

Everyman and the Angels



Representations of celestial beings in the arts available to the laity in the Middle Ages.

Natasha Coombs BA

Dissertation in partial completion of a M.Res. in Medieval Studies

University of Wales Trinity Saint David September 2022

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed Natasha Coombs (candidate)

Date 26/09/2022

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed Natasha Coombs (candidate)

Date 26/09/2022

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for deposit in the University's digital repository.

Signed Natasha Coombs (candidate)

Contents

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Nine Orders of Angels	8
Chapter 2: The Archangels	23
Chapter 3: Angels in Church	42
Chapter 4: Angels in Literature	75
Chapter 5: Everyday Angels	89
Conclusion	110
Bibliography	113
Photographic credits	118

Abstract

Faith in medieval Europe is generally perceived as being almost exclusively Christian, with most medieval people knowing little about other religions outside of small enclaves of Jewish people and with very few Muslims being encountered in the West. The bible has many angels mentioned amongst its *dramatis personae*, but they also occur in the other Abrahamic faiths. This dissertation considers representations and presentations of angels in Western Latin Christianity and also incidentally in Eastern Orthodoxy as well as Judaism and Islam. While we have a vast legacy of writings on angelology drawn from the earliest Christian fathers throughout the medieval period, little has been written about how members of the laity would learn about angels and what they would be taught about them. Recent publications have analysed and commented on these writings by learned theologians, but again, the study of how angels were presented to the laity and how this could provide a basis for the perception of angels by the laity is lacking. My dissertation comprises five chapters as follows:

1 The Nine Orders of Angels. This chapter introduces medieval angelology and forms a foundation for the rest of the work. It focuses on the theological view of angels, and is relevant to how layfolk viewed or were encouraged to view angels in Christian culture.

2 The Archangels. This chapter will examine representations of archangels as well as the contexts in which they were found and the meanings of archangels to medieval people. These celestial beings, along with Lucifer, held great significance in medieval culture, and are often represented in iconography and writing.

3 Angels in Church. Religious buildings are the most obvious places to look for angels. They appear in many forms, sometimes surrounding the congregation. Angelic representations are some of the most spectacular church ornaments and the reasons behind their inclusion in church ornament is examined in this chapter.

4 Angels in Literature. References to angels occur in all forms of literature, religious and secular. Literature is a form in which angels are shown to appear inside and outside churches, sometimes actually in procession, thus occupying both sacred and profane space, as will be demonstrated in this chapter.

5 Everyday Angels. Angels were represented as being all around the medieval person, particularly in the form of the guardian angel. It is in representations of the everyday that their perception and understanding by medieval people may most clearly be seen. This final

chapter sites angels in the everyday lives of medieval lay Christians, whether at church ceremonies or during more mundane activities.

My research covers primarily Christianity in western Europe, from the earliest days of the Roman Catholic Church to the Reformation and takes into account different social contexts of medieval society, from the wealthiest and most powerful to (where possible) the poorest. The latter section is the most problematic to research: little has been recorded of the everyday lives of ordinary layfolk.

Acknowledgments

Firstly, to my husband who, once again, has helped me track down angels in churches large and small, and to my friends who have listened to me enthusing about my subject for hours.

Next, the Lampeter faculty, in particular Professor Janet Burton and Doctor Harriett Webster who have been supportive all through my academic endeavours, and Doctor William Marx who has supervised my journey of discovery into the realms of the angels.

Lastly, to two extraordinary women: Dorothy L. Sayers MA who not only translated *The Divine Comedy* but also introduced me to angel roofs through her novel *The Nine Tailors*, and to my late mother, Beryl Jean Stracey, who did not live to see me complete this dissertation but now understands the true nature of angels.

Everyman and the Angels

Representations of celestial beings in the arts available to the laity in the Middle Ages.

Introduction



Plate 1: Unknown artist, Malmesbury Abbey South Porch, carved stone, 12th century. Malmesbury Abbey, Malmesbury, Wiltshire. Natasha Coombs, 2020. Here an angel flies above six of the apostles, directing the congregant into the church.

Belief in angels in all their forms has been prevalent since before the birth of Christ and was strongly demonstrated throughout the thousand years of the medieval period. Celestial beings occur throughout Christendom, both Western and Eastern, and in the other Abrahamic faiths, Islam and Judaism. The goal of this dissertation is to examine the perception of angels by the laity and representations available to them and, as a result, medieval theology and philosophy of angels will only be briefly introduced but not examined in detail. The angelology of Pseudo-Dionysius, Augustine, and Aquinas will be discussed for what they can contribute to our understanding of the foundation of belief in celestial beings, in particular in the nine orders of angels. Only those aspects which would have been important to Everyman will be dealt with in any detail: what did angels look like? When were they created? What did they know? What could they do? This dissertation will endeavour to discover what images and understanding of angels were available to layfolk, for example, the ploughman or the merchant's wife. What was the nature of their belief in angels and how was this encouraged and supported through the public art of churches both within and without? While the source material used in this dissertation may seem eclectic and diverse, that is inherent in the subject. An examination of popular attitudes towards angels must cover all aspects of life, thus I look

at the lowliest and the highest objects, the rarest and the most common. Angels were believed to be ubiquitous: they touched all aspects of medieval life.

Angelology is not a new discipline. It was taught at the University of Paris from the twelfth century under the auspices of such theologians and practicing churchmen as Peter Lombard, Bishop of Paris.¹ Much has been written by modern authors on medieval angelology, but little study has been devoted to the lay perception of angels. While angelology is no longer regarded as a science, it is still an area for study by scholars and writers such as David Keck, Steven Chase, and Tobias Hoffmann, all of whom are active in the field of research into medieval angelology. They give little time, however, for consideration of the impact of angels on the everyday life of the lay person. While Keck agrees that ‘it is possible to discuss broadly what medieval Christians were thinking and doing with regard to angels’, his approach inevitably misses a lot of interesting and useful material regarding the secular world.² By drilling down further into medieval representations of angels, it is their perception by the laity which will be addressed in this dissertation.

Why study the lay view?³ Much has been written over the past two millennia about angels, their place in the divine order, where they come from, and much more. The ordinary lay folk of the Middle Ages formed the greater part of the populace, but as one moves from the higher to the lower social strata, the harder it is to find reliable information on who these people were, and their thought is even more obscure since the overwhelming majority were barely literate, if they could read or write at all. As is so often the case, more has been written by and about the folk of higher status and the higher clergy, even though it is the ordinary people who made up most of the society. Surely a focus on how angels were represented to members of the lower classes is of interest. How and in what forms did members of the lower classes encounter representations of angels? It is a truism to say that history is written by the victor: in this case we may say that history is written by the literate, leaving the illiterate to disappear into the past. As a result, little has been written about the worldview of ordinary people and it is difficult to discover what they might have thought about angels and how they imagined them. The lack of written evidence makes it harder for the researcher to unearth such information, but makes the

¹ David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), p. 72.

² *Ibid.*, p. 159.

³ Ginzberg has some interesting comments on the problems associated with studying the ordinary people of the sixteenth century, which also apply to the medieval period. See his introduction to *The Cheese and the Worms*. Ginzberg, Carlo, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, trans. by John & Anne Tedeschi (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. xiii-xxvi.

study all the more fascinating. The lower social orders are notoriously underrepresented in historical documents, but much information can be found about their beliefs, when we begin to search sources such as church buildings, the songs of the period, and the plays of the guilds, many of which are extant. Keck posits that, by the thirteenth century, many ordinary Christians were becoming more interested in theological matters as they affected him or her directly:

This church [of the Fourth Lateran Council] sought to respond to a laity that since the twelfth century had become increasingly interested in matters of personal religion ... Vernacular translations of Scripture appeared, and sermons focused not on judgement ... but on personal spiritual and ethical questions.⁴



Plate 2: Unknown artist, *The Creation of the World*, The Stammheim Missal, Ms. 64, fol. 10v, paint and ink on vellum, probably 1170s. <<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/107V36>> [Accessed 10 May 2022] Here the hand of God brings all things into being, with the exception of angels. Notice at the top Jesus is flanked by two seraphim.

⁴ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 158.

What was Medieval Angelology?

The opening chapter of Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, describes the six days during which God created all things, from heaven and earth to man and other creatures. Conspicuous by their absence are the angels. Since, to the medieval mind, it seems that nothing that was not listed here could exist, how then were angels to be explained? They appear later in Genesis and throughout the Old and New Testaments and St Augustine says that ‘Every visible thing in this world is put under the charge of an angel.’⁵ Although these references are not proof of the angels’ creation, they imply their formation and existence and suggest that angels are ubiquitous and powerful.

The writings of the fifth- to sixth-century Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite give a basis for the doctrine of the Nine Orders of Angels, and it is this subject which forms the first chapter of this dissertation. Following the medieval love of order and categorisation, Pseudo-Dionysius’ codification of the angelic orders gives definition to the various levels of celestial existence, but to what extent this was common knowledge remains uncertain. He tells us that only the three lowest orders, the principalities, archangels, and angels, were in contact with humanity but visual depictions of, in particular, the two highest orders, seraphim and cherubim, are not uncommon in medieval art, and as such these orders were known to medieval viewers. Angels and archangels are comprehensible: after all, although they are not described as such in the Bible, they are represented as winged people, but what did medieval people with little or no understanding of the underlying theology make of the flying babies’ heads which often represented seraphim and cherubim? Scripture generally provides few details about the appearance of angels, although they are sometimes described as young men in shining robes, and medieval theologians and craftsmen alike seem to have found it difficult to describe or illustrate the appearance of any angel with any authority.⁶ As a result of this lack of cohesion, we find a great variety of angelic representations.

Although only three archangels are named in the Bible, others are implied and two of the named three have such significant roles that their order deserves a chapter of its own. The role of Lucifer is vital to Christianity, and we are told in the Book of Ezekiel, 28:12-14 that he was one of the highest angels, most loved by God. For this reason, he is included in this chapter

⁵ Augustine, *De diversis questionibus* is quoted by Steven Chase, *Angelic Spirituality: Medieval Perspective on the Ways of Angels*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), p. 14.

⁶ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p 30.

along with Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel. Other, non-canonical archangels such as Uriel are discussed as is the role of archangels in Judaism and Islam, albeit very briefly. A question to be considered is why does only the Archangel Michael have his own feast day?



Plate 3: Unknown artist, *Dominions and Seraphim*, paint on wood, 15th century. St Michael and All Angels' church, Barton Turf, Norfolk. Natasha Coombs, 2021. These angels are found on a rood screen, a prominent feature in any church, visible to the congregation. The representatives of the Dominions (left) and Seraphim (right) have been defaced by iconoclasts during the seventeenth century, presumably because the seraph carries a censer, and the Dominion has a papal crown.

The medieval church is the main context in which lay people encountered representations of angels and the chapter on Angels in Church deals with this topic. While medieval Christians were in church, they were literally and metaphorically surrounded by angels. They could see representations of angels all around them, and it is on the basis of these representations that the belief of layfolk in the existence and the presence of angels would have been nurtured and sustained. Although they were bound to make confession and receive the Eucharist only once a year, many went more frequently and thus were exposed to reminders of the celestial hosts through preaching and through the iconography and even the fabric of the building itself. The popularity of angelic iconography from the earliest days of Christianity did not stop with the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century: after this period there was an increase in personal dedications to, for example, the guardian angels.⁷ We shall see examples of the variety and ubiquity of angelic iconography in the chapter on 'Angels in Church'. How did angels assume great importance to the congregation of one of the great East Anglian wool

⁷ Diarmuid MacCulloch, *All Things Made New: Writings on the Reformation* (London: Penguin, 2017), pp. 28-29.

churches, which shows gilded angels in the roof? Was it due to the presence of a good preacher who was forceful in helping his listeners to understand the importance of angels? In some of these buildings the churchgoer must have felt the presence of a numberless host in the roof. This prevalence of angels must have informed the average lay-person's view of the appearance of angels, as Keck says in *Angels and Angelology*.⁸ Were the angels made to look as they do because that was how they were expected to look?

The chapter concerning 'Angels in Literature' documents not only how angels were represented in preaching - perhaps the most obvious literary form in which to find them - but also in drama, song, and other writings, often taking them outside the church. Religious texts about angels are not restricted to preaching: didactic religious plays were often performed in churches with some participants dressed as angels, in addition many plays began in churches and wended their way out into the street. Verses, here meaning both poetry and verse narratives, included angels, sometimes as the main characters, sometimes as extras. Songs were sung about angels, not only as church hymns, but in also secular settings. The thirteenth-century *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, a collection of more than four hundred songs in praise of the Virgin collected by King Alfonso X *el Sabio* of Castile, hold many references to angels, as do popular carols of the period.

Angels are not restricted to areas inside the church door and so 'Everyday Angels' have a chapter, dealing with the presence of angels in the lives and deaths of ordinary people. Angels, in particular the personal guardian angels, seem to have been omnipresent to medieval people and, while they are not often specifically mentioned at the major life events, they are frequently found on fonts, close to the beginning of life, and surround the dying on their deathbeds. Perhaps guardian angels are less present in the arts because they were taken for granted as being all around.

Much has been written over the centuries about angels, usually from the standpoint of the angelologist or cleric. Commentary on angels is still being made by scholars. David Keck's *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* deals largely with the work of the seraphic doctor St Bonaventure, and is written from the angelological standpoint, that of the professionally religious. He mentions the lay view only in passing, but his book has been very useful in compiling this dissertation. Steven Chase's *Angelic Philosophy* is again a work of angelology,

⁸ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 30.

acting as a source book of the thought of medieval theologians, both well-known and less popular on the subject. Tobias Hoffmann's work, *Free Will and the Rebel Angels in Medieval Philosophy*, has been essential reading for the section on Lucifer in the chapter on 'The Archangels'. Many other authors working on ecclesiastical and secular medieval history often refer to angels and sometimes include a chapter on the subject, but again the lay view of angels is rarely subjected to any in-depth scrutiny. Primary sources that deal with angelology are rarely concerned with the laity's perception of angels. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite is an important theologian in this field, and inspired many others to improve on his work, perhaps most importantly Thomas Aquinas.

In an attempt to get closer to the texts available to medieval angelologists, biblical quotes will be taken from the Douay Reims Bible, which is recognized as the English translation that is most closely based on Jerome's Latin Vulgate of the fourth century, the most widely used Latin Bible in the Middle Ages.

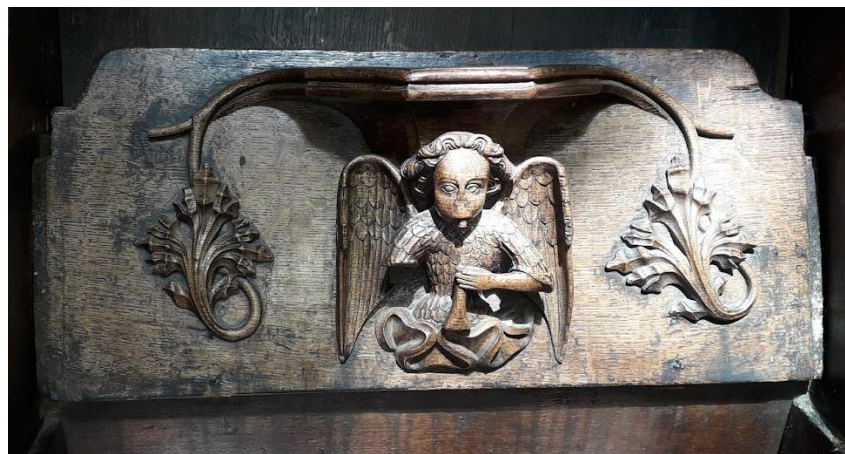


Plate 4: Unknown artist, *Musical Angel*, carved wood, 15th century. St Laurence's church, Ludlow, Shropshire. Natasha Coombs, 2020. Some angels are less obvious than others. A defaced angel on a misericord playing a small trumpet.

Chapter 1: The Nine Orders of Angels



Plate 5: Francesco Botticino, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, tempera on wood, c. 1475.
<<https://www.nationalgalleryimages.co.uk/search/?searchQuery=assumption+of+the+virgin>> [Accessed 10 May 2022] At her death, Christ blesses Mary, receiving her into heaven. They are surrounded by the nine orders of angels, arranged in their three choirs. Originally an altarpiece.

