



# “Are They Not All Ministering Spirits?” (Hebrews 1:14a): Comparative Angelology in the Letter to the Hebrews and in Luke’s Writings.”

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**Resumen** La Carta a los Hebreos, inspirada por San Pablo, y los escritos de Lucas, mencionan a los ángeles más que otros autores del Nuevo Testamento, con la excepción del Libro del Apocalipsis de Juan. Dado que Pablo y Lucas eran compañeros de viaje, uno puede suponer una relación teológica íntima entre sus enseñanzas sobre los ángeles. Este presente estudio comparativo se compromete a llenar un vacío en la beca bíblica desde la década de 1950, a saber, explorar más a fondo cualquier interdependencia literaria o teológica entre los escritos de Lucas y Hebreos, cualquier semejanza, influencia mutua, o contradistinción de su enseñanza acerca de los ángeles de Dios. Al final, una imagen impresionante toma forma que parece confirmar el propósito diferente de esos géneros literarios y su respectiva angelología.

**Palabras clave:** Nuevo Testamento, Géneros literarios, Ángeles

**Summary** The Pauline-inspired Letter to the Hebrews and Luke’s writings mention the angels more than other New Testament authors, with the exception of the Book of Revelation. Given that Paul and Luke were travel companions, one can surmise an intimate theological relationship between their teachings on the angels. This present comparative study undertakes to fill a gap in biblical

scholarship since the late 1950s, namely, to explore more at length any literary or theological interdependence between Luke's writings and Hebrews, any similarity, mutual influence, or dissimilarity of their teaching about the angels of God. In the end, a stunning vignette takes shape that appears to confirm the differing purpose of those literary genres and their respective angelology.

**Key words:** New Testament, Literary genres, Angels

## INTRODUCTION

Given the well-known New Testament tradition that Saints Paul and Luke were travel companions for several years, it is to be an obvious field of research to undertake a comparison of their writings. Luke's presence in Rome with Paul near the end of the latter's life was attested by 2 Tim 4:11: "Only Luke is with me". Most of all, his presence can be felt in those several accounts, where Luke, in the first person plural, affirms his eyewitness, including in Acts 28:16: "And when *we* came to Rome [...]." Both Luke and the author of Hebrews are described by most New Testament scholars as the most literary writers of the New Testament, paired with their masterful use of the Septuagint. In consonance with some accounts, Luke also contributed to the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>1</sup>

Since Luke's Gospel and his Acts of the Apostles are already an enormous pool for scholarly investigation, a selection will have to be made from among the Pauline letters. And so, the letter to the Hebrews will be the choice, since the scientific consensus maintains that Paul at the very least inspired its Theology. The most recent study in this regard dates back to an essay by C.P. JONES, entitled "The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Lucan Writings" in 1957.<sup>2</sup> Why not revive the subject after over six decades?

In order to respect the limitations of this essay, one will have to make another determination, this time concerning the theological topic to be compared. After some searching into the matter, a striking circumstance re-emerges: the Gospel, Acts and Hebrews contain the most numerous references to the angels in the New Testament, bested only by the Book of Revelation. That the latter excels in mentioning those heavenly messengers – approximately sixty-eight times – is hardly a surprise, given its apocalyptic genre. Yet, Luke and Hebrews are not far behind, with a combined volume of fifty-six mentions, twenty-two of which

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1 CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, *Epistle to the Hebrews*: [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org) (accessed 10 July 2019).

2 Published in NINEHAM, D.E., ed., *Studies in the Gospels, Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, Basil Blackwell: Oxford 1957, pp. 113-144.

found in Luke's Gospel (twenty-three when including the "two men" in 24:4), twenty-one in the Acts (twenty-two when including the "two men" in 1:10; a Lukan total of forty-three), and thirteen in Hebrews, which, incidentally, surpasses all other Pauline letters. By comparison, the Gospel of Matthew refers to the angels only twenty times, Mark six times, and the John's Gospel has a mere four occurrences of that word.

As indicated above, if Luke and Paul spent considerable time in each other's company, then it appears very likely that there be some theological kinship between their writings. JONES in his article avers an early Christian conviction that Luke actually translated Paul's letter to the Hebrews: "to suggest that they both share the same theological outlook and together represent a form of theological thought that was current in the post-Pauline gentile Church of the latter part of the first century."<sup>3</sup> And again, he assumes "between these writings a kinship of outlook, a common family likeness. [...] St. Luke and Hebrews stand together as forming a solid bloc, in distinction from St. Mark and St. Matthew, from St. Paul, and from St. John."<sup>4</sup> The same author succeeds in documenting an extensive similarity of language between the two NT writers.<sup>5</sup> He also hints at a comparative angelology, albeit without much elaboration.<sup>6</sup>

And that is precisely where this study aims at, namely to explore more at length any literary or theological interdependence between Luke's writings and Hebrews, any likeness, mutual influence, or contradistinction of their teaching about the angels of God. For the sake of clarity, it will be advised to first analyze the angels as covered by Hebrews, followed by themes shared with Luke and with Acts; eventually, one will examine the passages with angels exclusive to Luke and Acts respectively.

## **1. HEBREWS' ANGELOLOGY: LOFTY VISION OF THEIR NATURE AND FUNCTION**

### *1.1. The angels as exclusively covered by Hebrews*

In reflecting on the angels in the Letter to the Hebrews, four themes appear to be crystallizing. In discussing them, the order of their appearance in the epistle is followed, beginning with the inferior nature of angels compared to the Son of God.

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3 JONES, *Hebrews and the Lucan Writings*, p. 113.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 142.

