, the holy Order of Archangels, through its middle position, participates in the two extremes, being joined with the most .holy Principalities and with the holy Angels." (Ps Dionysius the Areopagite, The Celestial Hierarchy)

- 9) **Angels** - These have two functions: 1) they are the ordinary messengers sent to men to watch over mortals in a more direct manner than the principalities. Angels reflect the "goodness of God" and direct it toward mortals. They also help to protect, and keep safe, households and individual souls from demonic attack. 2) Angels carry God's word to mankind, and act as messengers and couriers to both God and the upper ranks of the heavenly hierarchy.

"For the Angels, as we have said, fill up and complete the lowest choir of all the Hierarchies of the Celestial Intelligences since they are the last of the Celestial Beings possessing the angelic nature. And they, indeed, are more properly named Angels by us than are those of a higher rank because their choir is more directly in contact With manifested and mundane things.

The highest Order, as we have said, being in the foremost place near the Hidden One, must be regarded as hierarchically ordering in a bidden manner the second Order; and the second Order of Dominions, Virtues and Powers, leads the Principalities, Archangels and Angels more manifestly, indeed, than the first Hierarchy, but in a more hidden manner than the Order below it; and the revealing Order of the Principalities, Archangels and Angels presides one through the other over the human hierarchies so that their elevation and turning to God and their communion and union with Him may be in order; and moreover, that the procession from God, beneficently granted to all the Hierarchies, and visiting them all in common, may be with the most holy order.

Accordingly the Word of God has given our hierarchy into the care of Angels, for Michael is called Lord of the people of Judah, and other Angels are assigned to other peoples. For the Most High established the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the Angels of God." (Ps Dionysius the Areopagite, The Celestial Hierarchy)

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The Seven Holy Angels

The Seven holy angels are:

- 1) **Michael** - "The Warrior" - The great prince of all the angels, and leader of the celestial armies. Presiding spirit of the planet Mercury. Brings, to man, the gift of prudence.
- 2) **Gabriel** - "The Herald" - The angel of death; the prince of fire and thunder; God's chief messenger; the angel of the annunciation.

Muslims refer to Gabriel as the chief of the four favoured angels and the spirit of truth. Gabriel was the angel who, according to the Koran, revealed the sacred laws to the Phrophet Muhammad.

- 3) **Raphael** - "The Healer"
- 4) **Uriel** - "The Bringer of Light"
- 5) **Chamuel** - Chamuel's name means "He who sees God", or "He who seeks God", and he is a powerful healer and leader in the Angelic hierarchy
- 6) **Jophiel** - Jophiel's name means "Beauty of God".

7) **Zadkiel** - Zadkiel's name means "Righteousness of God".

Some authorities include or substitute one or more of the following Angels in "The Seven":

- **Ariel** - Ariel's name means "Lion or lioness of God", and he is involved with healing and protecting nature.
- **Azrael** - Azrael's name means "Whom God helps", and his primary role is to help people to cross over to heaven when they die.
- **Jeremiel** - Jeremiel's name means "Mercy of God", and he helps the new arrivals in the spirit world to review their lives in preparation for judgement.
- **Metatron** - an Angel who is linked to children. Metatron is the twin brother of the Archangel Sandalphon.
- **Raguel** - Raguel's name means "Friend of God"; and he oversees all of the other Archangels and Angels and ensures that they work together in harmony and according to divine decree and will.
- **Raziel** - Raziel's name means "Secret of God", and he is the keeper of all of the secrets of the universe and how the universe operates.
- **Sandalphon** - Sandalphon's name means "brother" in Greek, and he is the twin brother, the Archangel Metatron.

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The Fallen Host

The fallen Host are the Angels that have fallen from God's grace - although this group is rarely alluded to in holy writ, they do serve as a warning to the faithful of what the "wrath of God" can bring.

Fallen Angels can be divided into two main groups:

1) **The Angels who followed with Satan** during the "war in Heaven".