The early theologians wrote much on what came to be known as angelology. Even before the early sixth century when the theologian known to us as Pseudo-Dionysius composed *The Celestial Hierarchy* in which the nine orders of angels were detailed, Origen in the third century had considered the creation and purpose of angels. Their creation had been debated and ruled upon at the Council of Nicaea in 325, and Augustine of Hippo had written widely on angelic subjects. All the major (and many minor) theologians had something to contribute, most notably Gregory the Great, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas. From outside the Christian sphere, Avicenna in the early eleventh century, followed by Averroes, both from the Islamic world, and Maimonides from the Jewish sphere had made contributions; after all, angels are not only a Christian phenomenon. The ordinary congregant in the medieval church was unlikely to have any knowledge of or interest in academic angelology, however the writings of the theologians formed the basis of the texts and teachings from which all clergy took the meat of their sermons. The erudition of the preacher, his ability to communicate and his willingness to tailor his preaching to his audience were central to the understanding amongst the congregation of theology in general, and angelology, for us, in particular. In this first

chapter the focus will be the angelic hierarchy, radiating outwards from God to reach humanity on earth. This focus will create a foundation for the rest of the dissertation.

The Creation of the Angels

Among the many things named as created by God in the first chapter of Genesis there is an omission: the creation of angels is not mentioned. This chapter of the Bible encompasses everything the medieval mind could encounter or imagine, and yet celestial beings are not named until Adam and Eve are evicted from the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:24: ‘And he cast out Adam: and placed before the paradise of pleasure Cherubims, and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.’ Thereafter angels and the other celestial beings are mentioned throughout the Old and New Testaments, although verses which may be read as references to their creation are few. Such oblique references are found, for example, in Psalm 148, a list of all created things which should praise God and later in St Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians. Verse 2 of the Psalm says: ‘Praise ye him, all his angels, praise ye him, all his hosts.’ This comes before all other created things, indicating that angels existed before anything else and implying that they were the first things created. Verse 5 then says of all things: ‘Praise the name of the Lord. For he spoke, and they were created.’ In chapter 3 of the Epistle to the Ephesians verses 14 and 15 run thus: 14: ‘For this cause, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15: Of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named.’ This second verse was understood to encompass the creation of angels as well as all other living beings.

The moment of the creation of angels was often debated in the medieval period and the subject of angels was debated at the Council of Nicaea (325AD), leading to the ‘first major church pronouncement concerning angels.’⁹ Leaving aside issues such as whether angels were created at all or whether they were co-creators with God, the moment of their coming into being is unclear, but it was widely believed amongst medieval theologians that Genesis 1:3 ‘And God said: Be light made. And light was made’ refers to the creation of the angels. When St Augustine of Hippo wrote his *De civitate Dei* and *De Genesi ad litteram* during the first quarter of the fifth century, towards the end of his life, he had spent much time and many words considering the creation of the angels. In considering the omission of the creation of the angels in Genesis, he states that the light of Genesis 1:3 is not the light of the sun but spiritual light, the light of the angels. ‘They are spiritual creatures whose beginning is fittingly described in

⁹ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 17.

the words *fiat lux* since they receive enlightenment along with their being.’¹⁰ Augustine had first put forward this idea in his unfinished Litteral Commentary of 393-4 and later expanded upon it; indeed, angels form a thread running through much of his writing, particularly that which deals with Genesis in his attempts to provide conclusive proofs against the Manichean heresies. The Augustine reading of Genesis 1:3 was followed by later theologians such as Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas.¹¹ Keck considers that ‘As a consequence, integrating the angels with particular accounts of the creation and fall was the dominant context for scholastic angelology in the twelfth century.’¹²

The Evolution of the Nine Orders

During the fifth to sixth centuries Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, a Greek theologian writing under the name of Dionysius the first-century martyr, wrote *De coelesti hierarchia* (*The Celestial Hierarchy*), following on from the work of St Ambrose.¹³ In this book he describes the nine orders and divides them into a system of three groups or hierarchies, each hierarchy consisting of three types of celestial being. This grouping into threes is reminiscent of the Trinity, although the Trinity is not hierarchical, as was pointed out by Thomas Aquinas.¹⁴ However the use of three and of three threes is a potent trinitarian symbol. Each of these hierarchies has a job or a ministry. The highest, composed of seraphim, cherubim, and thrones, is tasked with the eternal praise of God. The second group, the dominations, virtues and powers, governs the three remaining orders of angels who form the lowest hierarchy: the principalities, archangels, and angels whose job is to interact with humanity. Each order has specific roles and responsibilities and is subordinate to those above it while having power over those below. Perhaps the most concise description of the power flow is found in Dante’s *Paradiso*, Canto XVIII in which Beatrice tells Dante about the nine orders of angels:

And all these orders upwards gaze with awe,
As downwards each prevails upon the rest,
Whence all are drawn to God and to him draw.¹⁵

Pseudo-Dionysius’s authority for this system, on which most later writing is based, comes from St Paul’s many epistles, particularly Colossians and Ephesians:

¹⁰ Elizabeth Klein, *Augustine’s Theology of Angels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 28.

¹¹ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 51.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54: The Aquinas reference is to be found in *Patrologia Latina* 219, 39-40.

¹⁵ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy III: Paradise* trans. Dorothy L. Sayers & Barbara Reynolds (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2004), p. 304.

In addition to Seraphim, Cherubim, Archangels, and Angels, Paul mentions five separate powers that came to be interpreted as separate orders or classes of angels: The Rulers (*archai*), cited eight times; the Authorities (*exousiai*), seven times; the Powers (*dynameis*), three times; the Lordships (*kyriotêtes*), two times; and the Thrones (*thronoi*), cited once.¹⁶

Pseudo-Dionysius's work has been widely interpreted and this basic structure has been retained with few alterations. Since his writings would be unlikely to have reached many lay people, there follow brief descriptions of the nine orders from writers more likely to have been used as source material for preachers of the period. *The Celestial Hierarchy* was followed by subsequent theologians, including St Gregory the Great, St Bernard of Clairvaux and St Thomas Aquinas.¹⁷ All Christian theologians used biblical narrative as well as current thinking to support their codifications of the nine orders, and differences were minor: the order of the hierarchy sometimes differed, and in the earliest centuries of Christianity before Origen wrote *De principiis* in the early third century, archangels were considered along with angels, but on the whole thinking was unanimous.¹⁸ Like Pseudo-Dionysius, Bernard considered it necessary to describe each order, and neatly encapsulated the roles of the nine orders in chapter 5 of *On Consideration*, for example:

Thus, the Seraphim burn, but it is with the fire of God, or rather with the fire which is itself God. Their distinguishing attribute is intensity of love, yet they do not love as intensely as God loves, nor in the same way.¹⁹

Gregory the Great in the late sixth century considered the naming and ordering of the angels important.²⁰ He found it a way of describing their talents and powers in a way that would be comprehensible to all. A frequent way of organising the orders, rather than as a ladder, was as a series of concentric circles, perhaps forming a cone, with God at the centre (see Plate 5). Gregory worked from the outer circle inwards, beginning with the angels, leaving the seraphim still closest to God and the angels nearest to humanity. St Augustine of Hippo in chapter 58 of *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love* (interestingly entitled 'We have no certain knowledge of the organization of the angelic society') says: '... let those who are able

¹⁶ In the general introduction of *Angelic Spirituality*, Steven Chase cites these biblical references: Col 1:15; 2:10; 2:15; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; I Cor 15:24; Rom 8:38; II Thess 1:7. Chase, *Angelic Spirituality*, p. 13.

¹⁷ Gregory the Great, *Forty Homilies on the Gospels*, Homily 34; Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Consideration*; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Vol 9 trans. & ed. by Kenelm Foster OP (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1963).

¹⁸ Chase, *Angelic Spirituality*, p. 19.

¹⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux *On Consideration* Trans. by Ailbe J Luddy (Ireland: Brown & Nolan, 1921), p. 187.

²⁰ Gregory the Great is quoted in Chase, *Angelic Spirituality*, p. 16.

answer these questions [about the angelic hierarchy], if they can also prove their answer to be true; but as for me, I confess my ignorance.’²¹

The order in which I have listed the angels is that used by Pseudo-Dionysius. Other theologians often deviated slightly from this; for example, Bernard put principalities between dominions and virtues, while Gregory the Great inverted the whole system.²² The number of wings for each type of angel is also variable. The three hierarchies are shown in the rood screen at the church of St Michael and All Angels at Barton Turf with all orders having four wings. This seems to be unusual though: the two highest orders often have six wings, although cherubim sometimes only have four. This variation in appearance is a result of the confusion caused by the brevity of biblical descriptions of celestial beings.



Plate 6: Sassetta, *The Stigmatisation of St Francis*, tempera on poplar, 1437-44.

<<https://www.nationalgalleryimages.co.uk/search/?searchQuery=NG4760>> [Accessed 15 June 2022] Although often depicted as fiery flying heads with six wings, as in the Botticini *Assumption*, here a seraph is shown as a burning man with wings.

In chapter two of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Pseudo-Dionysius said that we should not imagine that the appearance of angels was like ‘... a kind of four-footed and many-faced creatures, or moulded to the brutish form of oxen, or the savage form of lions, and fashioned

²¹ Augustine of Hippo, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love* trans. J B Shaw (Washington: Regenergy Publishing, Inc., 1961), pp. 69-70.

²² Chase, *Angelic Spirituality*, p. 19.

like the hooked beaks of eagles ...’ but that they were to be imagined as wheels of fire, thrones or however else they were described in the Bible.²³ Where does this leave the description of tetramorph cherubim in Ezekiel 10:10-14?²⁴ He seems to see the biblical descriptions as a kind of shorthand enabling the less holy to envisage celestial beings as visual forms until they reach a higher level of comprehension. He admits that even the more ethereal descriptions of angels as pure light fall short of their reality.²⁵ This admission must have made it easier for churchmen and artists to be creative in their representations of these heavenly creatures: if it is impossible to envisage the true state of these beings, how much harder to create true images of them. In this light, any representation must be understood as a human attempt to envisage and portray that which it is impossible to portray. He gives reasons why they should be portrayed, however lowly the portrayal, as such portrayals can be used didactically. Images of angels give the more humble a hook to hang their ideas on. The use of earthly imagery helps many while also disguising the true nature of these beings, supporting their ineffability.

The Nine Orders



Plate 7: Unknown artist, *A Six-Winged Seraph* in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 066, ink and paint on vellum, 12th century. <<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/jb848tp9919>> [Accessed 20 May 2022] The six wings of the seraph as an allegory of the soul’s path to God.

The First Hierarchy

To take the highest order first: the seraphim, those nearest to God, spend their time in eternal praise and their name ‘denotes that they are fiery or burning.’²⁶ Although there are many

²³ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysius the Areopagite* trans. Revd. John Parker MA (London: Skeffington & Son, 1894), p. 17.

²⁴ In these verses cherubim are described as being a wheel ... in the midst of a wheel’, ‘full of eyes’, having four faces: those of a cherub, a man, an eagle and a lion. What the medieval mind was to make of this description is hard to imagine.

²⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, p. 18.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

mentions of the nine orders in the Bible, descriptions of them are few and brief but the seraphim are described in Isaiah 6:2: ‘Upon it stood the seraphims: the one had six wings, and the other had six wings: with two they covered his face, and with two they covered his feet, and with two they flew. 6:3: And they cried to one another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of his glory.’ Verse 2 here reads as though the seraphim are covering God’s eyes and feet, a view held by some medieval theologians, but it is usually understood that it is their own eyes and feet that they cover. What is undeniable here is their work, which is to praise God unceasingly although they are on occasion messengers to the earth. They are often depicted as fiery beings surrounding God’s throne following translation of the word *seraph* as burning which was construed in the medieval mind as burning with love of God. The six wings of the seraphim were used allegorically in a thirteenth-century text by St Bonaventure using the wings to describe the ascent and descent of Christ and, in the *Collationes in hexaemeron*, using each wing and each feather to represent a part of the journey taken by the soul to reach God, each wing being a stage in that journey, and each feather a state of mind or beneficial action.²⁷



Plate 8: Unknown artist, *The Initial E* from the book of Ezekiel in the Winchester Bible, ink, gold and paint on vellum, 1150-1175. <www.symbolforschung.ch/tetramporph.html> [Accessed 15 May 2022] Although this is clearly the tetramorph with its wheels described in Ezekiel’s vision, it has the faces of the four evangelists, omitting the face of a cherub and substituting that of the ox.

The cherubim are the second order, their name indicating ‘a fulness of knowledge and stream of wisdom.’²⁸ Gregory the Great and Bernard of Clairvaux agree that they both are and represent perfect knowledge.²⁹ Bernard describes them thus: ‘The Cherubim shine and in

²⁷ *On the Six Wings of the Seraphim* is the text referred to detailing the properties of the wings. Chase, *Angelic Spirituality*, p. 31-35.

²⁸ Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, p. 27.

²⁹ Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, Homily 34, trans. David Hurst OSB, (Minnesota: Cistercian Publications, 1990,) p. 43; Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Consideration*, p. 185; Chase, *Angelic Spirituality* p. 102.

knowledge are pre-eminent.’ He also says that they know only ‘by participation’, and not in the same way that God does, that is of their own knowledge.³⁰ As has been said, they are the first angels to be mentioned in the Bible, bearing a flaming sword. They are frequently mentioned thereafter, and Ezekiel 10:12-14 describes them as being covered in eyes with four faces: one of a cherub; one of a man; one of a lion, and the last of an eagle and having wheels somehow connected with them. A notable appearance of cherubim is as two of them made of beaten gold sheltering the Ark of the Covenant with their wings in Exodus 25:18-20. Here they are clearly considered worthy to protect God’s Word, albeit in the form of man-made statues. They are knowledge and, here, guardians of knowledge.



Plate 9: Unknown artist, *Mary and Child in a Mandorla with Cherubim*, tempera on wood, 1480-1500. <<https://www.nationalgalleryimages.co.uk/search/?searchQuery=The+Mary+and+Child+in+a+mandorla+with+Cherubim++>> [Accessed 15 May 2022] Although this is a late fifteenth-century work this is how we now often imagine cherubim: baby heads with wings.

³⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Consideration*, p. 187.



Plate 10: Unknown artist, *The Angel of Thrones*, paint on wood, 15th century. St Michael and All Angels' church, Barton Turf, Norfolk. Natasha Coombs, December 2021. Here the angel of thrones wears regal robes and carries attributes of fair judgement: the scales of justice and a building representing the state.

The five orders between the cherubim and the archangels are much more rarely commented on and, as Keck says: '... when one passes from cherubim to the thrones, one passes from familiarity to obscurity.'³¹ For that reason I will deal with these orders more briefly. Thrones, as their name suggests, bear God and, according to Gregory the Great, '... the Lord sits in them and discerns justice through them.'³² They judge, as Bernard says with almost Godlike tranquillity and presumably their judgement is always right.³³ They have the attributes of kingship, as shown in the fifteenth-century Barton Turf rood screen and Pseudo-Dionysius considers them to be 'forever in divine presence'.³⁴ As with other orders, although they are mentioned in, for example, Colossians, thrones are not described in the Bible, and they are sometimes confused with the description of cherubim in Ezekiel chapter 1.

³¹ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 61.

³² Gregory the Great, *Forty Homilies on the Gospels*, Homily 34.

³³ Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Consideration*, p. 187.

³⁴ Chase, *Angelic Spirituality*, p. 26.

The Second Hierarchy

The middle hierarchy consists of dominions, virtues, and powers, although Parker's translation of Pseudo-Dionysius calls the first two lordships and authorities.³⁵ This group has power over the three lowest orders of angels but does not interact with humanity. They are referred to infrequently in the Bible, almost in passing. The dominions, sometimes called dominations, rule over all the lower orders of angels, benevolently exercising a degree of the power of God whom they serve.³⁶ The virtues are able to perform miracles and strive to awaken human souls to good, acting as a conduit for God's virtue.³⁷ This conductivity is a feature of all the orders: they can only do what God wants and allows them to do and everything they do is done by God through them. The powers are described in Parker's translation of *The Celestial Hierarchy* as possessing 'a certain masculine and unflinching manliness towards all those Godlike energies within themselves ...' representing God's ultimate power.³⁸ These three orders are rarely depicted separately, usually appearing as part of an illustration of all nine orders. As a rule, they can only be distinguished by their attributes; for example, dominions bear sceptres and wear crowns, representing governance, while virtues may hold lilies or roses, flowers often associated with Mary.