5 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

6 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

### 1.1.1. Ontological comparison: Christ's superiority over angels

The thought that the Son of God exists on a higher ontological level than angels plainly emerges as early as Heb 1:4, where the incarnate Word of God is described as “having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”<sup>7</sup> This verse marks the introduction of the angels within the epistolary *exordium* as an important theme. The inaugural context is that of “Christ’s ruling position being better than the position of angels.”<sup>8</sup> The previous verse, 1:3, alludes to his Incarnation and to his return to the Father’s right hand after accomplishing his work of redemption, namely, “when he had made purification for sins.” The “superior inherited name” is the biblical way of expressing the very nature of the Second Divine Person, now in his Hypostatic Union in session at the Father’s right hand.<sup>9</sup>

Commentators notice that “Hebrews has a penchant for comparison and the author likes the word *kreittōn*, ‘better’ or ‘superior’ (cf. 6:9; 7:7.19.22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16; 12:24). [...] The point here is that as Son he not only surpassed the previous prophetic messengers of God’s word, but was also superior to the angels, who should be looked upon as familiar mediators between God and humans. [...] perhaps the superiority of Christ to them says something about the word spoken in him as compared to the Law.”<sup>10</sup> The main point about angels in Heb 1 is their subordination to the exalted Christ (vv. 5.6.7.13). This will be contrasted in Heb 2 by the emphasis on the incarnate Son’s temporary subordination to angels (vv. 2.5.7.9.16). Elsewhere, Hebrews assumes, but does not lend prominence to, the angels’ role in the heavenly liturgy (12:22) and as God’s messengers (13:2), both of which ideas are probably implied in 1:14.

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7 All Scripture quotations are taken from *The New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV), which first appeared in 1989.

8 BEALE, G.K., *A New Testament Biblical Theology, The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI 2011, p. 464.

9 “Recent commentators have given various interpretations of this *ónoma*, but most understand it as a stylistic replacement for the title ‘Son’. Others have suggested the title ‘Lord’ or even ‘High Priest’ is in mind. Still others have understood the term *ónoma* to be in and of itself connoting the Messiah’s power, divinity, and superior rank.” BEALE, G.K. – CARSON, D.A., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI 2007, p. 924.

10 MITCHELL, A.C., *Hebrews*, Sacra Pagina, Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN 2007, p. 39. In this context, MITCHELL also underlines that the article before “angels” was included by the sacred author to insinuate that there may have been other stages of revelation that was mediated by angels, between the prophets and the Son, Heb 1:1-2.

One might say that the Gospel is to the Law what Christ is to the angels.<sup>11</sup> Jesus' superiority over the angels does raise two interpretive questions: First, how can the divine Son, "the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being" (Heb 1:3a), *become* superior to the angels? After all, they were created through him. Second, what is the name that he has inherited?<sup>12</sup> To signify more overtly the glorification of the Son, the author concludes his epistolary foreword (Heb 1:1-4) by stating that the Son has "become very superior to the angels". This can only refer to his human existence, for in his divine nature he infinitely excelled the angels already, and, therefore, could not become it. How did he become superior to the angels? "by inheriting a name very different from them." The Son of God, having become man "inherited a name very different from that of the angels."<sup>13</sup>

To illustrate the point of comparison, Hebrews expands on the above line of thought in 1:5, "For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you'? Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son'?" Assuredly, the Hebrew Old Testament refers to angels at times as "sons of God" (e.g., Gen 6:2.4; Psa 29:1; 82:6; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Dan 3:25). "When the 'begetting' of the Son took place is subject to a wide range of interpretations. Some commentators specify a moment sometime outside of time, perhaps at creation."<sup>14</sup> A homogeneous phrasing, as a *continuum* to v. 5, appears in Heb 1:13, "But to which of the angels has he ever said, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'?" "The image of enemies being transformed into a footstool indicates that the Son has been given power in exaltation. It speaks of vindication, as well, for the Son is not actually subduing his enemies. Rather, God does this for him."<sup>15</sup>

Almost rationalizing about their lesser nature, v. 14 adjoins this rhetorical question of outstanding theological density: "Are not all [angels] spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" This characterization of the function of angels is marvelously exemplified in the stories of their activity in Luke's infancy narrative, as also in Acts.<sup>16</sup>

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11 Cf. ELLINGWORTH, P., *The Epistle to the Hebrews, A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Eerdmans Publishing: Grand Rapids, MI 1993, p. 104.

12 Cf. HEALY, M., *Hebrews*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI 2016, p. 38.

13 Cf. AA.VV., eds., *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*, Paulist Press: New York, NY 2018, p. 1489.

14 MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 47.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

16 Cf. JONES, *Hebrews and the Lucan Writings*, pp. 120-121

Parenthetically, the adjective λειτουργικός has a cultic connotation in secular Greek and in the Septuagint, whereas the NeoVulgate rendition stresses the aspect of order and harmony: *administratorii spiritus*.<sup>17</sup> The angels are shown, therefore, as serving not the throne of God for once, as angels often do in the Hebrew Bible, but they are placed in service to those who await the inheritance of salvation.<sup>18</sup> In this fashion, the author of Hebrews is speaking on an eminent plane of theological insight about the angels, with little material detail concerning their actual mission. He prefers an ontological comparison that confirms Christ's superiority over all angelic spirits.

### *1.1.2. Eschatological comparison: No angelic authority over a Christocentric re-creation*

Paired with the above notion of Christ's more excellent nature is the belief articulated in Heb 2:5, namely, that the angels do not possess any ultimate authority over the *eschaton*, understood as time and space redeemed, re-created and glorified in Jesus: "Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels." It is useful to remember that the tradition of God subjecting the world to angels was current in Hellenistic Judaism, as <sup>LXX</sup>Deut 32:8 shows. The future world (*orbem terrae futurum*), however, was not to be placed under their control, and the author mirrors that view: everything will be finalized in a Christocentric key.<sup>19</sup> "Angels never received the privilege of ruling the world to come. The task of ruling the world for God belongs to human beings, beginning with Adam."<sup>20</sup> At his point already a pattern emerges, in that, like the previous subject (1.1.1.), also this eschatological comparison is pondered in terms of sheer abstraction by the sacred author.