John speaks of this war in the Book Of Revelation:

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev 12:7-9)

2) **The Fallen Grigori.**

These were the Angels who were sent to look after, guide, and assist man during the beginning of civilisation. Unfortunately, instead of fulfilling their positive role, these Angels began to teach man "sciences" that God had categorically forbidden. These sciences included astrology, divination, herb craft, and magic.

To make matters worse, these Angels also started to lust after the "daughters of Man". In order to satisfy their lust, these Angels took on physical form and had a physical relationship with the women. This was described in Genesis as follows:

There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. (Gen 6:4)

These mighty men were called the "Nephilim".

This was also mentioned in the Book of Enoch:

The Book of Enoch

VI-XI. The Fall of the Angels: the Demoralisation of Mankind: the Intercession of the Angels on behalf of Mankind. The Dooms pronounced by God on the Angels: the Messianic Kingdom (a Noah fragment).

Chapter VI.

1. And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters.

2. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: 'Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children.'

3. And Semjâzâ, who was their leader, said unto them: 'I fear ye will not indeed agree to do this deed, and I alone shall have to pay the penalty of a great sin.'

4. And they all answered him and said: 'Let us all swear an oath, and all bind ourselves by mutual imprecations not to abandon this plan but to do this thing.'

5. Then swore they all together and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it.

*6. And they were in all two hundred; who descended in the days of **Jared** on the summit of Mount Hermon, and they called it Mount Hermon, because they had sworn and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it.*

7. And these are the names of their leaders: Sêmîazâz, their leader, Arâkîba, Râmêêl, Kôkabîêl, Tâmiêl, Râmîêl, Dânel, Êzêqêêl, Barâqijâl, Asâêl, Armârôs, Batârêl, Anânêl, Zaqîêl, Samsâpêêl, Satarêl, Tûrêl, Jômjâêl, Sariêl.

8. These are their chiefs of tens.

Chapter VII.

1. And all the others together with them took unto themselves wives, and each chose for himself one, and they began to go in unto them and to defile themselves with them, and they taught them charms and enchantments, and the cutting of roots, and made them acquainted with plants.

2. And they became pregnant, and they bare great giants, whose height was three thousand ells:

3. Who consumed all the acquisitions of men. And when men could no longer sustain them,

4. the giants turned against them and devoured mankind.

5. And they began to sin against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish, and to devour one another's flesh, and drink the blood.

6. Then the earth laid accusation against the lawless ones.

Consequence

Consequently, the Grigori were imprisoned in a layer of heaven; and although they appealed to Enoch to speak to God on their behalf, they remained imprisoned for "70 generations" (it is still not clear if they were ever released).

Concerning the Nephilim, it appears that one of the reasons for the great flood, was not only to punish disobedient man, but to cleanse the earth of the Nephilim - the union of Angels with humankind. It appears that God was very threatened by this union, and applied a very vigorous and complete cleansing program.

In both cases the Angels turned from God, by misusing the "free will" that had been granted to them by God himself.



(Picture above - Michael casts out Lucifer and the Angels (1/3 of the host of Heaven) who followed him - The War in Heaven)



(Picture above - The Grigori - The Joining of Angels with Humankind)



(Picture above - Global Ethnic Cleansing - "God Style" - The Great Flood)

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Islamic Angel Names

Muslims say that Angels were created from pure, bright gems, the genii from fire, and man from clay.

The four Islamic Archangels are:

- 1) **Gabriel** (or Jibraaiyl or Jibril or Jibrail in Arabic) - The Angel of revelations. Gabriel was the angel who, according to the Koran, revealed the sacred laws to Muhammad.
- 2) **Michael** (Mikhail or Mik'aaeel in Arabic) - The Angel who is the champion of the faith.
- 3) **Raphael** (Israfil or Israafiyl) - The Angel who sounds the trumpet at the resurrection.
- 4) **Azrael** - The Angel of death.

End

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