The Third Hierarchy

The lowest or outermost of the three hierarchies holds the principalities, archangels, and angels, all of whom have dealings with humanity. The principalities are charged with ruling over nations using their almost Godlike abilities and over the archangels and angels. They are often conflated with Fortune; indeed, Aquinas backs this up, and this may be why Fortuna sometimes appears in churches, usually in the centre of a wheel of fortune.³⁹ The archangels and angels, the two lowest orders, would have been the most familiar to the medieval mind; this is probably because they were the orders that had the most contact with humanity.

³⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, p. 31.

³⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Consideration*, p. 187.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

³⁸ Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, p. 31.

³⁹ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 62.

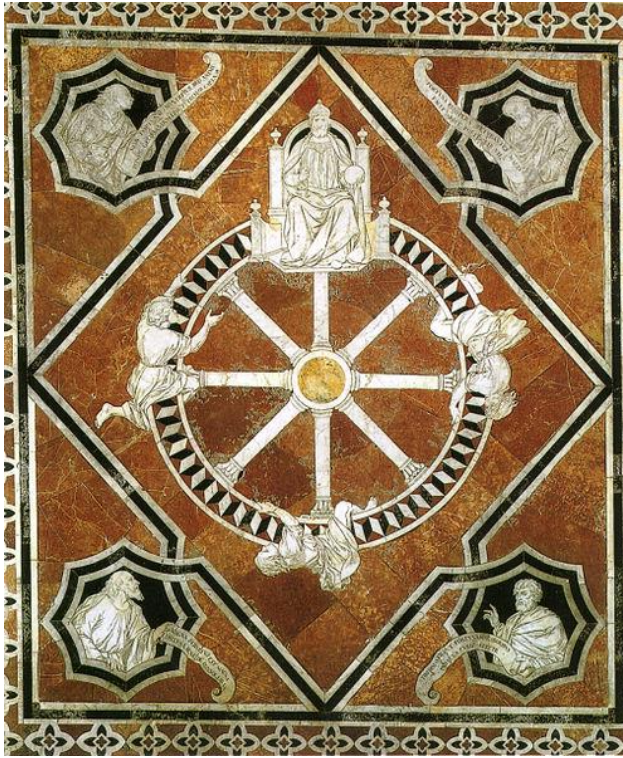


Plate 11: Unknown artist, *The Wheel of Fortune*, marble inlay, 14th century.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/wiki/File:Pavimento_di_siena,_ruota_della_fortuna.jpg> [Accessed 15 May 2022] In the floor of the Duomo of Siena a wheel of fortune does not show Fortuna, her existence at the centre is merely implied.

Archangels govern cities, while angels in the form of guardians watch over individual people. Of the archangels, St Michael had his own feast day, the 29 September, while the guardian angels had their own, the 2 October. These are the only feast days, out of all the many in the Christian calendar, dedicated to angels. Jacobus de Voragine in *The Golden Legend* devotes several pages to St Michael and more detail about him can be found in the chapter devoted to Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, the three named archangels.⁴⁰ Bonaventure, amongst others, considered that each of these names had meaning: Michael being He who is as God; Gabriel the Fortitude of God and Raphael the Medicine of God.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, intro. Eamon Duffy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 587-597.

⁴¹ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 63.



Plate 12: Pietro Perugino, *Tobias and the Archangel Raphael*, paint on wood, c. 1496-1500. The National Gallery, London. Natasha Coombs, 2022. This story is found in chapter 5 of the Book of Tobias.

Archangels are the subjects of some of the most splendid artwork involving angels of any order. Raphael is perhaps most often shown in representations of the story of Tobias and the Angel, taken from the Book of Tobias, while Gabriel and Michael have many paintings of, respectively, the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary and of Michael's defeat of Satan, taken from the Book of Revelations. They have important jobs to do, given them by God. Raphael, although not mentioned as often as Gabriel or Michael, was credited with powers of healing, both physical and spiritual, and miracle working, all of these springing from the story in the Book of Tobias. Bonaventure associated Gabriel with virtues such as reverence and mercy which made him perfect for the role of divine messenger at the Annunciation. Michael is clearly a warrior and defender, although a just figure, weighing souls in his balance at the Day of Judgement.⁴²

Angels, the most lowly of the orders, have the onerous task of protecting individuals and so it is from amongst them that the guardian angels are taken. They also control the four

⁴² For further comment on the attributes and powers of the three named archangels, see the specific chapter in this dissertation and Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 63.

winds.⁴³ They are the creatures found amongst the roof structures of the great wool churches of East Anglia, as has been detailed in the chapter on angels in church. They must have seemed the most immediately important to many people of the period: they could communicate between the human and God, bringing prayers from earth to heaven, and reported to God on how the human in question was behaving. Most often angels are described in the Bible as men in white robes as in Acts 1:10 where two men dressed in white appeared at Christ's ascension, and the only celestial beings that have wings seem to be the cherubim and seraphim. Since this is the case, why did angels in medieval iconography so often have wings? One compelling argument is that the idea came from pre-Christian art and objects such as the Nike of Samothrace, and it seems logical that angels should have wings to help them on their journeys from heaven to earth. The earliest representation of a winged angel is found in the late fourth-century Prince's Sarcophagus at Sarigüzel which has elegant, well-groomed flying angels on its two longer sides. The depiction of angels in any art form was legitimized at the Council of Nicaea in 787, and wings seem to have graced them only since after the conversion of Constantine in the early fourth century.⁴⁴



Plate 13: Unknown artist *The Nike of Samothrace*, (200-190 BCE), now held at the Louvre. http://www.musee.louvre.fr/oal/victoiredesamothrace/victoiredesamothrace_acc_en.html [Accessed 15 May 2022] Here Victory spreads her wings, looking very like an angel.

⁴³ Psalms 104:4; Hebrews 1:7; Apocalypse 7:1.

⁴⁴ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 30.



Plate 14: Unknown artist, *The Prince's Sarcophagus*, carved stone, late fourth century.

<<https://www.worldhistory.org/image/8810>> [Accessed 15 May 2022] A sarcophagus from Sarigüzel with winged angels.

The Progress of the Nine Orders

This systemization of angels has never been upset. Throughout the medieval period it was upheld and reinforced by St Thomas Aquinas and others.⁴⁵ Writings on the nine orders have long been used to bolster human (especially ecclesiastical) hierarchies. In speaking of the highest hierarchy of heavenly beings, Pseudo-Dionysius then likens them to the Hierarchy of the Church on Earth. In the twelfth-century *On Consideration*, St Bernard of Clairvaux tells us that church hierarchies should work in the same way as the angelic one, down from the Pope to priests.⁴⁶ St Bonaventure, writing in the thirteenth century, stated that the behaviour of the lower angels in unhesitatingly obeying the higher orders should be emulated by the earthly ecclesiastical hierarchy and that the nine orders of angels was commensurate with the nine levels of ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁴⁷

While medieval lay people may have taken the existence of angels for granted, particularly in the role of guardian angels, it is doubtful that they had much if any knowledge of the science of angelology or of many of the other orders of angels. Was the subject modified or corrupted as it filtered down from the theologians and philosophers, through the clerical hierarchy, to layfolk? Although the celestial hierarchy may seem a matter of higher theology, not approachable to the ordinary Christian, Jacobus de Voragine in his *Golden Legend* uses this system when discussing the angels.⁴⁸ Since this text was often used as a source book for preachers, some reference to the hierarchy must have been made in sermons, depending on the

⁴⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, part 1 question 108 deals with angelic hierarchy.

⁴⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Consideration*, p. 102.

⁴⁷ Bonaventure *The Hexameron*, Collation 22.

⁴⁸ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. 331-332; 589-590.

erudition of the priest. While angels were not often the subject of sermons with the exception of Michael the archangel, they make frequent appearances in them. A subject of such importance for Everyman could not have been ignored and guardian angels are often included. The subject of angels in sermons is covered more fully in the chapter on angels in literature. The nine orders in their totality are sometimes represented in art. The dados of the rood screens in the churches of St Michael and All Angels at Barton Turf in Norfolk and St Edmund King and Martyr at Southwold, Suffolk, show them, as does a window at All Saints church, North Street in York. The west front of Wells Cathedral has the nine orders in the central part of the front, just below the apostles, and many other churches and cathedrals may have had images of the nine orders before the iconoclasm of the Reformation. These representations are discussed further elsewhere in this dissertation. There is considerable variety in the ways in which the nine orders are depicted because the craftsmen had only the opinions of those commissioning the work to work from, rather than holy writ. As we have seen, the number of wings varies, while some have feathers covering their bodies and others have robes. Some are merely heads floating in clouds while others are fully formed. Some are more masculine, their apparent sexuality changing through the period.

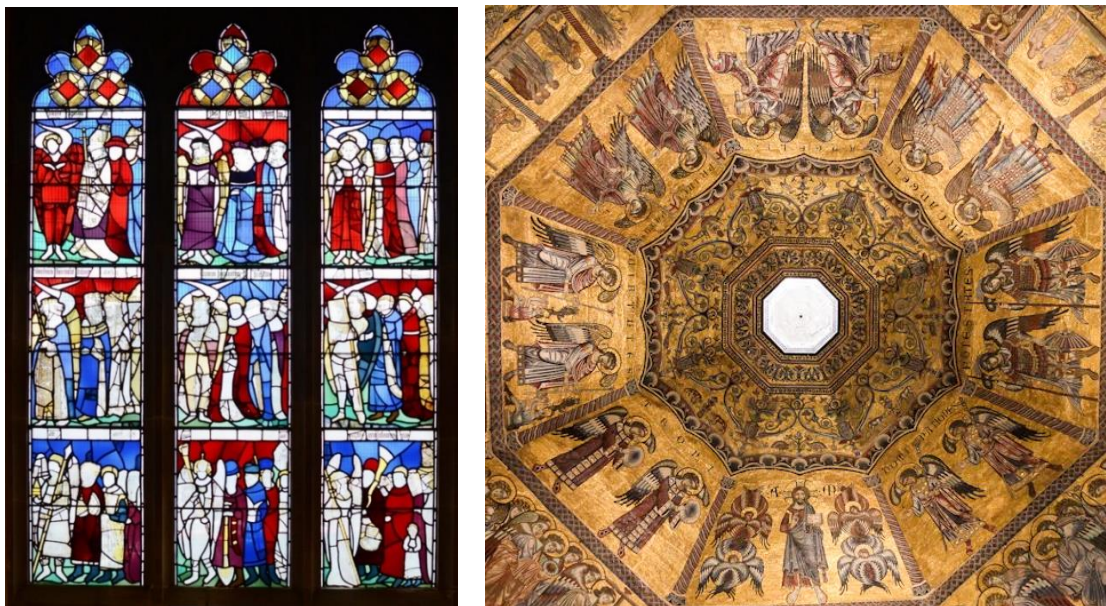


Plate 15: Unknown artist, *The Nine Orders of Angels*, glass and lead, 1410. <<https://allsaints-northstreet.org.uk/stained-glass>> [Accessed 15 May 2022] All Saints' church, North St, York. This window has been heavily restored, but it is still possible to make out the orders of angels in their hierarchies as described by Pseudo-Dionysius.

Plate 16: Unknown artist, *The Nine Orders of Angels*, glass mosaic, 12th century. <<https://www.florenceartmuseums.com/baptistry-of-san-giovanni/>> [Accessed 15 May 2022] The nine orders in mosaic in the twelfth-century Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence. Each order has a panel, with the exception of the seraphim and cherubim who flank Christ. In contrast with Plate 15, the nine orders are not seen in relation to their work with humanity.

Chapter 2: The Archangels



Plate 17: Filippino Lippi, *The Three Archangels with the Young Tobias*, oil on panel, c. 1485.

https://museireali.beniculturali.it/catalogo-galleria-sabauda/#/dettaglio/59631_I%20tre%20arcangeli%20e%20Tobiolo [Accessed 15 May 2022] Each of the three named archangels is identifiable here: Michael on the left is armed, Raphael holds Tobias (who carries a fish) by the hand and Gabriel carries a lily.

The aim of this chapter is to explore how archangels were represented and where and in which contexts they were found. It will show that archangels were understood by and known to the laity, not only Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, sanctioned by the church, but Uriel who, although not recognised officially, was clearly believed in by some. Archangels as a class are mentioned only twice in the Bible, for example I Thessalonians 4:15 and Jude 1:9 where Michael is named. They are mentioned by their names more often although only three archangels are given names (not counting the apocryphal Uriel and a few others who will be mentioned later, some canonical in the other Abrahamic faiths while others seem to be conjured out of air). Nevertheless, it is implicit that for the Middle Ages there were many more as with all the other orders. However, the archangels Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael deserve a chapter of their own because they have such important roles to play. There is another named angel, Lucifer, said to have been closest to God; he is given a place in that chapter with the archangels because his part is central to the Christian narrative of loss and redemption. These four angels had a great impact on the medieval Christian, having names with meanings and each serving a purpose. Raphael is the least mentioned, only appearing in the Book of Tobias, now counted among the Apocrypha but recognised as part of the Old Testament in the Middle Ages, although he appears in many works of art. Gabriel makes several appearances, most importantly at the Annunciation where he brings Mary the news that she is to bear the Son of God. This event is the focus of many images in all media, and has many attributes associated

with it such as the pot of flowering lilies. Michael has several jobs to do: he is a warrior, constantly represented as fighting evil, but also in charge of weighing souls on the Day of Judgement. Depictions of the three named archangels are clear, each demonstrating his specific role and character.⁴⁹ As well as more general powers, they each have powers specific to themselves, unlike other angels whose powers are more those of their orders rather than characteristic of them as individuals. The archangels are often given healing and protective powers as well as their more specific attributes as will be shown below. When considering the archangels, it is worth remembering that, however close to God, no angel could ever be on a par with Christ and that the worship of angels was to be avoided and was proscribed, most notably in Revelations 19:10 and 22:9 where an unspecified angel corrects St John, telling him to worship only God and not angels.⁵⁰ As with so many prohibitions, this ban on angel worship was not always honoured and the prohibition is repeated throughout the medieval period, indicating that there were lapses. While one could pray to an angel for help, they should not be worshipped: only the Trinity were worthy of worship. Even Michael could only be begged to intercede: he could not save a soul on his own. What happened to the soul after Michael had wrestled with demons for it was, ultimately, in the judgement of God. Archangels were invoked in oaths such as this, from the time of Charlemagne:

I swear by Almighty God and his only begotten son our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and the holy and glorious mother of God, the ever-virgin Mary, and the four gospels, which I am holding in my hand, and St Michael and St Gabriel the archangels.⁵¹

Such oaths place archangels almost on a level with the Trinity and with Mary, although its structure which gives an indication of hierarchy falls short of actually doing so. Towards the close of the Middle Ages all three archangels gained in popularity with a liturgy for Raphael created in the fifteenth century in Hereford and Exeter dioceses.⁵²

Angels and archangels are features not only of Christianity but also of Judaism and Islam and the angelology of these religions is worthy of a longer piece but will be dealt with only very briefly here. Judaism has a system similar to the nine orders in which archangels are

⁴⁹ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 38.

⁵⁰ Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 163.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 312 quoting from *Corpus Iuris Civilis* 3, p 89.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 167.

not mentioned, although Michael, Gabriel and Raphael are named. Likewise, they appear in Islam as Mikail, Jibril and Israfil with other angels of equal rank.



Plate 18: Lütfi Abdullah (?), *Siyer-i-nebi: The Life of the Prophet*, ink and paint on paper, 1591.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siyer-i_Nebi#/media/File:Siyer-i_Nebi_298a.jpg [Accessed 10 May 2022]

Muhammad with a veiled face in company with four angels: Jibril, Mikail, Israfil, and Azrail advancing on Mecca. It is a tradition in Islam for Muhammad always to be shown with a veiled face. The flames surrounding his head indicate holiness, as does a halo in Western art.

Michael

In medieval culture, Michael is arguably the most important of the archangels. He has several tasks to perform: in the instant of creation, he conquered Lucifer, exiling him from

heaven; throughout the span of created life, he constantly battles evil forces on the behalf of humanity, and at the end he fights again as described in the Book of Revelations, 12:7-9:

12:7 And there was a great battle in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought, and his angels. 12:8 And they prevailed not: neither was their place found anymore in heaven. 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world. And he was cast unto the earth: and his angels were thrown down with him.