### *1.1.3. Soteriological comparison: Angels not redeemed by Christ, but only humans*

Slightly less loftiness can be spotted in Heb 2:16 which is weighing the angels' elimination from Christ's work of redemption: "For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham." Hence, the angels are not the object of the Redeemer's concern, but rather humans, and more

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17 Cf. ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, pp. 132-133.

18 Cf. MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 51.

19 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 64.

20 SCHREINER, T.R., *New Testament Theology, Magnifying God in Christ*, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI 2008, p. 381.

precisely, the descendants of Abraham. Those descendants intimate the salvific mission of the Church.<sup>21</sup> Yet if the Son of God truly bypasses and ignores the angelic spirits, then a rather doomful vision opens up before the reader's eyes, namely, that of fallen angels irredeemably caught up in unending darkness. There remains no hope for those demons, and by extension, for those who wind up reprobates.<sup>22</sup> The theological intuition of this soteriological comparison cannot be found elsewhere in the New Testament, it is unique to Hebrews.

#### *1.1.4. Ecclesiological inclusion: Angels part of the Mystical Body of Christ*

Perhaps the most distinguished facet of angelological teaching, and it is the last of those addressed exclusively in this letter, would be Heb 12:22, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering." Taking this "festal gathering of angels"<sup>23</sup> together with the "whole Church of firstborn sons and daughters" in v. 23, the author appears to speak about the eschatological configuration of the Church. It begs the inference that – in spite of 2:16, which permanently excludes merely the diabolical spirits – the angelic hosts are fully included in the Mystical Body of Christ, bringing about its fullness.<sup>24</sup> "In contrast to the terrifying sights associated with the Sinai phenomenon, the heavenly Jerusalem will be a place of festivity filled with angels beyond counting. Angels were part of the tradition of the Sinai theophany (Deut 33:2), but they are also frequent in the literature of Hellenistic Judaism where their number is extraordinary (e.g., *1 Enoch* 60:1)."<sup>25</sup>

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21 Cf. MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 75.

22 See DANTE ALIGHIERI's proverb "lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'intrate" ("all hope abandon, ye who enter here!"), *Divine Comedy*, Part One, *Inferno*.

23 ELLINGWORTH points to a striking, yet limited, parallel with Qumran's *War Scroll*: "For the multitude of the Holy One [is with Thee] in heaven, and the host of the angels is in Thy holy abode, praising thy name." (*IQM* 12:1-4), *Hebrews*, pp. 676-677.

24 There is a respectable lineage of ecclesial writers who, at the very least, do not explicitly preclude the angels from the Mystical Body of Christ: see AUGUSTINE's emphasis on the *Christus Totus*, THOMAS AQUINAS' teaching on Christ's headship ("Where there is one body, we must allow that there is one head. Now a multitude ordained to one end, with distinct acts and duties, may be metaphorically called one body. But it is manifest that both men and angels are ordained to one end, which is the glory of the Divine fruition. Hence the mystical body of the Church consists not only of men but of angels." *Summa Theologica*, Third Part, Question 8), as well as Pius XII's 1943 Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*.

25 MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 283.

Before scrutinizing the angelological themes shared with Luke's writings, one could sum up the findings so far by acknowledging that all the above tenets, to a varying degree, are restricted to this Epistle; no other New Testament author asserts these realities quite the same way, adding to the distinction of Hebrew's angelology. It reveals the nature and role of angels on a soaring level of theological speculation. While they are conceived as incontrovertibly inferior to the substance and power of the Second Divine Person, and not at all the focus of his redemptive mission, they are, nevertheless, truly part of his eschatological Church.

### *1.2. Angelic themes shared with the Gospel of Luke*

In addition to the above, three angel-related topics are common to Hebrews and Luke's Gospel, all of whom are theologically interrelated.

#### *1.2.1. Angels worship Christ*

To begin with Heb 1:6: "And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him'." "This quotation from the LXX appears to come from Psa 96:7, which has changed the MT's [Hebrew Masoretic Text] 'all gods bow down before him.' Another possible source is Deut 32:43, 'and let all the sons of God worship him'."<sup>26</sup> It refers grammatically and terminologically to either (a.) the Incarnation (cf. Heb 10:5-9), (b.) the Nativity, (c.) the Ascension, or (d.) the second coming of Christ; Patristic sources are divided, and its syntax is inconclusive. The textual elasticity notwithstanding, its theological message is unmistakable in calling attention to the Christocentric worshipfulness of all the angels.

Luke's account of the angels' position in his Gospel's infancy narrative is coextensive, albeit more connected to a concrete historical circumstance. He exhibits them addressing some shepherds present in the fields in that Bethlehemic region, keeping watch over their flock by night (Lk 2:4.8): "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!'", Lk 2:13-14. For the phrase "the heavenly army", see 2 Chron 33:3; Neh 9:6; Jer 8:2.<sup>27</sup> It may refer to the stars, but it is clearly used of angels in

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<sup>26</sup> MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. JOHNSON, L.T., *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 3, The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN 1991, p. 50.