Michael is also charged with the weighing of souls on the Day of Judgement. He is there at the deathbed of the pious to fight Satan for the soul, before he can conduct that soul away from the earthly existence to its next phase, either purgatory or heaven.⁵³ Presumably this struggle did not occur over the dying who were guilty of mortal sin and thus destined for hell. Michael is frequently called on for protection and aid. No other angel or archangel has so many or such onerous tasks to perform and it is no surprise that, although Gabriel has a universally recognised. He has at least one other on the 8 May which commemorates his conquest of a pagan army and second appearance at Monte Gargano in the year 493.⁵⁴ The September date commemorates the sixth-century dedication of a church in Rome to the archangel.⁵⁵ Other local dates have been ascribed to Michael's feast day, such as the 16 October at Mont-Saint-Michel where he appeared on that day to the bishop of Avranches and 6 May at Gargano, but the 29 September is the 'official' date.⁵⁶ It is known in Britain as Michaelmas and has acquired importance not only in the liturgical calendar but as a date from which the autumn university term takes its name as does one of the legal quarters of the year, along with Lady Day (the Feast of the Annunciation, 25 March), Midsummer Day (24 June) and Christmas Day (25 December), when quarterly rents fell payable. It is properly termed the Feast of St Michael and All Angels; this compensates for the lack of feast days in the western Christian tradition dedicated to other angels individually. St Michael, with or without the other angels, is a popular dedication for churches, apparently now the fourth most common in the Church of England with 816 dedications out of a total of 16139 Anglican churches.⁵⁷ It is reasonable to assume

⁵³ Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death: The Classic History of Western Attitudes Towards Death Over the Last One Thousand Years*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1981), p 115.

⁵⁴ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 179.

⁵⁵ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 128.

⁵⁶ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 179.

⁵⁷ The total number of Anglican churches is taken from The Church of England's site <<https://www.churchofengland.org>> while the number of St Michael dedications is from <<https://blanchflower.org/cgi-bin/qsaint.pl>> [Accessed 15 May 2022].

that this proportion has changed little in the centuries since the Reformation, reflecting the enduring popularity of this saint.



Plate 19: The Rohan Master, *The Dead Man Before God*, ink and paint on vellum, 15th century.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le_Mort_devant_son_juge,_Maitre_de_Rohan.jpg> [Accessed 15 May 2022] Michael fights a demon for the soul of a dying man. As is so often the case, here the soul is shown as a tiny person.

Throughout the medieval period Michael's popularity waxed and waned, although he was never unpopular, and Monte Gargano remained a busy site of pilgrimage right through as it still is today. During the tenth and eleventh centuries many churches had been dedicated to Michael, but this slowed so that by the thirteenth century the prime dedicatee was Mary.⁵⁸ Of course, an angel, having no physical body, cannot leave corporeal relics to act as foci for shrines, but he left contact relics in the shape of footprints in the living rock at Gargano. One of his most famous appearances was to Joan of Arc in 1425, inspiring her to fight for France.⁵⁹ Whether or not one believes in Joan's vision, it must have been thought credible (or at least useful) at a time when France was in great need of a hero. Michael's cult was pan-European and to take Wales as an example, there are fifteen villages with Llanfihangel (St Michael's Church) as the first part of their name, usually with the church on the top of a hill, a feature of most places dedicated to Michael. This siting of Michael's churches in high areas is perhaps because of his appearances at Gargano and what is now Mont-Saint-Michel which churches are notably on peaks.

⁵⁸ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 180.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

As well as his other tasks, Michael is seen as an intercessor between humanity and God, being the most important of the angelic mediators. In the fourth-century Apocalypse of Paul, an apocryphal account of Paul the Apostle's vision of heaven and hell, we find that:

'...when the souls of the damned see one saved soul pass by, wafted by the archangel Michael to Paradise, they beg him to intercede on their behalf with the Lord. The archangel invites the damned, along with Paul and angels who accompany him, to beg God in tears for a modicum of "refreshment" (*refrigerium*).'⁶⁰

Here we can see that Michael is ranked higher even than St Paul, and able to bring souls into God's presence. In a fifteenth-century prayer for the dying contained in the *Book of the Craft of Dying*, translated from the French, and printed by Caxton, St Michael is again entreated to intercede:

'Saint Michael, the Archangel of our Lord Jesu Christ, help us at our high Judge. O thou most worthy giant and protector, that mayst never be overcome, ... defend him [the dying person] mightily from the dragon of hell, ... thou art so clear and worthy a minister of God, that in the last hour of the life of our brother thou wilt receive the soul of him into thine holy bosom; and bring her into the place of refreshing and of peace, amen.'⁶¹

Here Michael is asked to bear the soul safely away from the earthly body and into safety. Prayers to Michael to be said at the deathbed are often found and must have been thought efficacious since the idea of losing a soul to the devil would be particularly horrifying. It could happen to anyone without the intercession of Michael or some other saint or heavenly being. This raises the question of the unprepared death: if death comes suddenly, in an accident or when one is alone, do the angels know? Since to achieve 'a good death' in which Michael and other angels would battle for the departing soul it was expected that one would make confession to a priest, preferably surrounded by family and friends, it is not clear how this could happen if death came upon one unawares.⁶² It seems unfair if angels could only be present when entreated and in the presence of a priest, however good the dying person may have been in life.

⁶⁰ Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991), p. 37.

⁶¹ *The Book of the Craft of Dying* p. 42; *The Art and Craft to Know Well to Die*, p. 84, both from *The Book of the Craft of Dying and Other Early English Tracts Concerning Death*, trans. & ed. By Frances M. M. Comper (London: Longmans, 1917).

⁶² The concept of a 'good death' is prevalent in the medieval period. It entails the approach to death including confession and contrition in the presence of a priest and one's family and friends. It is central to such texts as those included in *The Book of the Craft of Dying* ed. M.M. Comper (see fn. 61).

Michael is traditionally represented with wings and beardless, sometimes in robes, often in armour, this latter militaristic personification increasing as the medieval period progressed. Mâle points out that at Chartres, in the Last Judgement tympanum created in the thirteenth century Michael is not yet armoured but wears a full-length robe.⁶³ He may carry a spear or the banner of Christ in his soldierly role and is often found fighting, indeed killing, a dragon who represents the devil, as described above in Revelation 12:7-9. In his other main role as weigher of souls at Judgement, while balancing the good and bad in a soul's earthly life with the help of the *liber vitae* which documents all good and bad acts and thoughts, he again battles the devil who is often seen trying to upset the balance by holding down the scales in an attempt to win another soul for himself.⁶⁴ Indeed, Mâle notes that at Conques in a similar scene the devil is 'sneering cynically' while trying to affect the balance.⁶⁵ In weighing souls Michael is not being good or kind: he is being just as are all angels. Justice is not a matter of beneficence or malice: it is honesty, however unpalatable. Apart from rejoicing over the saving of souls, angels in the Bible do not exhibit emotion. Interestingly, in this role of celestial scales-bearer, Michael is sometimes found as the patron saint of the dead.⁶⁶ Indeed at the monastery of Fulda in Germany in 822 a chapel was dedicated to him.⁶⁷ We may ask whether this image of the weigher of souls was in part inspired by images of Anubis, the jackal-headed god of death and all related subjects in ancient Egypt.⁶⁸ There are clear similarities, not only iconographic but also in the concept of the weighing of souls.

⁶³ Emile Mâle, *Religious Art in France: The Late Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Iconography and Its Sources* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 89.

⁶⁴ Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, p 105.

⁶⁵ Mâle, *Religious Art in France*, p. 54.

⁶⁶ Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, p 103.

⁶⁷ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 166.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 614.



Plate 20: Unknown artist, *Anubis Weighing Souls*, ink and paint on papyrus, c. 1290 BCE.
 <<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/galleries/egyptian-death-and-afterlife-mummies#&gid=1&pid=1>>
 [Accessed 10 May 2022] From *The Book of the Dead of Hunefu*. Perhaps a precursor of Michael at the Day of Judgement.



Plate 21: Unknown artist, *St Michael Weighing a Soul*, paint on plaster, c. 1500.
 <<https://finditdoit.worcester.gov.uk/organisation/the-commandery/>> [Accessed 15 May 2022] An armed and armoured Michael weighing souls with the help of Mary. To the left a small devil can be seen, presumably attempting to affect the balance.

We will see in the chapter devoted to angels in literature that there were specific sermons concerning Michael and, although there are patterns for these in *The Golden Legend* and in John Mirk's *Festial*, those actually presented must have varied considerably depending

on the talent and inspiration of the preacher.⁶⁹ We can only assume that Michael must have been the subject of sermons on other occasions as well: perhaps on the eve of a battle, or at a month's or year's mind service for a dead Christian.



Plate 22: Master of Soriguerola, *The Panel of St Michael*, tempera and varnished metal plate over fir wood, late 13th century. <<https://www.museunacional.cat/en/colleccio/panel-saint-michael/mestre-de-soriguerola/003901-000>> [Accessed 10 May 2022] On the right of this late-thirteenth-century panel St Michael fulfils two of his roles: in the top left quarter he weighs souls, countermanding the efforts of a devil, and bottom right he fights Satan, disguised as a dragon.

Michael was not above helping individuals, albeit saintly ones. He came to the aid of St Homobonus (literally Goodman) of Cremona, a minor merchant, pious, and with a family, who was prone to ‘attacks of evil spirits’, but St Michael presented him with a staff with which to ward them off.⁷⁰ While Homobonus has his own *vita*, *Quoniam historiae*, he is not mentioned in *The Golden Legend*. Perhaps he was a saint with a very localised following, although he was canonized in 1199 two years after his death by Pope Innocent III.⁷¹ The greatest miracle is perhaps that the wonderful staff does not appear as a relic after his death.

⁶⁹ John Mirk, *Festial Vols 1 & 2*, ed. by Susan Powell (Oxford: EETS, 2009); Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, intro. Eamon Duffy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁷⁰ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 210.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

Gabriel

Like Michael, Gabriel was also a popular angelic saint. He has a feast day, the 24 March, although this is rarely referred to, occurring in few manuscripts except, for example, one held at Exeter Cathedral Library (MS 3508, fol. 6) where he appears as an insertion in the calendar. He is closely associated with the Annunciation, celebrated on the 25 March, where he is shown to have a vital role as God's messenger to Mary.⁷² The Ethiopian Orthodox Church gives Gabriel his own feast day of the 28 December and Gabriel is revered in the other Abrahamic faiths. Gabriel is a popular figure in medieval art, especially in the many representations of the Annunciation where he is shown as a winged youth or young man, sometimes dressed in white and often bearing a lily, usually looking towards Mary, sometimes from beneath his eyelids, sometimes directly. This event is described in the New Testament in Luke 1:26-38 in which Gabriel is sent to Mary from heaven and announces that she will conceive and bear the son of God: '1:28 And the angel ... said to her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.' The phrase 'Hail, full of grace' is the foundation of the *Ave Maria* prayer, Hail Mary, still recited so many thousands of times by Catholics around the world each day. That the harbinger of such great news should be represented so many times in the Middle Ages is no surprise. Because Gabriel, like Michael, was ethereal, his relics were inevitably contact relics. A will made in 1462 in Kent bequeaths to the deceased's parish church a piece of stone on which Gabriel had stood at the Annunciation.⁷³



Plate 23: Filippo Lippi, *The Annunciation*, tempera on wood, c. 1460-63. The National Gallery, London. Natasha Coombs, 2022. Gabriel brings Mary the news from God. A lily in a pot stands between them while the angel carries another lily.

⁷² Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 152-3.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

On the feast day of the Annunciation, according to de Voragine:

... the angel brought the message to the Virgin by the announcement to prompt her to believing, through believing to consent, and through consent to the conceiving of the Son of God.⁷⁴

This angel is, of course, Gabriel, and de Voragine also says that his purpose in appearing to Mary was primarily to be God's messenger but also to become Mary's servant and to make reparation for the fall of Lucifer and his angels. He also notes that Gabriel's salutation worried Mary but that she was able to ask him questions and receive replies to calm her. In this respect the angel is acting not only as a messenger from God but as someone who can explain the meaning of the message. De Voragine explains every phrase of this conversation, making the idea of a virgin birth comprehensible to lay listeners. Gabriel acts as interpreter for God, and de Voragine does the same for the archangel to people. Like Michael, Gabriel is presented as a powerful intercessor and an intermediary who brings Mary's great news to her. One result of this news and Mary's role as mother of Jesus is that she becomes Queen of Heaven; she is effectively queen of the angels and thus a human female is placed above God's first created beings.

In the *Divine Comedy*, in Purgatory X 34-45 and Paradise XXXII 94-96, Gabriel appears as Mary's servant and friend. In the first of these passages, a statue of Gabriel is described thus:

Appeared to us, with such a lively ease
Carved, and so gracious there in act to move,
It seemed not one of your dumb images;

You'd swear an Ave from his lips breathed off,⁷⁵

There are examples of churches dedicated to Gabriel, but these are few and far between. The village of Stoke Gabriel in Devon has one, and Orme tells us that the dedication to the archangel was made in the thirteenth century by Bishop Bronescombe whose patron Gabriel

⁷⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, p. 196.

⁷⁵ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy II: Purgatory*, trans. Dorothy L Sayers & Barbara Reynolds (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1955), p. 144, l. 37-40.

was.⁷⁶ Possibly this scarcity of dedications is because of the lack of relics, but that would not account for the great number of churches dedicated to St Michael. Since Gabriel was the angel of the Annunciation, one might expect a greater number of dedications, although his presence is presumed in the many dedications to St Michael and All Angels.



Plate 24: Filippo Lippi, *The Annunciation*, tempera on wood, c. 1460-63. The National Gallery, London. Natasha Coombs, 2022. Although angels in the Bible are never winged, here Gabriel has magnificent wings of peacock feathers.

Raphael

In the Book of Tobias, now counted among the Apocrypha but part of the Old Testament before the Reformation, the archangel Raphael in human disguise guides and helps the young Tobias on a long journey. During the journey when Tobias caught a fish, Raphael advised him to use the fish's liver to cure his father's blindness and because of this Raphael is credited with healing powers and his efforts as Tobias's guide and protector also ensure that he is regarded as a protector of travellers. Apart from this story Raphael makes no other appearance in the Bible, although he is understood to be the angel who stirs the waters of the Pool of Bethesda in John 5:1-4.⁷⁷ He is the angel Israfil in the Qur'an, constantly prepared to announce the Day of Resurrection and he is recognised as a healer in Judaism, his name meaning Medicine of God.

Bonaventure composed a sermon on the theme of Raphael's role in the story of Tobias and his abilities as a healer, using this power of Raphael's allegorically as a 'triple medicine for sin' and surely this theme would have filtered down from the Seraphic Doctor via his direct

⁷⁶ Nicholas Orme, *English Church Dedications with a Survey of Cornwall and Devon* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), p. 37.

⁷⁷ Michael David Coogan, 'Raphael', in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* ed. by Coogan, Michael David & Metzger, Bruce M. (Oxford: OUP, 1993), p. 642.

listeners and readers to lower levels of the clergy. Bonaventure, among other theologians, asked why Michael had a feast day while Gabriel and Raphael did not. He agrees that Michael should have one but does not answer his original question. Raphael and his involvement in the wedding of Tobias and Sarah is mentioned in thirteenth-century marriage ceremonies and this event features in a small panel of the glass from Sainte-Chapelle in Paris.



Plate 25: Unknown artist, *The Marriage of Tobias and Sarah*, glass and lead, c. 1243-48.
<<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O8583/marriage-of-tobias-and-sara-medallion-unknown/>>
[Accessed 10 May 2022]

Why such a shadowy figure should be the focus of devotion in the medieval period is mysterious, and yet in the mid fifteenth century Bishop Edmund Lacy of Exeter composed a liturgy for the feast of Raphael on the 5 October. In *The Register of Edmund Lacy*, we are told that he “conceived, composed and published” this liturgy for the archangel Raphael, although this seems only to have been used at Exeter and Hereford, where Lacy had previously presided, and at York.⁷⁸ Since the feast of Raphael was only formalized in 1921, one wonders how Lacy arrived at his date. The lack of feast days for Gabriel and Raphael was commented on by Bonaventure among others, so perhaps Lacy was merely trying to redress the balance.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 116.