1 Kgs 22:19.<sup>28</sup> Noticeable is also a subtle terminological difference: Hebrews has “to worship, adore” (προσκυνησάτωσαν, *adorent*), whereas Luke employs the more generic term “to praise” (αἰνούντων, *laudantium*). Hence, in unison with what was ascertained already, the Epistle stays on a more transcendental level of theological description than the Gospel, which is tied into a specific historical situation. Further underscoring this is the ensuing verse, “when the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’” Lk 2:15. The reader learns that this angelic army had traveled from their autochthonous environment, i.e., heaven, down to earth, in order to surround the birth of Christ with their praise. Consequently, even though both authors could be interpreted as implying the selfsame moment in time, Hebrews tells it in almost meta-historical terms.

### 1.2.2. Angels as God’s servants

Another juxtaposeable theme is that of the angels acting as servants, accentuating God’s sovereign rule over them: “Of the angels he says, ‘He makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire.’” Heb 1:7. The sacred author employs some intriguing Greek lexeme when he equates the classical word ἄγγελος (*angelus*) with the generic πνεῦμα (*spiritus*), as well as λειτουργός (*minister*)<sup>29</sup>, and πυρὸς φλόγα (*flammam ignis*).<sup>30</sup> “This quotation is taken from LXXPsa 103:4, where it has the meaning that God has turned angels into winds or spirits. The Greek word *pneuma* can mean either. The MT is ambiguous and may have the meaning that God makes fire into servants, or servants into fire.”<sup>31</sup>

Just as observed before, the correlated passage in Luke’s Gospel is appreciably more corporeal and associated with an historical event: “Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.” Lk 1:11. “The angel is identified as Gabriel in 1:19. This angel also appeared

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28 Cf. MARSHALL, I.H., *The Gospel of Luke, A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Paternoster Press: Grand Rapids, MI 1978, p. 111.

29 Its lexical meaning derives from its root λαός + ἔργον, lit. “work of the people”, and thus, “one engaged in special service, cultic and other, a public servant, minister with special reference to accountability before God (see also Rom 13:6; 15:16; Heb 8:2); curiously, in Phil 2:25 the term refers to the role of Epaphroditus as personal aide to Paul.

30 There are indications of “a job differentiation among angels as well, for there are angels over the elements, including water (Rev 16:5; John 5:4), fire (Rev 14:18; Heb 1:7), and wind (Rev 7:1; Heb 1:7).” FREEDMAN, D.N., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, Doubleday: New York, NY 1992, p. 254.

31 MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 49.

to Daniel at the time of evening incense offering, to prophesy a seventy-week period required ‘to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place’ (Dan 9:20-27). Many scholars detect the influence of Daniel’s apocalyptic vision in Luke’s infancy account.”<sup>32</sup> “The altar of incense stood in the center of the holy place. [...] The passive form ὤφθη (*apparuit*) [...] denotes a real appearance rather than a dream.”<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, Hebrews and Luke agree on the angels’ servant mission, but whereas the former identifies it in historically disengaged terms, the latter ties it into a perceptible moment on earth.

Before moving on, one more dissimilarity should be pointed out, namely, that the diction “angel of the Lord” is found only in Luke’s work: it is a redolent of the ubiquitous Old Testament *Malakh Yahweh*. Most appearances of this dominical angel leave the reader perplexed as to whether it was an angel or Yahweh himself who appeared. Lk 1:11.19 identifies him with Gabriel, who, in Catholic tradition, is one of the three archangels.

### 1.2.3. *Christ lower than the angels in his Incarnation*

The last angelological joint area between the two authors is somewhat surprising, in light of what was said about Christ’s superiority to the angels. Heb 2:7 in fact affirms the opposite, namely, that the eternal Word by his Incarnation humbled himself for a brief period of time under the angels: “You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor.” The statement “made him a little while lower than the angels” is analogous to “crowned him with honor and glory” in the same verse, making both roughly synonymous. This overtone, however, seems paradoxical, as “honor and glory” are poles apart from any kenotic abasement. Psalm 8 stands in a complementary relationship to this, giving tribute to the role humans play in creation, even if they rank below angels in the created order.<sup>34</sup> Closely related to this verse is Heb 2:9, which elucidates how the Savior’s death experience made him temporarily inferior to the angelic world: “but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.” “Not only is the death of Jesus placed at the center, but his incarnation and exaltation are given their due as well.”<sup>35</sup>

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32 JOHNSON, *Luke*, p. 32-33.

33 MARSHALL, *Luke*, p. 55.

34 Cf. MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 65.

35 MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 66.

Just as realized before, Luke's Gospel translates the exalted theology of Hebrews into a palpable affair, demonstrating how the angels' splendor temporarily outshone that of Christ himself, that is, when the heavenly messenger appeared to the shepherds in Bethlehem: "Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified." Lk 2:9. This "angel of the Lord" may well be Gabriel (cf. Lk 1:11.19). The Greek verb ἐφίστημι conceivably carries the sense of a sudden arrival, paired with blazing glory indicating the presence of the divine.<sup>36</sup>

### 1.3. *Angelic themes shared with the Acts of the Apostles*

As it happens, there is no single theme shared by the three writings, or by Luke and Acts among themselves. Yet there are two passages that have a commensurate angelological import in Hebrews and the Acts of the Apostles.

#### 1.3.1. *Angels mediate Torah*

On the whole, the author of Hebrews rehashes the concept of God's wisdom and law having been communicated by the hands of angels in the Old Dispensation: "For if the message (λόγος, *sermo*) declared through angels was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty, how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Heb 2:2-3a. "Paul implies as much in Gal 3:19, when he speaks of the Law as inferior to the promise because it was spoken through angels. Traditionally, the Law was seen as mediated by angels (cf. Acts 7:53). In Judaism this mediation does not at all affect the importance or stature of the Law. For Paul and the author of Hebrews, however, there is a difference in importance between God's word spoken through a Son and what was spoken by means of angels."<sup>37</sup>

This thought is echoed in Stephen's speech, as he applies the traditional teaching of angelic mediation to his present hearers: "You are the ones that received the law (νόμον, *legem*) as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it." Acts 7:53. One conspicuous variance is that Hebrews chooses the nonspecific term of "word", while Acts has "law". As a point of interest, early evidence for Torah being given by the instrumentality of angels is not widespread. Of the texts cited in support of the tradition, Gal 3:19 and Heb 2:2 are sure, but Christian; *The Book of Jubilees* 1:29, PHILO, *On Dreams* 1:141-143,

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36 Cf. MARSHALL, *Luke*, p. 108-109.

37 MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 56.

and FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities of the Jews* 15:136, are all thinkable, but disputed; *The Testament of Dan* 6:2 is dubious.<sup>38</sup> In closing, both the Epistle and Acts display a sound concurrence on the angels' intermediating exercise between the divine and the human spheres, especially when it comes to the revelation of God's word.

### 1.3.2. Veiled appearances of angels

Hebrews and Acts are equally united in the understanding that God's angel visited and communed with individual persons on earth: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Heb 13:2. Insinuated here is Gen 18:2-15; still, others who entertained angels may be eligible: Lot (Gen 19:1-14), Gideon (Judges 6:11-18), Manoah and his wife (Judg 13:3-22), and Tobit (Tob 12:1-20).<sup>39</sup> Without a doubt, this is the most factual and history-bound mention of angels in Hebrews.

Matching this verse is the visitation of Moses in Acts 7:30, "Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush." Allusion is made here to LXXExo 3:2, except that Luke omits "of the Lord" after angel, a blank nonetheless supplied by the Western Text tradition. On the basis of this verse, the sacred author keeps on mentioning "the angel" throughout the rest of Stephen's discourse, even when the Septuagint itself leaves it out (7:35.38.53).<sup>40</sup> Formerly a periphrasis to avoid pronouncing the ineffable name of Yahweh, the LXX's own use of this *Malakh-Yahweh*-derivative is infrequent enough to validate Luke's practice.<sup>41</sup> Be that as it may, the happening here told is paramount to Luke's narration, although disregarded in the Jewish parallels.<sup>42</sup>

Acts 7:35 substantiates the persuasion that it was God who made himself present in the angel: "It was this Moses whom they rejected when they said, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' and whom God now sent as both ruler and liberator through the angel who appeared to him in the bush." Furthermore,

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38 Cf. JOHNSON, L.T., *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina Series, The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN 1992, p. 134.

39 Cf. MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 293.

40 Cf. JOHNSON, *Acts*, p. 128.

41 See also Exo 14:19 and Lk 7:35; Deut 33:2 and Lk 7:53.

42 PHILO of Alexandria is the most mindful commentator of this occurrence, incorporating the metaphorical exegesis of the burning bush as the people who are oppressed but never consumed. The angel, in turn, is emblematic of God's providence, which quietly sends comfort in danger, exceeding every hope (*Life of Moses* 1:65-67.69).

Acts 7:38 extends that angelic intervention even to the episode involving God's holy mountain: "He is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living oracles to give to us."

In spotlighting the commonality between Hebrews and Luke's writings, what matures at this juncture is the fact that the former maintains that rather non-concrete approach to the angels, whereas the latter, very much in concert with the literary genre of Gospel and Acts, attaches the presence of angelic spirits to the non-ethereal instants of divine-human encounters in the scriptural narrative.

## **2. LUKE'S ANGELOLOGY: HISTORICAL INTERACTION WITH GOD, CHRIST, THE CHURCH, AND HUMANITY**

Proposing to buttress the above point, the research now turns to texts that are proper to Luke's teaching on the angels, starting with the Gospel. Such an inquiry will hopefully enable an even more comprehensive picture of resemblance and dissemblance between the two sacred writers, i.e., Luke and Paul.

### *2.1. Gospel's angelology: Messengers of God, guardians of Christ*

Just as a preliminary *datum*, out of twenty-two instances of the angels in Luke's Gospel, fourteen can be found in the Infancy narrative.

#### *2.1.1. Messengers of the Triune God*

Announcing the birth of John the Baptist, Luke depicts the angel in his traditional role as God's messenger, which, of course, is the etymological meaning of the Greek noun ἄγγελος: "But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John'." Lk 1:13. As a consummate counterpart comes the announcement of Jesus' birth: "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth." Lk 1:26. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is being addressed by this heavenly messenger: "The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God'." Lk 1:30. After his mission was accomplished, the angel returns to his position in heaven: "Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word'. Then the angel departed from her." Lk 1:38.

Luke also delineates how the angels respond to the hesitation or worries of their interlocutors, as if they were partaking of the human nature: "Zechariah

said to the angel, ‘How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years’.” Lk 1:18. Gabriel listens to a comparable concern by the mother of Christ: “Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’” Lk 1:34. “Mary’s statement is straightforward and enables the angel to clarify the true origin of the child.”<sup>43</sup>

Luke’s specific contribution to the scriptural portrait of the angels features something already implied in the Old Testament, namely, that they are attendants in God’s very presence: “The angel replied, ‘I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news’.” Lk 1:19.<sup>44</sup> It is not only a good message, but the angel is also able to transmit the joy of being in the presence of the Almighty as adumbrated by the verb εὐαγγελίσασθαι (*evangelizare*) in both verses: “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.’” Lk 2:10.