⁷⁹ Bonaventure, John Belet and Sicard of Cremona are cited by Keck in *Angels and Angelology* as asking why the other archangels had no feast days. Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 64.

Lucifer



Plate 26: Unknown artist, *St Michael casts out Lucifer from heaven*, ink and pigments on vellum, 1460. <<https://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/illmanus/roymanucoll/t/largeimage77426.html>> [Accessed 15 May 2022] Michael's spear carries the banner of a red cross on a white background, signifying the victory of Christ's blood over death and hell.

The fall of Lucifer was presumably an interesting topic for laypeople: such stories of transgression are perpetually fascinating. He was created at the same time as all the other angels, in the first instant of creation in Genesis 1:3 'And God said: Be light made. And light was made.' In one respect, the verse may be most appropriate to Lucifer whose name means Bringer of Light. He also fell in that instant: from the creation of angels to the fall of Lucifer apparently took no measurable time at all.⁸⁰ He is first named in Isaiah 14:12: 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? How art thou fallen to the earth, that didst wound the nations?' In this book of the Bible, Lucifer is taken to represent the king of Babylon but may also be read as 'the prince of devils, who was created a bright angel, but fell by pride and rebellion against God.'⁸¹ This is the only time that Lucifer is mentioned in the

⁸⁰ Keck states that 'The three events of the creation, fall, and confirmation of the angels transpired within the space of an instant...' and that this was a recurring theme for debate among medieval theologians. Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 16.

⁸¹ This quote is from the commentary included in the Douay-Reims Bible, p. 427.

Bible, the devil usually being called Satan, but this character has many names: Lucifer, Satan, the Devil, Beelzebub... In Tundale's Vision he is described thus:

Two grett wyngys that were blacke
Stod on eyder syde on his backe
Two fett wyth naylys of yron and stell
He had that weron full scharpe to fell
He had a long nekke and a smalle
But the hed was gret with all
The eon wer brode in his hed
And all wer brannand as fyr red
His mowthe was wyd and syde lyppud
Hys snowt was with yrron typpud
Fyr that myght neuer slakyd bee
Owt of is mowthe com gret plenty...⁸²

In Matthew's Gospel we find Lucifer's demons referred to as angels: 25:41 'Then he shall say to them also that shall be on his left side: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.'⁸³

The late-fourteenth-century text *Le Menagier de Paris* is, as well as being in part a household guide is also a handbook of devotional study. In the book's first part, which deals with such matters as comportment in church and the meaning of the mass, Lucifer is mentioned. The eponymous *Menagier* states that:

⁸² *The Vision of Tundale (Visio Tnugdali)* is originally a lengthy twelfth-century poem. A Middle English version exists from which the excerpt given is taken. The poem describes the eponymous Tundale's journey through heaven and hell, guided by an angel, leading to conversion from his previously relaxed lifestyle to a more upright one. It was translated into many languages and Eileen Gardiner in *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell* tells us that it was widely read. *The Visions of Tundale; Together with Metrical Moralizations and Other Fragments of Early Poetry, Hitherto Inedited*, ed. by William B. Turnbull (Edinburgh: T G Stevenson, 1843), p. 29. Eileen Gardiner, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell: A Sourcebook*, (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2018).

⁸³ Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, p. 100. See also pl. 85 of this dissertation.

... once Lucifer was the most solemn angel and the most beloved and the nearest to God that was then in paradise, and therefore he was high Lucifer, which is as 'twere *lucem ferens*, to wit bearing light, for in the eyes of the others all light and joy was there where he came, for that he represented and brought remembrance of that sovereign Lord, who so loved him and from whom he came and to whom he was so near. And as soon as this same Lucifer set aside humility, and puffed up his heart with pride, Our Lord set him further away from Him, for He caused him to fall lower than all the others, to sit to the lowermost depths of hell, where he is the lowest, the worst and the most wicked of the evil ones.⁸⁴

This text was written for a young wife by her older husband, a merchant. We can take it as an example of the perception of Lucifer by educated lay people. It may be that the story of Lucifer's fall following his exhibition of pride was a cautionary tale, intended to prevent people from following the path of vainglory.

Angels of the Apocrypha and Other Angels



Plate 27: Unknown artist, *Uriel*, paint on plaster, 13th century.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uriel#/media/File:Image_of_Uriel_the_Archangel,_Cairo.jpg> [Accessed May 12 2022] This image is found in the Hanging Church in Cairo. The Church of Mother of God Saint Mary is a Coptic Christian church and so the prohibition against apocryphal characters does not apply.

These four archangels are not the only angels known by name. As has been said, it is implicit that for the Middle Ages there are many more archangels than the four familiar ones (including Lucifer) and on examining the Apocrypha other named archangels such as Uriel will be encountered. Uriel is mentioned in the second Book of Esdras, but he fell from favour in the

⁸⁴ *The Goodman of Paris (Le Menagier de Paris: A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy by a Citizen of Paris c. 1393)*, ed. & trans. by Eileen Power (London: The Folio Society, 1992), p. 94.

eighth century and was thereafter omitted from prayers and liturgies.⁸⁵ Uriel is still accepted by the Ethiopian church and the Eastern Orthodox church, but the later medieval western Christian tradition did not accept him.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, there are instances of the representation of Uriel in western medieval art, for example in Plate 28. In this instance, clearly either the donor or the craftsman had an abiding belief in Uriel as a biblical figure.

Uriel, along with the angels Raguhel and Tobihel, appears in an eighth-century litany from Soissons but is there any provenance for these other two?⁸⁷ Raguhel appears in the Judaic book of Enoch, while Tobihel is mentioned, with another unorthodox angel Orihel, in a Carolingian litany.⁸⁸ There are others, too many to list but their origins are even more obscure, and they will not be examined here. Prayers invoking non-canonical angels were frowned upon by the ecclesiastical hierarchy and such angels were sometimes considered to be demons in disguise. In Charlemagne's capitulary *Admonitio generalis* of 789 the naming of any angels except for Gabriel, Michael and Raphael was banned as being heretical.⁸⁹ This document outlined eighty-two ecclesiastical laws including those governing guilds and fraternities in whether or not they should administer oaths, but its introduction states that constant praise of God was essential and the whole document is framed in this light.⁹⁰ In this prohibition the *Admonitio* was enforcing the decree from the much earlier Council of Laodicea held in 363-4.⁹¹ The need to assert the ruling from a council held over four hundred years earlier indicates that this frowned-upon habit was still alive. A list exists from the late fifteenth century of the names of many non-canonical angels with invocations to them:⁹²

Wen thow seest thine Emmy calle on Sent Oriell.

Wene thow goost by the way calle on Sent Ragwell.

Wen thow goost to hone parte to do thy arrand calle aponne Saynt Barachiell
and thow shaht have thy desyre.

⁸⁵ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 63.

⁸⁶ Amsalu Tefera, 'A Fifteenth Century Homily on the Archangel Uriel' *Aethiopica* 21 (2018), pp. 87-119, p. 89

⁸⁷ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 164.

⁸⁸ Karen Louise Jolly, 'Prayers from the Field: Practical Protection and Demonic Defence in Anglo-Saxon England' *Traditio*, Vol. 61 (2006), pp. 95-147.

⁸⁹ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 164.

⁹⁰ Roger Collins, *Charlemagne* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998), pp. 108-9.

⁹¹ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 164.

⁹² This list, in Middle English and dating from the late fifteenth century, is found in a manuscript now held in the Morgan Library in New York. M. J. Swanton, 'A Fifteenth-Century Cabalistic Memorandum Formerly in Morgan MS 775' *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (1983), p. 260.

And there be hone man wroht ayenus the calle upon Saynt Pantalion and is wroht shall sone fro hym.

Wen yow wylt come unto any lord or pryns have in thy mynd Sant Tubiell and Saynt Rachyell and all thing shall fall well to the.

Interestingly, these lines had been erased from the book and were only recovered with the use of ultraviolet light. Presumably someone in the book's history wished to follow church ruling on angelic names. In this article Swanton states that, despite proscription against the use of the names of non-canonical angels, there had been a resurgence in such cults during the fifteenth century.⁹³ One wonders why this is so: as with the growth in private, lay devotion and the growth in the popularity of transi tombs and other memento mori, perhaps it demonstrates a delayed reaction after the devastation of the bubonic plague which swept Europe in the previous century. There were of course wars during this period, but even the worst had a much smaller impact than the plague. Throughout the medieval period literacy increased, first among the clerical class and then amongst the laity with the introduction of bureaucratic systems.⁹⁴ Towards the end of the period books and pamphlets became more plentiful and less expensive due to the arrival of the printing press, which further escalated the rise in literacy among the lay populace.⁹⁵ This increase coincided with and perhaps encouraged the growth of lay devotion: how much easier to read texts for yourself whenever you could make time than to wait for a priest to read them to you. The combination of the aftermath of a great disaster with the improved availability of knowledge is a potent one, when considering late medieval devotions and perhaps this is a reason for the growth in belief in non-canonical angels.

⁹³ Swanton, 'A Fifteenth-Century Cabalistic Memorandum', p. 260.

⁹⁴ M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., 1979), pp. 46-47.

⁹⁵ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 82.



Plate 28: Unknown artist, *The Archangel Uriel with Esdras*, glass and lead, 14th century.

<<http://geograph.org.uk/photo/6159961>> [Accessed 12 May 2022] Here Uriel is pictured with Esdras; in whose apocryphal book he features. This is an example of the prohibition on the representation of apocryphal angels being ignored.

The Fluctuating Popularity of Archangels

By the thirteenth century archangels were becoming less visible among what Keck calls ‘professional angelologists’ and commentaries on them became more scarce in learned circles.⁹⁶ However, their popularity among the laity and perhaps also in some parts of the clergy never waned. Since we have seen that dictates from the highest reaches of the church were not always followed, we may presume that they were still seen as a clear and present help when needed. They seem to have represented a step up from the guardian angels, nearer to the Trinity, but perhaps a last resort for those in distress.

⁹⁶ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 92.

Chapter 3: Angels in Church



Plate 29: Unknown artist, *A Roof Angel*, carved wood, 15th century. St Peter's church, Upwell, Norfolk. Natasha Coombs, 2021. An angel in the roof of a village church, almost within reach thanks to the eighteenth-century gallery.

The aim of this chapter is to reveal and explain the extent of angelic iconography in churches, while attempting to understand the attitudes of the medieval laity to angels. Church is, after all, the most obvious place to find representations of celestial beings and the place where most medieval people would have encountered angels most frequently. Churches are divided into two main areas: the nave, where the congregation gathers, and the chancel which includes the sanctuary and altar and there is hardly a part of the church structure or its furnishings which cannot support an angel or two. In the medieval period the chancel was maintained by the priest while the nave was the domain of the congregation. The congregation's responsibilities included not only the care for the fabric of the nave but books, vestments, and images. This arrangement was formalized and defined in statutes created between 1279 and 1313, when Pecham and then Winchelsey were Archbishops of Canterbury.⁹⁷ This legislation goes some way to explain the involvement of parishioners such as John Baret at St Mary, Bury St Edmunds, where he was responsible at least in part for the creation of the angel roof:

⁹⁷ Nicholas Orme, *Going to Church in Medieval England* (London: Yale University Press, 2021), p. 80.

Baret's parish church ... also benefitted from his generosity. His motto, 'Grace me Governe', is painted on the spandrels at the east end of the magnificent angel roof in the nave. This was in place long before Baret made his will, so there is no evidence to show to what extent he was involved in the provision of what is one of Suffolk's best angel roofs. It could mean no more than that he paid to have the eastern most angels, the angels of the canopy, painted [Plate 30].⁹⁸



Plate 30: Unknown artist, *Roof Angels*, carved wood, 15th century. St Mary's church, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. Natasha Coombs, 2021. The easternmost angels of St Mary's, Bury St Edmunds, are now repainted to resemble their original appearance.

As Nicholas Orme points out, imagery in churches had a purpose: 'to encourage devotion and give instruction.'⁹⁹ '... those [images] that appeared did so on the initiative of church patrons, clergy, or parishioners at various times in the church's history.'¹⁰⁰ This echoes the thought of Gregory the Great who considered images in a church to be beneficial in teaching, as is mentioned below.

While the appearance of many angels in church was at the behest of individual donors and was believed to benefit the souls of these people, both through their beautification of the church buildings and through memorialization, they were also seen to benefit onlookers who, through the presence of angels, may be inspired to prayer, drawing nearer to their own redemption. They are also referred to in sermons at this period, such as those of John Mirk, and will be addressed in another chapter, as will angels in miracle plays and other dramas played out in churches.

⁹⁸ Margaret Statham, 'John Baret of Bury', *The Ricardian*, Vol. 13 (2003) 420-431, p. 428.

⁹⁹ Orme, *Going to Church*, p. 109.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

Angel Roofs

For many people living in the East Anglian counties of the fifteenth century the new architectural phenomenon of the angel roof was noticeable. These magnificent structures began to appear shortly after the construction of the roof at Westminster Hall in London and within a century, many churches had angels gazing down at the congregation from the previously barely ornamented roof space. Created in a secular building, the Westminster angel roof was built in the final decade of the fourteenth century by Master Carpenter Hugh Herland and his craftsmen for Richard II.¹⁰¹ However, angels were used as roof features in the religious setting of the choir of Gloucester Cathedral during its reconstruction in the mid-fourteenth century. Indeed, this roof holds a veritable heavenly host, playing an orchestra of medieval instruments and it is appropriate that they should be here: the roof is, after all, the part of the building nearest to heaven. The roof's building is recorded in the *Historia* of St Peter's Abbey, Gloucester although sadly there is little detail given: 'Lord Adam de Staunton succeeded his master John Wygemor, in whose time the great vault of the choir was built, at vast expense, ...'¹⁰² The Gloucester angels cover the joints in the stone structure, while Westminster's angels ornament the ends of hammerbeams, without which beams the largest timber roof in northern Europe could not stand.¹⁰³ Was the roof of Gloucester Cathedral choir an inspiration for the Westminster Hall roof? While it has not been possible to find any connection between Hugh Herland and Gloucester, the king had visited the city, knew the cathedral and must have seen the choir roof. Was Richard inspired by the magnificent, vaulted ceiling? Given the presence of angels in the Wilton Diptych (see Plate 84) it is not unreasonable to assume that the Westminster angels were there to bolster his standing, both personally and in the context of the government of England. A noticeable difference between the angels of Gloucester and those of Westminster can be found in what they hold. In Gloucester they play musical instruments and praise God. At Westminster they have a more secular job: all twenty-six angels bear shields emblazoned with the arms of Richard II.¹⁰⁴ The impression we gain is that the Gloucester angels forever praise God, while Westminster's, each bearing Richard's arms, seem only to uphold the earthly king.

¹⁰¹ John Harvey, *English Medieval Architects: A Biographical Dictionary Down to 1550* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1987), p. 139.

¹⁰² *Historia of St Peter's Abbey, Gloucester*, trans. by William Barber, 1988. (Gloucester: Chapter of Gloucester choir, 2021), unpaginated. This was kindly made available to me by the Cathedral archivist.

¹⁰³ Michael Rimmer, *The Angel Roofs of East Anglia: Unseen Masterpieces of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2015), p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ Rimmer, *The Angel Roofs of East Anglia*, p. 3.



Plate 31: Unknown artist, *Angel Musicians*, painted stone, 13th century. Gloucester Cathedral, Gloucester. Natasha Coombs, 2021. Is the choir roof of Gloucester Cathedral the inspiration for the timber angel roof at Westminster Hall?

Plate 32: Unknown artist, *An Angel Bearing a Coat of Arms*, carved wood, originally painted, 14th century. <<https://www.angelroofs.net/the-first-angel-roof-westminster-hall>> [Accessed 20 March 2022] A roof angel from Westminster Hall, bearing the coat of arms of Richard II.

Angel roofs spread rapidly from London to East Anglia, presumably through the work of Herland who was ‘appointed to impress labour for the works’ on the new harbour at Great Yarmouth.¹⁰⁵ It is thought that through this task he made contact with local worthies who wished to display their wealth, taste, and devotion by adorning their churches. It seems clear from the style of the earliest angel roofs of this area that these wealthy and pious landowners and merchants were aware of the Westminster roof, if they had not seen it in person. The first of these, at the Chapel of St Nicholas in Kings (then Bishops) Lynn, built during the first decade of the fifteenth century, bears comparison with its much grander predecessor in Westminster. The angels are in the same position relative to the roof, although in Kings Lynn it is a false rather than a real hammerbeam roof, and stylistically the angels are similar: they are dressed alike and all carry objects rather than singing or praising God as are so many others. They are clearly not executed by the same hand, though. The hair differs greatly between the two sets of angels: hair style is often a factor denoting a craftsman’s skill and is sometimes used to identify particular craftsmen.

¹⁰⁵ Harvey, *English Medieval Architects*, p. 140.



Plate 33: Unknown artist, *A Roof Angel from St Nicholas' Chapel, Kings Lynn*, carved wood, late 14th century. <<https://www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=4090>> [Accessed 20 March 2022]. While the roof structure here differs from that at Westminster, the combination of architectural construction and angels leads to a direct comparison between the two roofs. The angel's right wing is a modern replacement.

These glorious features are a noticeable way for a sponsor to declare publicly their piety and wealth. No member of a congregation could miss them, even in the heights of a gloomy church: many were richly gilded and painted, as we see at Blythburgh (Plate 35) where much original pigment remains and at St Mary's, Bury St Edmunds (Plate 30) where some of the angels have had their paint and gilt restored. The unusual tricephalous angel at St Thomas Salisbury (Plate 34) still bears much of its original paintwork, showing how gaudy – to modern taste – it must have been. The angels were surely created to give the sensation that one was constantly under the angels' gaze and protected by these messengers of God, particularly since a feature of angel roofs is the direction of the angels' gaze. This is generally downward, towards the congregation, and this direction reinforces their meaning. Demi-angels on wall plates tend to stare across to their counterparts on the other wall, but those found on hammer beams or in the roof space look downwards. This presumably is intended to suggest that they act as observers for God: through their eyes God sees His people, at least while they are in His house. It is entirely possible that the optical theory of extramission was in play here. It states that vision occurs when the eye sheds light on an object: are not the angels acting here as God's eyes?¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Seb Falk, *The Light Ages: A Medieval Journey of Discovery* (London: Allen Lane, 2020), p 87.



Plate 34: Unknown artist, *A Tricephalous Angel*, carved and painted wood, 15th century.

<<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2019/15-november/news/uk/rare-carving-discovered-in-salisbury-church>> [Accessed 20 March 2022]. A very rare tricephalous angel holding the conjoined heads of Christ, God, and the Holy Spirit, recently uncovered at the Church of St Thomas and St Edmund, Salisbury.

Angel roofs of varying quality and style are found throughout Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire with outliers throughout East Anglia and in other parts of England and Wales such as at All Saints, North Street in York; St Collen, Llangollen in Wales, and St Mary's, Westonzoyland in Somerset. The greatest concentration is, however, in East Anglia where many survive despite the actions of iconoclasts such as William Dowsing in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire during the seventeenth century. Angels were not always seen by these men as objects for destruction. Although Dowsing believed that images of angels should all be destroyed or at least defaced, he was not thorough in his actions, whether through oversight or choice; other reformers considered angelic figures to be an appropriate ornament in a church. While Calvin 'was sour about both Mary and angels', Martin Luther 'never lost his warm devotion either to Mary or angels'.¹⁰⁷ Calvin was deeply wary of idolatry, and it is those who shared his views that were responsible for so much iconoclastic destruction across Europe. We read in Trevor Cooper's essay in his edition of *The Journal of William Dowsing* that 'From his first visit Dowsing waged war on angels and cherubim.'¹⁰⁸ He gave orders in many churches

¹⁰⁷ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *All Things Made New: Writings on the Reformation* (London: Penguin, 2017), p 29.

¹⁰⁸ Trevor Cooper, 'Brass, glass and crosses: identifying iconoclasm outside the Journal', *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia During the English Civil War*, ed. by Trevor Cooper (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2001), p 94.

for the angels to be pulled down: while many were destroyed, some survived. Was this because he either did not notice them or were his orders disobeyed?



Plate 35: Unknown artist, *Roof Angel*, carved wood and paint, 15th century.

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blythburgh_church_-_roof_angel.jpg> [Accessed 20 March 2022]. The angels of Blythburgh. Visited by William Dowsing and mentioned in his journal, the church has twelve of the original twenty angels remaining. Perhaps they are just too high up to make removal practical.¹⁰⁹

There is much to be said of the appearance of the inhabitants of angel roofs. As has been mentioned, their hair varied: sometimes it appears as ringlets, sometimes as waves. They are often clothed in long robes, but many have feathery suits and others armour. Some are full-length, others appear to be rising from clouds so that only the upper body and head are visible, while yet others, demi-angels, are less three dimensional and seem to be merely bas-relief busts. Most have only two wings, although there are six- and four-winged examples, presumably representing seraphim and cherubim. It is possible that their clothing reflected that worn by actors in the many liturgical dramas of the Middle Ages.¹¹⁰ Roof angels usually have a job to do, either playing musical instruments, bearing banderoles which once bore messages, or carrying shields or other objects. They sometimes carry souls to the bosom of Abraham, and often they present the Instruments of the Passion: those everyday objects used in the judicial torture and murder of Christ: hammer, nails, a ladder, as well as the dice with which His guards played. The most awful must be the spear which pierced His side, the crown of thorns and the cross itself. These reminders of Christ's death and torture are frequent attributes for angels to

¹⁰⁹ *The Journal of William Dowsing* ed. by Trevor Cooper, pp. 299-300.

¹¹⁰ Rimmer, *The Angel Roofs of East Anglia*, p. 18.

bear.¹¹¹ The way in which the Instruments were used in prayer and contemplation, each having its own meaning, is reminiscent of the feeling evoked by *The Dream of the Rood*, the Anglo-Saxon poem in which Christ's cross tells its story. In the poem the dreamer comes to the conclusion that the cross is a wonderful thing to be longed for, his 'hope of protection'.¹¹² This is the same attitude taken towards the Instruments in the manuscript outlined in William Marx's essay 'British Library Harley MS 1740 and Popular Devotion' in which each Instrument is used to correct a fault in the contemplative person.¹¹³



Plate 36: Unknown artist, *Angel Roof*, carved wood, 15th century. With kind permission of Lionel Wall. A richly decorated angel roof from St Mary, Westonzoyland in Somerset.

Another part of the roof in which angels could be seen is the roof bosses such as those at Chester Cathedral. Often hard to discern, these lofty pieces of work sometimes tell stories. In these bosses, angels wield censers, conferring blessing on the Trinity and on Mary.

¹¹¹ Much work has been done on the Instruments of the Passion (*Arma Christi*), for example see Gertrude Schiller *Iconography of Christian Art vol. 2* trans. Janet Seligman (London: Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd., 1972), pp. 189-97.

¹¹² Anonymous, *The Dream of the Rood* in *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse* (Oxford: OUP, 1981), pp. 1-3.

¹¹³ C. W. Marx, 'British Library Harley MS 1749 and Popular Devotion', in *England In The Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of The 1992 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Nicholas Rogers (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1994), pp. 207-222, at p. 221.



Plates 37 & 38: Unknown artist, *Roof Bosses*, carved stone, paint, and gilt, late 13th century. With kind permission of Sean Breadin. On the left, Virgin Mary and the Christ Child with censing angels and right, censing angels around the Trinity, roof bosses from Chester cathedral.

Angels among the Congregation

Angels often made their way down from the roofs to appear among the living, sometimes in pew ends and misericords. Being closer to the worshippers, did they have more impact on them? Pew ends were a less expensive way to demonstrate piety than angel roofs, and it is a surprise that few show angels. While pew ends are found in the nave, visible to all church users, misericords are less obvious, being concealed in the choir where the secular attendants were unwelcome. In *Misericords of Northwest England*, Dickinson states that in the 1986 publication *English Misericords*, Marshall Laird reported that only 4.5% of the 3400 misericord carvings were of angels or other religious figures.¹¹⁴ A further but more unusual site for carved wooden angels is on a rood screen. While they frequently appear painted on the lower level, they seldom appear in the carved upper parts. At the church of St Mary, Silchester in Hampshire not only are there angels in the tracery head, but they are in a most unusual pose with wings outstretched, very similar to the depiction of Michael shown on the obverse of the angel coin (Plate 105).

¹¹⁴ John Dickinson, *Misericords of North West England: Their Nature and Significance* (Lancaster: Centre for North-West Regional Studies, 2008), p 2.



Plate 39: Robart Daye, *Pew End*, carved wood, 16th century.
<<https://www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=4309>> [Accessed 20 March 2022].
This pew end at St Nonna, Altarnun, Cornwall shows an angel unusually displaying the name of the woodcarver.



Plate 40: Unknown artist, *Misericord*, carved wood, 15th century. St Mary's church, Fairford, Gloucestershire.
Natasha Coombs, 2022. Having examined many misericords, there seem to be few with angels.



Plate 41: Unknown artist, *A Tracery Head with Angels*, carved wood, late 15th century. With kind permission of Lucy Squire. This very unusual representation of a banner-bearing angel with outstretched wings can be found in the church of St Mary, Silchester, Hampshire.

Painted Angels

Separating the choir and chancel from the nave, the clergy from the lay congregants, was the rood screen with an almost impenetrable dado level below an ornate, pierced screen with the rood loft above, supporting the crucifix with Mary and St John. This structure was a visible and physical division between the sacred and the profane and was often highly decorated with paintings of saints and prophets on the lower level. The rood screen of the small church of St Michael and All Angels at Barton Turf in Norfolk has almost intact painted images of the Nine Orders of Angels on its fifteenth-century rood screen. This fine piece of work bears only small iconoclastic damage to the faces of two orders, the Dominions and the Seraphim, presumably because they both bear Catholic attributes: the Dominion wears the triple crown of Rome, while the Seraph wields a censer. Fortunately, this screen is otherwise intact. The only other remaining rood screen featuring the Nine Orders is found in the church of St Edmund, King and Martyr, Southwold in Suffolk, dating from about 1480, where, sadly, all the angels are defaced. The Seraph and Thrones are shown here after the angels from Barton Turf. The Nine Orders form only a third of the St Edmund's rood screen: the other two parts show apostles and prophets. To me, the Barton Turf angels are finer, and I suspect by a different hand although some consider that the artist may be the same in both cases. Whether the angelic theme was a popular one for rood screens before the Reformation will never be known. This iconography derives from the fifth-century writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite who, drawing on biblical sources, codified the Nine Orders in his work *The Celestial Hierarchy* (*De*

coelesti hierarchia) about which more has been said in an earlier chapter along with further discussion of the appearance and attributes of the various ranks of celestial beings.¹¹⁵



Plates 42-46: Unknown artist, *The Nine Order Rood Screen*, paint on wood, 15th century. St Michael and All Angels' church, Barton Turf, Norfolk. Natasha Coombs, 2021. The Rood Screen with iconoclastic damage clearly visible in Plate 42.

Plate 47: Unknown artist, *Rood Screen*, paint on wood, 15th century. With kind permission of Simon Knott. A Seraph and a Throne, sadly defaced, from St Edmund King and Martyr's church, Southwold, Suffolk.

Wall paintings of angels are more common, as they appear in various settings, such as Gabriel in the Annunciation scene that is placed (and almost impossible to photograph) above the cadaver level of the tomb of Alice de la Pole at Ewelme, where Alice gazes on the mystery.

¹¹⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Celestial Hierarchy*.



Plate 48: Unknown artist, *Underside of the Upper Level of the Tomb of Alice de la Pole*, paint on stone, 1475. St Mary, Ewelme, Oxfordshire. With kind permission of Tracey Silvester. Alice de la Pole, granddaughter of Geoffrey Chaucer, commissioned a transi tomb with this image amongst others painted on the underside of the upper level for her cadaver to gaze at until the Day of Judgement. Alice's cadaverous face is visible at the lower right.

More publicly accessible angels can be found in medieval churches throughout Christendom, appearing on church walls from the greatest cathedrals such as those at Winchester and Westminster Abbey to the lowlier St Mary Kempeley in Gloucestershire. While some of these colourful decorations may have fallen foul of the iconoclasts and later of Victorian church 'improvers', many of whom scraped away all trace of plaster and paint, they were originally created to express the so-called Gregorian dictum. To give only two examples:

Gregory [the Great] disapproved of this wrecking spree and said, 'A picture is displayed in churches ... in order that those who do not know letters may at least read by seeing on the walls what they are unable to read in books.'¹¹⁶

According to the historian William of Malmesbury (c. 1095/96-c. 1143) a church was not considered complete until its walls glistened with colour; in short, a church was not 'finished' until the painters had finished.¹¹⁷

Subjects depicted in wall paintings are as varied as there are stories of angels, from the Annunciation to angelic appearances in Doom paintings. One of the loveliest painted representations of angels is found in the ceiling of the Chapel of the Guardian Angels in Winchester Cathedral. Smaller churches such as those at Chalgrove and Chaldon had broad

¹¹⁶ Roger Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings* (Oxford, Shire Publications Ltd., 2014), p 13.

¹¹⁷ Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings*, p 11.

programmes of wall paintings covering many subjects and can hardly be compared to the high-status work at Winchester, but they serve a different purpose: while the guardian angels of the king's chapel speak to his power and piety, those of the lesser churches are in part didactic; they tell bible stories. Perhaps for ordinary folk this makes them more important.



Plate 49: Unknown artist, *Ceiling of the Chapel of the Guardian Angels*, paint on plaster, 1241. <<https://www.hampshire-history.com/guardian-angels-chapel/>> [Accessed 21 March 2022] This magnificent ceiling was constructed and ornamented on the orders of Henry III in Winchester cathedral.



Plate 50: Unknown artist, *The Dormition of Mary*, paint on plaster, 14th century. <<https://www.chalgrovechurch.org>> [Accessed 21 March 2022] A more everyday group of angels here at St Mary's, Chalgrove, Oxfordshire.



Plate 51: Unknown artist, *The Ladder of Salvation*, paint on plaster, 12th century. <<https://www.chaldonchurch.co.uk/chaldon-mural>> [Accessed 21 March 2022] This dramatic mural features angels in the upper, heavenly area with demons lower down at St Peter & St Paul, Chaldon, Surrey.



Plate 52: Unknown artist, *Chancel Arch*, paint on plaster, 15th century. St Michael and All Angels' church, Raunds, Northamptonshire. Natasha Coombs, 2018. Angels bearing some of the Instruments of the Passion hover around the shadow of the cross, removed with the rood screen and rood loft during the Reformation. It is fortunate that the paintings in this church remain.

Wearable Angels

Ecclesiastical vestments, although worn by the clergy, were sometimes visible to the congregation and were often gifts or bequests from the faithful. These often-splendid garments seem symbolic of the role played by the higher clergy, giving a visual link to the glory of heaven. Being delicate artefacts, most are now lost to us, but many of those which survive bear images of angels and other celestial beings. During the period between approximately the mid twelfth and the late fourteenth centuries a style of embroidery arose in England called *opus anglicanum*. This embroidery style was prized throughout Europe, and some examples remain, such as the Syon Cope and the Steeple Aston Cope. The latter, produced between 1320 and 1340, features these very unusual horse-riding, musical angels who were originally part of the orphrey of the cope (the band running down the front of the vestment), shown in Plate 52. Judging by existing artwork in any medium, this combination of angels playing musical instruments while riding is unique.¹¹⁸ We can only assume that the angels are riding to make it more clear that they are acting as messengers, although one can hardly imagine riders playing viols or lutes for long, and the angels' wings make the horses seem redundant. The orphrey would have been visible to the congregation each time the priest turned to face them or took part in a procession either in church or outdoors.¹¹⁹



Plate 53: Unknown artist, *Horse-riding musical angels, opus anglicanum*, silk embroidered onto silk twill, 1320-1340; Steeple Aston Cope; <<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-steeple-aston-cope>> [Accessed 21 March 2022].

The Syon Cope shows twelve complete angels in medallions with several other half-length angels. This garment, again worked in *opus anglicanum* and produced at about the same time as the Steeple Aston Cope, has angels in the spaces between the main characters and

¹¹⁸ Clare Browne *et al*, *English Medieval Embroidery: Opus Anglicanum* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2016).

¹¹⁹ <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-steeple-ashton-cope>.

events shown such as St Michael overcoming the devil, and Christ's crucifixion. Both copes are held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Being so visible during church services and in a position where it may be assumed that these images of angels had a protective effect for the priest, such embroidery must surely have had a deep impact on its observers.