Gabriel in his message to Mary discloses his special relationship to the Trinity, which would extend to all angels: “The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God’.” Lk 1:35. These words are an amazing glimpse into the angel’s intimate knowledge of God’s imminent plan<sup>45</sup> to bring about the Incarnation of the second divine person. Bolstering this spiritual affinity between the angels and the Holy Spirit in particular, is their portrayal in Heb 1:14 with the Greek word πνεύματα (*spiritus*).

### 2.1.2. Surrounding Jesus’ life

Luke’s Gospel is predominantly concrete when it comes to the angels surrounding the earthly and eschatological existence of Christ. Thus, for instance, no other New Testament writer insists that the archangel Gabriel is also the one to have imparted a name to the incarnate Son of God: “After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.” Lk 2:21.

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43 JOHNSON, *Luke*, p. 37.

44 “In the NT angels play the same role they played in the OT.” HAHN, S. *ed.*, *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, Doubleday: New York, NY 2009, p. 46.

45 Notice the triple grammatical future in the Greek original, expressing the impending action indicative of each divine person: (a.) “the Holy Spirit *will* come”, (b.) “the power of the Most High *will* overshadow”, (c.) “the child to be born *will* be holy; he *will* be called Son of God.”

Then there is mention of the angels in the context of Christ's temptation in the desert: "For it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you'." Lk 4:10 (cf. Mt 4:6). In fact, the Greek verb διαφυλάξει<sup>46</sup> underlines the intensity of the angelic care for their Master, whereas the Latin of the NeoVulgate, *conservet*, emphasizes perhaps more the aspect of preservation and protection.

Moreover, they are revealed as comforters in Christ's Passion: "Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength." Lk 22:43. In contradistinction to most angelic apparitions, on this occasion the angel makes himself present to his Master to offer consolation and, thereby, strength. "Note also that the idea of angels 'ministering' to Jesus at a time of testing is found elsewhere in the tradition (Mk 1:13)."<sup>47</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the angels are present at the resurrection of Christ: "and when they [the women] did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive." Lk 24:23. The women, therefore, in reporting their experience on Easter Sunday morning, understood the "two men" in Lk 24:4 (cf. Mk 16:5 ["a young man"]; Jn 20:12 ["two angels"]; see also Acts 1:10) to be angels ("While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men [ἄνδρες δύο, *duo viri*] in dazzling clothes stood beside them.<sup>5</sup> The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen.<sup>6</sup> Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,<sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again'." LK 24:4-7).

Most stunningly, however, the angels will be the parousiacal companions of Christ, true to the promise in Acts 1:11, "'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven'." In order to encourage the followers of Jesus to be bold evangelizers, Luke recalls the Lord's teaching about his second advent<sup>48</sup>, surrounded by his servants, the angels: "Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." Lk 9:26. The message is reiterated, albeit with slight changes to the way his disciples speak about Christ in public ("to be ashamed", "to acknowledge", "to disown", "to deny") in Lk 12:8 ("And I

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46 "From LXXPsa 90:11, omitted by Mt 4:6." JOHNSON, *Luke*, p. 74.

47 JOHNSON, *Luke*, p. 351.

48 JONES points to compelling kinship between the eschatology of Luke/Acts and Hebrews, cf. *Hebrews and the Lucan Writings*, p. 129-139.

tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God.”), and again in 12:9 (“but whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God.”).

Jesus repeatedly embraces the angelic spirits in his teaching to the crowds. Exceptional is the highlight on the angels’ capacity to experience joy at the destinies of humanity: “Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Lk 15:10. It “is the equivalent of ‘in heaven’ in the previous story (v. 7). The angels of God are pictured as part of the heavenly court also in 2:13-15; 9:26; 12:8-9. In Luke’s story, they mainly function as messengers from God to humans (1:11.26; 2:9; 22:43; Acts 8:26; 10:3; 12:7; 27:23).”<sup>49</sup> “The thought is of the angels rejoicing along with God.”<sup>50</sup>

Also limited to the Gospel of Luke is the conception of the souls of the righteous being transported at the end of their earthly lives by the angels into the bosom of Abraham: “The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried.” Lk 16:22. This figurative scenario is rather special, since the view of angels carrying the departed souls of the righteous into paradise is not found in rabbinic sources before A.D. 150. Underlined is God’s saving love lavished in the afterlife upon Lazarus, who had met with profound misfortune and suffering on earth.<sup>51</sup> Hence, the angels are instrumental in bringing about the paradigmatic reversal of fortune so typical of the biblical story.<sup>52</sup>

## 2.2. *Acts’ angelology: Assistants of the apostles, facilitators of Church expansion*

In order to complete the comparison between Hebrews and Luke’s writings, one must finally add a brief review of the angels in the Acts. As a *nexus* between the two writings of Luke, the Acts offers a shrouded sight of the angels at the moment of Jesus’ ascension: “While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. <sup>11</sup> They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven’.” Acts 1:10-11. These “two men” certainly remind the

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49 JOHNSON, *Luke*, p. 236.

50 MARSHALL, *Luke*, p. 604.

51 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 636.

52 Cf. GADENZ, P.T., *The Gospel of Luke*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI 2018, p. 287.



reader of the Lord's resurrection (Lk 24:4), but most of all, by closely interacting with the apostles, they set the stage for the angels' mission in this book.