Plate 54: Unknown artist, *The Syon Cope*, silk embroidered onto silk twill, early 14th century. <<https://www.vam.ac.uk/the-syon-cope>> [Accessed 21 March 2022] The bands running along the straight edge of the almost semi-circular garment form the front of the cope, being worn over the shoulders like a cape. Thus, the figure of St Michael killing the dragon shown below sits at the lowest part of the back, making it very visible.



Plate 55: Unknown artist, *The Syon Cope*, silk embroidered onto silk twill, early 14th century. <<https://www.vam.ac.uk/the-syon-cope>> [Accessed 21 March 2022] St Michael slays the dragon, who represents Satan.

Angels in Stone Sculpture

Stone sculpture is found throughout most churches, both in the fabric of the building, exterior and interior, and in additions such as tomb monuments. Such sculpture may show angels in any of their forms and performing any of their functions. The small image on the front page of this dissertation shows a favourite example of interaction between celestial beings and humans. This is the early-twelfth-century Dream of the Magi, to be found on the capital of a pillar in the Cathedral of St Lazare in Autun and, *mirabile dictu*, we know the name of its creator: Gislebertus.¹²⁰ This piece is touching. The angel leans down to gently touch the hand of one of the Magi, awakening him to warn him and his colleagues to go home a different way, avoiding Herod. This is Matthew 2:12: “And having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their country.” This image is found elsewhere, in manuscripts, mosaics and other media, but never in quite such a moving form. The stone fabric of churches was home to many angels. As we have seen, they appear around doorways and in arches, swooping and hovering, as corbels supporting roof timbers, perched around capitals, on fonts and monuments, ornamenting the exterior and the interior; in fact, wherever stone carving is possible, there we may find angels, varying from the humble to the exquisite. At St Mary’s church in Fairford, Gloucestershire, most of the nine orders of angels are represented in stone, acting as corbels supporting the roof timbers. They are, very helpfully, labelled.



Plate 56: Gislebertus, *The Dream of the Magi*, carved stone, 1120-1135.

<<https://www.artway.eu/content.php?id=848&lang=en&action=show>> [Accessed 21 March 2022] Gislebertus’s exquisite *Dream of the Magi* from St Lazare Cathedral, Autun. The angel gestures towards the star which will guide the Magi.

¹²⁰ Emile Mâle, *Religious Art in France: The Twelfth Century* trans. by Marthiel Mathews (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 416.



Plate 57: Unknown artist *An Archangel*, carved stone, 15th century. St Mary's church, Fairford, Gloucestershire. Natasha Coombs, 2022. The bust of an archangel with beautifully curly hair and a handsome suit of feathers.

The existing Malmesbury Abbey church, although only the nave and porch of an earlier monastic foundation survive, dates from 1180.¹²¹ The porch is home to angels who fly above apostles on the west and east sides, flying towards the door, while others flank Christ in Majesty in the tympanum. The church's 1994 guidebook tells us that the porch, like the rest of the building, was originally painted. The result must be left to the imagination, although attempts have been made to recreate such polychromy in other places, either through computer generated effects or with coloured illumination at night, as at Amiens in Plate 62.¹²²



Plate 58: Unknown artist, *West Lunette*, carved stone, late 12th century. Malmesbury Abbey, Malmesbury, Wiltshire. Natasha Coombs, 2020. The west lunette of the south porch. An angel holding a book above six apostles.

¹²¹ M. Q. Smith & Rita Wood, *The Sculptures of the South Porch of Malmesbury Abbey: A short guide* (Malmesbury: Friends of Malmesbury Abbey, 2002).

¹²² More information about the Amiens cathedral illumination can be found here: <<https://www.somme-tourisme.com/amiens-et-autres-histoires/la-cathedrale-notre-dame-damiens>>.



Plate 59: Unknown artist, *Tympanum*, carved stone, late 12th century. Malmesbury Abbey, Malmesbury, Wiltshire. Natasha Coombs, 2020. The tympanum with a central mandorla showing Christ in Glory, flanked by supporting angels.



Plate 60: Unknown artist, *East Lunette*, carved stone, late 12th century. Malmesbury Abbey, Malmesbury, Wiltshire. Natasha Coombs, 2020. The east lunette, showing an angel swooping above the remaining six apostles. This scene, along with those seen in plates 56 and 57, ushers the worshipper into the church.



Plates 61 & 62: Unknown artist, *Angels*, carved stone, 10th or 11th century. St Leonard's church, Bradford upon Avon, Somerset. Natasha Coombs, 2022. These angels were found near the church in 1855 and moved on the church's renovation, but they show some stylistic similarity with those at Malmesbury Abbey. Were they removed from the porch of this humble church and hidden to protect them?



Plate 63: Unknown artist *West End of Notre Dame d'Amiens*, light on carved stone, 13th century with 21st century lights. <<https://www.visit-amiens.com/notre-dame-damiens-cathedral>> [Accessed 21 March 2022] A light show giving an idea of how the outside of many of the great cathedrals must originally have appeared, each of the many statues and other features picked out in polychromy.

Porches are popular places for angels where they are often found swinging censers to purify those who enter the church. In these images, the angels appear to welcome any who enter. Censing angels also appear on chancel arches and Easter sepulchres, as at Heckington, pictured below. The use of angels so engaged above entrances and other liminal areas serves a purpose: it is in the liminal spaces between places and between states of being where spiritual danger may lurk, and it is there that sanctification is needed.¹²³ Tympana and porches often feature the iconography of salvation and redemption, quite fittingly reflecting the last great transition to, hopefully, eternal life. Thus, it is appropriate that Easter sepulchres should also display censing angels, marking Christ's transition from this world to the next. There are so many examples of censing angels in churches that a separate dissertation, a catalogue of occurrences, on that subject would be possible.

¹²³ Helen E. Lunnon, , *East Anglian Church Porches and their Medieval Context* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), 'Chapter 2: Functions of Church Porches', pp. 55-100, at p. 98.



Plates 64 & 65: Unknown artist, *Easter Sepulchre*, carved stone, 1330s. St Andrew, Heckington, Lincolnshire. With kind permission of Dr. Allan Barton FSA. A beautiful, if worn, pair of censing angels above the niche of an Easter Sepulchre.

Other stone angels in churches are found in monumental masonry such as the monument to Sir Richard and Lady Croft from 1510 in the church of St Michael and All Angels at Croft Castle in Herefordshire (Plate 65). They hover above the gisants, bearing shields which surely would have shown the Croft and Cornwall (Lady Croft's family) coats of arms, and angels also support Lady Croft's pillow. Although originally sited in a now lost north chapel and presently moved to the chancel, this monument would have been visible to the congregation, encouraging prayers for the souls of the inhabitants of the tomb. The angels here offer support to the people entombed, watching over them until the Day of Judgement. Another tomb featuring angels, found in the church of St John the Baptist in Kinlet, Shropshire, is that of an unknown lady, perhaps Isobel Cornwall. This monument dates from the early fifteenth century and here again angels support her pillow, although they have been, sadly, damaged so that their wings are barely obvious. Again, they offer support to this sad young woman, buried after dying in or shortly after childbirth as can be seen from the tiny, swaddled baby wrapped in the folds of her cloak. A further example of angels in funerary monuments is found at St Mary Redcliffe in Bristol where angels support the pillows of the polychromatic Canynges monument. Interestingly, those at William Canynges head are noticeably larger than those at his wife's.



Plate 66: Unknown artist, *Croft Monument*, carved stone, 1510. St Michael and All Angels' church, Croft, Herefordshire. Natasha Coombs, 2021. Tiny, flying angels with back-swept hair support the canopy of this elegant monument to Sir Richard and Lady Eleanor Croft. Others support Lady Eleanor's pillow.



Plates 67 & 68: Unknown artist, *A Funerary Monument*, carved alabaster, 14th century. St John the Baptist's church, Kinlet, Shropshire. Natasha Coombs, 2022. The unknown lady and her infant at Kinlet.



Plate 69: Unknown artist *The Canynges Monument*, carved and painted stone, 1474. St Mary's church, Redcliffe, Bristol. Natasha Coombs, 2022. Angels support the pillows for the two gisants on this grand monument. Angels attending William are much larger than those supporting his wife's pillow.

These details highlight another theme: angels had been part of the representation of and understanding of Christian death and burial ritual since the earliest time.¹²⁴ The popularity of angels on tombs reflects many biblical passages, such as Luke 16:22 in which the soul of the pauper Lazarus is borne to Abraham's bosom by two angels, and the presence of angels at the tomb of Christ in John 20:12 where Mary encountered angels who spoke to her. The image of angels bearing souls is a popular one, appearing in glass, stone, paint and wood throughout medieval Europe.

¹²⁴ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p 204.



Plate 70: Unknown artist *The Ascension of Lazarus' soul*, carved stone, 12th century.
<<https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt%3AFVEZ.CAPITAL.NAVE.N021.1>> [Accessed 21 March 2022] Lazarus' soul is borne to heaven by angels here on a capital in the church of St Mary Magdalen at Vezelay.

At the other end of life, we find the font, used to welcome infants into the church at baptism. While some earlier fonts are without representations and decoration of any kind, many are highly ornamented, and that ornament often includes angels. Since each person was in the care of a guardian angel either from birth or from baptism, the presence of angels here is logical.¹²⁵ The other winged beings who appear on fonts are the four evangelists, with St Matthew's symbol, a winged man, looking like an angel. There is a difference though: angels are created as celestial beings and were never human, which Matthew undoubtedly was. All four Evangelists have symbols: St Matthew has a man, St Mark a lion, St Luke an ox and St John an eagle and all are winged.

¹²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae: A Concise Translation* ed. & trans. by Timothy McDermot (London: Methuen, 1989), p. 158.



Plate 71: Unknown artist, *Font*, carved stone, mid-12th century. St Michael's church, Castle Frome, Herefordshire. Natasha Coombs, 2021. When is an angel not an angel? The font at Castle Frome showing the four evangelists, here St Matthew as a winged man with a book.

Tall crosses are sometimes found outside a church, richly carved with biblical scenes and other iconography. They were a common sight during the medieval period. Now often sadly too weathered to be read clearly, many include angels in their imagery, in scenes such as the Appearance of the Angels to the Shepherds or Daniel in the Lions' Den.



Plate 72: Unknown artist *Muirdeach's High Cross*, carved stone, 9th Or 10th century. <https://www.irisharchaeology.ie/2017/05/muiredachs-high-cross-monasterboice-co-louth/> [Accessed 21 March 2022] Angels hover round Christ's head at the crucifixion. Although somewhat weathered, the detail here is still legible.

The smiling angels of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Reims are a unique example of angelic iconography. These wonderful figures clearly illustrate Luke 15:7: 'I say to you that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doeth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance.' Anyone noticing these cheerful faces flanking the west door of the cathedral would surely feel welcome into the church and perhaps comforted. When there is biblical reference to joyful angels, why do they not appear more frequently in art? Were angels seen more as stern messengers and guardians? One other example of a smiling angel is that shown in Plate 34, the tricephalous roof angel at the Church of St Thomas and St Edmund, Salisbury.



Plates 73 & 74: Unknown artist *The Smiling Angels of Notre Dame*, carved stone, 13th century.
<<https://www.cathedrale-reims.com/decouvrir-la-cathedrale/architecture/portails-facade-ouest>>
<<https://www.france-travel-info.com/8-cathedrals-in-france/>> [Accessed 22 March 2022]

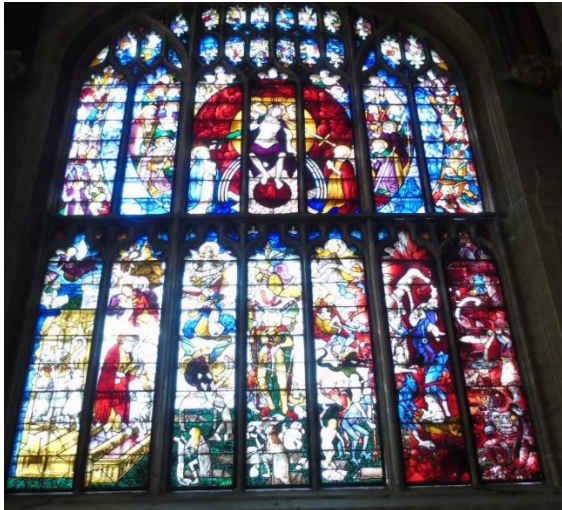
The smiling angel on the left flanks the door of the west front of Reims Cathedral. Who could fail to be welcomed and comforted by this charming image? On the other side stands an equally welcoming colleague. They look outwards, welcoming the churchgoer.

Angels in Glass

Much medieval stained glass has been lost, whether to the iconoclasts of the early modern period or to twentieth-century bombs, and while it is likely that many churches included angels in their windows, it will never be known quite how prevalent such representations were. Fortunately, there are still places such as St Mary's, Fairford in Gloucestershire where, from stained-glass windows created between 1500 and 1517, angels shine forth. At St Mary's the programme of medieval glass is almost complete, making it unique in Britain. Remaining medieval stained glass in the UK is being catalogued through the *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi* project (<https://www.cvma.ac.uk>) and although a vast quantity of stained glass has been lost, it is heartening to see how much remains. Often described in the Bible as either beings of light or fire, or as men dressed in shining white robes, angels are a

perfect subject for this artform. These windows would have been visible to the whole congregation during daylight hours, providing not only light to otherwise gloomy interiors, but adding even more colour as the sun paints the windows' colours over the interior of the building. At certain times of day, it is still possible to see the vibrant colours of the glass brightening the inside of a church, creating splashes of all hues on now bare walls. Did these windows seem miraculous to the medieval eye? While bright colours exist in the natural world and much clothing was colourful, brilliantly dyed cloth was more expensive than plainer stuffs and any injection of colour surely would have been welcome: colour can highlight or change one's mood, a cheerful palette may brighten a sad day or make a good day even better.. The church at Fairford is filled with angels: they fill many of the windows, are found in the stone corbels supporting roof timbers, and a pair of angel wall paintings are on the west side of the pillars supporting the tower. The great west window, shown in Plates 74 and 75, has many angels, some of them identifiable such as Michael the Archangel in the central light of the lower section, but most angels crowd around Christ in Judgement and his saints in the upper part. It is recommended that the glass in St Mary's should be read in a clockwise direction, beginning on the north side of the church with the fall of man, and moving into the New Testament with the life of Mary and the birth of Christ, with the Easter story over the altar, and events following the resurrection around the Corpus Christi Chapel. The south wall is home to many saints, with three judgements on the west wall: those of David and Solomon flanking the Last Judgement, shown above. On the north wall are the Evangelists and the prophets, while above in the clerestory over the nave are martyrs and confessors on the south side and evil doers on the north. This imagery is clearly meant to be read as a whole programme and its didactic value to a congregation with many barely literate members cannot be doubted. The layout of the glass is reminiscent of the procession after aspersion and preceding the mass of the period.¹²⁶ This complete programme of glass gives the church a feeling of being of a piece, giving a sense of iconographic unity, even considering the earlier phases of building work which are still visible.

¹²⁶ Orme, *Going to Church*, p. 212.



Plates 74 & 76: Unknown artist, *The Great West Window*, glass with pigments and lead, 1510-1517. St Mary's church, 5airford, Gloucestershire. Natasha Coombs, 2022. The upper half of the window displays many angels, and the concentric circles could be designed to indicate the Nine Orders of Angels in their places with the fiery Seraphim nearest to Christ.

Mosaics

A fusion between windows and walls is found in the mosaics popular in southern Europe. These often-dazzling artworks are made from small glass tesserae and often feature angels, as in the Cathedral of Monreale in Sicily where mosaics were installed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, begun under the patronage of William II of Sicily. As with much other ecclesiastical ornament, there is a didactic purpose to the work, as here illustrating Jacob's dream of angels ascending and descending. This story is told in Genesis 28:12: 'And he saw in his sleep a ladder standing upon the earth, and the top thereof touching heaven: the angels also

of God ascending and descending by it.’ Then, in Genesis 32:24 we find Jacob ‘... remained alone, and behold, a man wrestled with him till morning.’ Although described as a man representing God, the visitant is often shown as an angel. Again, as is the case with windows, these mosaics were clearly visible, being high up on the walls and in ceilings, positioned where their gold tesserae would reflect any available light.