### 2.2.1. Assistants to Apostles and Deacons

Acts 5:19-20 unveil the angels as the deliverers of all the apostles in the early Church: "But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and said, 'Go, stand in the temple and tell the people the whole message about this life'." Of note is that the Acts corroborate the Gospel's fondness for the title "angel of the Lord", referring to an angel of rank or stature who carries out special missions for Yahweh (cf. Exo 3:2; Josh 5:13-15; Judg 2:1-5).<sup>53</sup> No less than six mentions of this angel are linked to the deliverance of the apostle Peter, which makes up the largest cluster of recurrences within one single narrated event. "Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, 'Get up quickly'. And the chains fell off his wrists." Acts 12:7. "Together with the use of *idou* ("look, behold"), the verb *ephistēmi* gives the sense of a sudden and startling appearance; compare especially Lk 2:9 and Acts 23:11. As in the appearance to Saul, light (*phōs*) is a sign of heavenly presence (Acts 9:3; 22:6.9-11; 26:13)."<sup>54</sup> "The angel reminds of Exodus, and foreshadows the liberation of the resurrection."<sup>55</sup> The story goes on: "The angel said to him, 'Fasten your belt and put on your sandals'. He did so. Then he said to him, 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me'.<sup>9</sup> Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel's help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision." Acts 12:8-9. "In fact, Luke manages to convey a remarkable dream-like quality to the entire sequence, including the angel's precise directions for putting on clothes!"<sup>56</sup> "After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him." Acts 12:10. The "withdrew from him" could be rendered as "stood away from him", as if to give centerstage back to the person of Peter (see also Lk 4:13; 13:27; Acts 5:38; 15:38; 19:9). The withdrawal of the heavenly rescuer correlates to Peter's "coming to himself",

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53 Cf. HAWTHORNE, G.F. – Martin, R.P., eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, InterVarsityPress: Downers Grove, IL 1993, p. 20.

54 JOHNSON, *Acts*, p. 212.

55 Cf. KURZ, W.W., *Acts of the Apostles*, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI 2013, p. 195.

56 JOHNSON, *Acts*, p. 212.

v. 11, coinciding with Lk 15:17.<sup>57</sup> “Then Peter came to himself and said, ‘Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting’.” Acts 12:11. Peter then went to the house of Mary, mother of John-Mark, and a maid named Rhoda came to answer the door (cf. Acts 12:12-14). Those gathered in prayer said to her, “‘You are out of your mind!’ But she insisted that it was so. They said, ‘It is his angel’.” Acts 12:15. Ironically, Rhoda is dismissed twice (“you are out of your mind!”), culminating in the mention of “his angel”. The Western Text makes it more tentative by stating “perhaps it is his angel”. Interestingly, the disciples had a tantamount reaction to the visitation of Jesus after his resurrection (Lk 24:37). Regarding the reality of attendant or guardian angels in special relationship with human persons, one could cite, *i.a.*, <sup>LXX</sup>Gen 48:16, Tobit 5:22, Mt 18:10, PSEUDO-PHILO, *Biblical Antiquities* 59:4, *Testament of Jacob* 1:10, and also SHEPHERD OF HERMAS, *Mand.* 6.2.2.<sup>58</sup>

Acts chronicles angelic activity also in the mission of the first deacons of the Church. Not only did the early Christians believe in personal guardian angels, but also the wider Jewish community of the time: they marvel at the transfigured face of the protomartyr Stephen: “And all who sat in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.” Acts 6:15. The comparison “like the face of an angel” has a scriptural precedent in <sup>LXX</sup>Esth 15:13, and in <sup>LXX</sup>Dan 3:92 for the young men in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace. Furthermore, in the *Palestinian Targum* on Gen 33:10, the phrase “face of God” is reverently replaced with “I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of an angel”.<sup>59</sup>

Along with Stephen, deacon and evangelist Philip becomes the beneficiary of angelic protection and guidance: “Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a wilderness road’.” Acts 8:26. Mediatorial roles of angels are pervasive in Acts, and Luke’s inspired narration is one in which the possibility of angelic spirits communicating with humans is taken for granted (cf. Acts 23:9). The intervention of the angel at this moment is particularly striking because of the frequent use of this language in Stephen’s discourse (see 7:30.35.38.53). But then in v. 29, suddenly it is the Spirit of God himself who is identified as dealing with deacon Philip.<sup>60</sup>

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57 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 212.

58 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 213.

59 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 110.

60 Cf. JOHNSON, p. 154.

Besides Peter, it is the other great protagonist of Acts, i.e., the apostle Paul, who enjoys the status of being looked after and encouraged in his work of evangelization: “For last night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship,<sup>24</sup> and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before the emperor; and indeed, God has granted safety to all those who are sailing with you’.” Acts 27:23-24. “From the beginning to end, Luke-Acts employs these emissaries from God to deliver messages and comfort to characters in the story, as well as acts of deliverance.”<sup>61</sup>

### 2.2.2. *Angels facilitate the Church’s diffusion into the Gentile world*

The Acts of the Apostles also prove how the angels are instrumental in propelling the infant Church into the Gentile world, a ministry intricately associated with that of their human counterparts, the ecclesial evangelizers. At one point, the plot involves a man in Caesarea, named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort (cf. Acts 10:1): “One afternoon at about three o’clock he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, ‘Cornelius’.” Acts 10:3. In contrast to the visions, or perhaps better auditions, of Saul and Ananias, Luke here prefers the angel as the deliverer of the message.<sup>62</sup> Continuing the biblical passage: “When the angel who spoke to him had left, he [Cornelius] called two of his slaves and a devout soldier from the ranks of those who served him.” Acts 10:7. The angel’s mission here is to coordinate the paths of the apostle Peter and of Cornelius: “They answered, ‘Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you [Peter] to come to his house and to hear what you have to say’.” Acts 10:22. “He [Cornelius] told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter’.” Acts 11:13. Evidently, this moment is of greatest relevance, since it ushers in the era of baptisms now received also by Gentile converts.

In that vein, the angels also personify the punishing power of God toward those who attempt to thwart that spread of the Good News to all peoples. Carrying on their archetypal Old Testament task of avengers of God’s providence and justice, an angel confronts king Herod: “And immediately, because he had not given the glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.” Antithetical to the use of *patassō* in 12:7, the

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61 *Ibd.*, p. 449.

62 Cf. *ibd.*, p. 183.

“smiting” here has its usual connotation of divine retribution (cf. 2 Kgs 19:35). “Luke’s typical use of *parachrēma* (“immediately”) is in contrast to FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, who has some time elapse between the acclamation and the onset of symptoms (*Antiquities of the Jews* 19:346).”<sup>63</sup>

As the infant Church grew and made her way to the “ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, understood by Luke to primarily mean the ancient capital Rome), her work remained intertwined with her religious matrix, namely, contemporaneous Judaism. That Jews of that time had the angels on their minds is again attested to in this verse: “The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.” Acts 23:8. Ironically, the Pharisees exacerbate the contention by referring exactly to the existence of spirits and angels (reversing the order from the v. 8, “angel – spirit”): “Then a great clamor arose, and certain scribes of the Pharisees’ group stood up and contended, ‘We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?’” Acts 23:9.

In wrapping up this section, it is almost effortless to recognize how all those messengers from God play a critical role through substantial portions of Luke-Acts.<sup>64</sup> In logical manner, following the progression of God’s eschatological plan, the Gospel showcases them in their relationship to the Trinity and to Christ, who regularly spoke about them during his public ministry. In due course, their agency becomes instrumental in the lives of the apostles themselves, as well as in the latter’s determination to preach the Gospel to all nations.

### **THEOLOGICAL COROLLARY: DIFFERENTIATION FOR THE SAKE OF COMPLEMENTARITY**

Now is the time to summarize the findings and to draw some theological conclusion. JONES is correct when he claims that “generally speaking, Luke records more instances of angelic activity than any other narrative writer of the New Testament, and Hebrews is the theological writer most interested in them.”<sup>65</sup> The only objection might be that the author of the Book of Revelation is arguably more interested in the angels, as he quotes them over five times as much. What can again be seconded is JONES’ insistence on the difference between the thought of Luke and Hebrews.<sup>66</sup> He is quite accurate in affirming the “more systematic and thorough theology of Hebrews”, yet then again it is

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63 *Ibid.*, p. 215.

64 Cf. JOHNSON, *Acts*, p. 97.

65 JONES, *Hebrews and the Lucan Writings*, pp. 120.

66 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 143.

hard to agree with his attempt to use it to amplify the “rather jejune and nebulous theology of Acts.”<sup>67</sup> And when the above lead-author suggests that Luke and Hebrews have introduced a simplification into the complex thought of the early Church, then that asks for a revision in light of the outcome of this essay, as well.

As the main fruit of this research one could argue that differentiation between the two sacred writers in contemplating the angels of God appears to be at the service of complementarity. This theological balance or supplementarity would intimate more literary proximity than perhaps suspected by C.P. JONES. And so, Hebrews’ reflection on the angelic world is decidedly more transcending, considering nature, cosmic status and role of the angels on a more sublime theological plane. In those passages exclusively covered by it, they are discussed in lofty terms of comparison with the Second Divine Person as the incarnate Son of God. They remain ontologically inferior to him, left with no real eschatological authority over any process of Christocentric re-creation. Neither are they benefitting from Jesus’ soteriological action, although they are wholly part of his Mystical Body. Themes common to this letter and Luke’s Gospel only reinforce this line of thinking: the angels exist to worship Christ, they are always and essentially God’s servants, even to the point of being temporarily placed above the Lord due to his abasement in the incarnational work of redemption. Hebrews, at least in its shared topics with the Acts, does acknowledge angelic intermediation in the propagation of the Gospel, albeit often supernaturally shrouded in mystery, bringing divine wisdom to the chosen people.

Luke, on the other hand, and totally in concord with his literary genre, paints them from a purely historical vantage point. Especially his preference for the title “the angel of the Lord” – cited three times in the Gospel, five times in Acts, and not present in Hebrews –, so eminently redolent of the Old Testament *Malakh Yahweh*, establishes an image of God’s historical dealings with his people. Thus, the angels concretely interrelate with God, Christ, the Church, and humanity. To be more specific, there is an unequivocal double-pronged approach to them in the Gospel of Luke: on the one hand they are awe-inspiring messengers of the Triune God; and on the other, they carefully encompass Jesus’ earthly life. Acts’ angle makes the reader realize how they, in due season, develop into watchful guardians and energetic assistants of the apostles and deacons. Crucial is their care for the two apostolic protagonists in the narrative, namely, Peter and Paul. Second and last, they then aid in introducing the Church to the whole

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67 *Ibd.*, p. 143.

world. That the Christian divulgation happened as quick and as forceful as it did, is not least due to their dynamic presence.

In the end, the upshot is that the juxtaposition of this Pauline epistle and the writings of Luke demonstrates diverse views on the angels, which redound to an amazing – or rather, inspired – theological complementarity, and not opposition or remoteness in any way. Emanating from this insight is the assurance that this conceptual diversity perfectly corresponds to the authorial objective of their differing literary genre. The scope of the epistle, as a theological sermon, frequently entails keen theological sagacity, while the intent of the Gospel genre is to narrate the historical event of God coming in the flesh to save the family of humankind. We have such a breadth of knowledge of the angelic world chiefly due to the variegated teachings contained in these two authors. As a closing outlook, however, another study could undertake to integrate the vast landscape of angelic references in the Apocalypse of Saint John, which promises to further enhance and hone the profile of New Testament angelology. Even though, and finally, there can be no doubt, the central principle that embodies the biblical angelology of both Testaments will always be that they are “all spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation.” Heb 1:14.