Plate 77: Unknown artist, *Jacob's Dream*, glass and gilt, 1180s.
 <<https://www.christianiconography.info/sicily/jacobsLadderMonreale.html>> [Accessed 22 March 2022]
 Part of Jacob's dream in which he sees angels ascending and descending a great ladder to heaven. These angels' damp fold drapery shows stylistic similarity to their approximate contemporaries at Malmesbury.



Plate 78: Unknown artist, *Jacob's Dream*, glass and gilt, 1180s.
 <<https://www.christianiconography.info/sicily/jacobWrestlesMonreale.html>> [Accessed 22 March 2022] In the same dream Jacob wrestles with an angel.

Protectors of Relics

Throughout the medieval period and across the medieval world relics of saints and the holy family were popular objects of devotion, whether as parts of saintly bodies or contact relics, with Fragments of the True Cross being most revered.¹²⁷ Every church needed a relic for its foundation and many people owned and even carried around personal relics for protection. Relics housed in churches were foci for devotion and pilgrimage with the pious travelling often great distances to see and, hopefully, touch them, hoping for prayers to be answered. Reliquaries, boxes or other containers housing these sacred objects, were often examples of the use of art to create religious wonder. Many have angels either worked into the surface of the container, crowning the reliquary, or acting as supporters. Since reliquaries are meant not only to contain sacred objects but to be seen, angels must be there for a purpose. Perhaps in this case it is their protective power which is being sought to protect the relic and those handling it as well as the spectacular nature of the iconography. As has been mentioned in the chapter on the Archangels, these celestial beings leave little in the way of relics except for a few contact relics such as stones on which they have stood during visits to Earth. Angels are more often the protectors of relics, rather than their sources.



Plate 79: Unknown artist, *The Limoges Reliquary*, copper, enamel, semi-precious stones, 1200-1250. <<https://www.gardnermuseum.org/experience/collection/12661>> [Accessed 22 March 2022] An enamelled reliquary casket of the mid-thirteenth century, made in Limoges with angels on all sides.

¹²⁷ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, Chapter 8.



Plate 80: Unknown artist, *The Holy Thorn reliquary*, gold, enamel, precious stones, 1390s. British Museum, London. Natasha Coombs, 2022. This elaborate reliquary houses a thorn from the Crown of Thorns, one of the Instruments of the Passion. Made for Jean, Duc de Berry, it uses the most precious of materials.

Extraordinary Angels

A seemingly peculiar representation of angels is found in the realm of automata. In the mid-thirteenth century, Villard de Honnecourt included designs for an angelic automaton to be used in churches, using its finger to indicate the position of the sun, presumably as a method of timekeeping.¹²⁸ The method of operation is unclear, but seems to have been weight driven. At around the same time, automated angels are also found in secular settings such as those created by William of Rubruck, designed to play trumpets alerting servants to the need for wine at banquets.¹²⁹ Yet another angel automaton was created by the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths to be used at the coronation pageant of King Richard II.¹³⁰ Other mechanical angels are mentioned by Truitt, but space allows me to include only a few examples. The existence of these ‘robots’ demonstrates that angels really were everywhere in medieval life.

¹²⁸ E. R. Truitt, *Medieval Robots: Mechanism, Magic, Nature and Art* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p 119.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p 136.

The Purpose of Angels in Church

That so many angels are still to be found in the churches and cathedrals of Europe gives a clear indication of their importance in medieval religious thought, both at the level of the great theologians and at that of the ordinary people. We have seen that there are many angels to be found in churches in many different forms. What was their purpose? At the lowest level perhaps merely a reminder that God's agents were constantly watching, but also of their work as guardians, both of individuals and the community. They welcome, comfort, reprimand, remind us of the ubiquity of God. Their popularity cannot be a matter only of artistic appropriateness, it must surely be didactic and inspirational. They appear throughout church buildings, both inside and outside, as constant reminders of the presence of God and of their guardianship of every christened soul. Many biblical stories were represented inside churches, whether in wall paintings, stained-glass windows or other media. They were taken from both testaments, as well as what are now considered the apocrypha, such as the book of Tobit where appears the story of Tobias and the Angel. As has been seen the story of Christ's conception and birth are stories where angels occur, as is the Day of Judgement which often features Michael weighing souls. Satan and his minions are often portrayed, whether in Doom paintings or in other media, telling stories such as his defeat by Michael.



Plate 81: Lorenzo Costa, *The Triumph of Death*, paint on plaster, 1490. St Giacomo Maggiore, Bologna. Natasha Coombs, 2017. This large painting is in the private chapel of the Bentivoglio family, located behind a locked gate, nevertheless visible to all. Here Death triumphs, but above him hover saints and a swarm of angels of many orders.

Chapter 4: Angels in Literature



Plate 82: Giovanni di Paolo *Beatrice and Dante Ascend*, paint, ink, and gold leaf on parchment, 1444-1450. <https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=yates_thompson_ms_36_fs001ar> [Accessed 1 July 2022] Beatrice shows Dante the hierarchy of the universe, the figure of love above them looking very like an angel.

Angels were apparent to the laity not only as images and sculptures but in the written, spoken, and sung word. Verse and prose, sermons, dramas, and song all upheld the presence of angels, not only on feast days and in sacred spaces but also in secular life. Most of this dissertation is focused on various forms of the visual arts. It is important, however, to make some acknowledgment of how angels are represented in the verbal arts, that is, the literature of instruction and devotion, historical narrative, drama, lyrics, and verse narrative. To attempt a full and detailed investigation of these texts within the scope of one chapter of a dissertation for the M.Res. would not be practical. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to provide some examples of how angels were represented to layfolk in the verbal arts. This chapter is designed to offer a selective survey of a large subject and to explore the examples cited for clues as to what impact these various forms of literature might have had on readers or listeners. The overriding question or theme of the discussion is whether the verbal arts offer to layfolk a distinctive perspective on angels and their representation. As with other modes of representing angels in the Middle Ages, in literature angels were said to be present not only in church but in everyday life and we may assume that medieval people accepted that the angels in secular songs were the same as those in religious settings. However, did they consider that boys dressed as angels in liturgical dramas really channelled that spirit? When a man appeared in a play dressed in a suit of feathers, did they suspend disbelief and see, not their friend or colleague, but an angel? If a priest told a story from *The Golden Legend*, was the angel saving the saint from death a believable character? This chapter aims to assess how layfolk might have been encouraged to

respond to these dramatic and written representations of angels. What was the nature of their belief in angels as mediated through dramatic and literary forms?

Sermons



Plate 83: Fra Angelico, *The Apparition of Saint Michael at Mont Saint-Michel and the Miracle of the Bull at Monte Gargan*, tempera on panel, 1418. <<https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/45075>> [Accessed 1 July 2022] On the left St Michael appears to indicate where the chapel is to be sited.

Church was not the only place where one would encounter celestial beings, and sermons were not the only vehicle for learning about them. As we shall see, they were represented as being present at the mass and during other church ceremonies. In the medieval period sermons were not necessarily given every Sunday, and those that were, were not necessarily in English. While pastoralia and books of sermons from the Middle Ages such as John Mirk's *Festial* were available in Middle English, many priests were barely literate (although they were required to be).¹³¹ Most of those who were required to preach did so only rarely, and the didactic value of that preaching was not uniformly high, although by the thirteenth century it was considered that priests should be instructing parishioners in various religious subjects.¹³² The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 had decreed that the clergy were to give instruction on the six principles of the faith four or more times a year, and this was reinforced many times, in England particularly by the 1281 Council of Lambeth under Archbishop Pecham.¹³³ The Fourth Lateran Council also dictated that Christians should make confession at least once a year, which could

¹³¹ Orme, *Going to Church*, p. 53.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 247.

¹³³ Niamh Pattwell, Introduction to Wynkyn de Worde, *Exornatorium Curatorum* ed. Niamh Pattwell, MET 49 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag WINTER Heidelberg, 2013), p. xi.

only be informed confession if the penitent had received instruction.¹³⁴ While books such as the sixteenth-century *Exonatorium Curatorum* and its predecessors were intended to be read by the laity as well as by clerics, books of model sermons and of suitable subjects for sermons were available to priests and others who wanted to make use of them, if they could get access to a copy. Stories of angels drawn from these sources were told by priests who tailored their sermons to the audience (*sermones ad status*). Sermons delivered by better trained preachers would be more meaningful and have a greater impact, bringing angels closer to congregants than those in the sermons of their less able colleagues.¹³⁵ Then as now, the talents of a priest were a matter of luck for a congregation.

Many sermons made reference to angels, especially those written for Michaelmas and occasions such as the Annunciation, Christmas and Easter in which stories angels had leading roles. Jacobus de Voragine's mid-thirteenth-century *The Golden Legend* is a compendium of stories about saints, many of whom are shown to have had contact with angels, often at their death, whether by martyrdom or through natural causes. A best-seller of the time, it was frequently translated into vernacular languages and must have been used by many priests needing help in composing sermons in the vernacular.¹³⁶ How many parish priests owned or had access to these texts? Some may have been able to gain access through monasteries or friaries, but priests living and working at a distance from such places may well have had difficulty unless they had a wealthy patron willing to purchase material for them. Visiting friars often preached, although they were not always welcomed into a parish.¹³⁷ Sermons written in Latin had, of course, little meaning for the majority of the laity, while those written in the vernacular were of less geographical impact. However, it is the use of Latin as a *lingua franca* that gives to texts such as *The Golden Legend* the power to travel giving such texts a certain authority, and Latin texts were frequently translated into the vernacular. It is in part through the repetition of sermons across medieval Europe that knowledge of angels spread.

¹³⁴ Claire M Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures: Preaching, Performance, and Gender in the Later Middle Ages*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

¹³⁵ In *Going to Church in Medieval England*, Nicholas Orme cites the parish of Sonning, Berkshire, where, in 1222, six out of seven priests were found to be 'gravely deficient in knowledge of song and grammar', with one unable even to understand the gospel and prayers he was reading to his congregants. One suspects that such basic lack of comprehension would lead to unedifying sermons. Orme, *Going to Church*, p. 54.

¹³⁶ The stories told in *The Golden Legend* were not mere entertainment. They had didactic purposes too, demonstrating how to live a Christian life, how to persevere against trials, how to triumph against evil, either in this life or the next. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*. See Giovanni Paolo Maggioni 'How to Preach the Golden Legend: The legend of St George and the legend of the Cross in the Sermons *de Sanctis* of James de Voragine' For the Hagiography Society, Leeds 19th Medieval Congress, <<https://www.academia.edu/1784681>>.

¹³⁷ Orme, *Going to Church*, p. 250.

The Golden Legend was a popular text and although not intended primarily for use by lay persons, its contents were a sourcebook for priests writing sermons and thus its contents filtered down to congregants.¹³⁸ In this lengthy work, angels fall into several categories: there are archangels, such as St Michael the Archangel; angels who act as messengers from God; angels who carry souls to heaven or appear disguised as people to test Christians or to cause good works to be done. It is notable that Satan, a fallen angel, also appears in disguise, sometimes as an angel, to tempt otherwise good people into sin. The entry in the *Golden Legend* for St Michael the Archangel (as he is the only angel with his own feast day, so he is the only angel to have a chapter or sermon specific to him) is longer than most others, and covers many aspects of his being, particularly his miracle working on behalf of God. It also treats him as a figurehead for all angels and implies that, in praising Michael, one praises all angels. ‘The sacred feast of Michael the Archangel celebrates his apparition, his victory, his dedication, and his memorial.’¹³⁹ Dedication in this case refers to Michael’s dedication of Monte Gargano as the site of a church and memorial refers to the commemoration of all angels and their work for humanity. at, de Voragine states that he is the protector of that place and that Michael himself selected the site for a church. Michael’s other mentions include appearances on Earth and reference to Michael’s position in the nine orders of angels. His victories stretch across time: his throwing down of Lucifer at the fall, his constant struggle against evil and his final victory at the Day of Judgement.¹⁴⁰ *The Golden Legend* goes into much detail on this subject covering many aspects of angelic guardianship.¹⁴¹ More has been said regarding St Michael in the chapter on the archangels, but in this case, he is an example of fortitude and strength.

John Mirk, the author of *Festial*, was an Augustinian canon and later prior of Lilleshall Priory in Shropshire. He wrote three texts as aids to priests, *Festial* being arguably the most important, probably composed in the 1380s. It is a programme of sixty-four sermons in English, most of them for specific saints’ days and largely based on translation of *The Golden Legend*. Again, the Feast of St Michael has its own sermon, and, although clearly based on the chapter in *The Golden Legend*, it is considerably shorter. Mirk also tells us to see Michael as a representative of all angels and that he is a miracle worker and victorious fighter. He also credits Michael with bearing and showing the Instruments of the Passion and says that he ‘*apperuth wonderfully*.’¹⁴² Interestingly, while de Voragine locates Michael’s appearance at

¹³⁸ Eamon Duffy, introduction in Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. xi-xiii.

¹³⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, p. 587.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 591-2.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 593-7.

¹⁴² John Mirk, *Festial Vol 2*, 1.26 p. 232.

what is now Mont St Michel in France, Mirk moves the same event to St Michael's Mount in Cornwall and, as with his use of the vernacular, this local reference gives greater relevance to an English audience.¹⁴³ Although Mirk's sermon for Michaelmas is shorter than that of de Voragine, leaving out much of the detail, it is just as effective.

Michael is not the only angel mentioned in *Festial*. In the sermon for Epiphany in *The Golden Legend* the dream of the magi is mentioned in which an angel comes to the sleeping Magi and advises them to go home by another way to avoid Herod. (See Plate 55). In this sermon he tells us that the star which the magi encountered on their way home may not have been an ordinary star but in part an angel.¹⁴⁴ This angel was the third, intellectual part of the five-fold nature of the star which gave the warning.¹⁴⁵ Here the angel is interpreted for the congregation in a way that brings a degree of angelology into church. Presumably congregants would have taken what they could understand from it. Other sermons such as those for Ascension and the Annunciation feature angels and their interactions with humanity. Each time an angel was presented as associating with humans it brought angels closer to people. After all, some of the people in most churches at Christmas would be shepherds: it would be natural to put oneself in the place of their colleagues near Bethlehem. Sermons presented interpretations of angels, their acts and essence in a form made comprehensible to the laity.

Prose

In what follows the intention is to highlight how angels were represented to layfolk in a selection of different genres of prose works. Angels appear in prose not only in devotional texts such as *The Cloud of Unknowing*, but also in other types of writing such as historical texts.¹⁴⁶ Both the Venerable Bede and Geoffrey of Monmouth mention angels in their histories, respectively *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* and *History of the Kings of Britain*.¹⁴⁷ It is notable that both these men were ecclesiastics, but clearly the existence of angels and their powers were taken as fact during the periods in which they wrote, in Bede's case the late seventh and early eighth centuries, and for Geoffrey the twelfth. In *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, Bede includes many stories about angels.¹⁴⁸ In

¹⁴³ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, p. 587; John Mirk, *Festial Vol 2*, l. 42-50, p. 233.

¹⁴⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, p. 81.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁴⁶ *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, trans. & ed. by Clifton Walters (London: Penguin Books, 1961).

¹⁴⁷ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation etc.* (London: J M Dent & co., 1910);

Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966).

¹⁴⁸ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*.

one tale, the monk Fursey comes from Ireland to East Anglia and founds a monastery, and angels abound. King Anna, Fursey's sponsor, reportedly saw and heard choirs of angels in a vision, praising God. He was also raised by them to look down to Earth and saw four fires, about to consume the world. The angels told him that the fires represent falsehood, covetousness, discord, and iniquity and that he was safe because:

That which you did not kindle shall not burn you; for though this appears to be a terrible and great fire, yet it tries every man according to the merits of his works; for every man's concupiscence shall burn in the fire; for as every one burns in the body through unlawful pleasure, so when discharged of the body, he shall burn in the punishment which he has deserved.¹⁴⁹

The angels in this story are informing, advising, guiding: a great part of their work was to provide a direct line of communication between God and humanity. There are other similar instances concerning appearance of angels in medieval histories, from the early to the later Middle Ages, and they give us an insight into a widespread belief in the existence and efficacy of angels. That the angels in Fursey's tale were helping and advising Anna gives support to him as a king. This is not the only occasion on which a king has been bolstered by angels: Richard II, for example, is faced and blessed in the Wilton Diptych by Mary and a host of angels and they bear his badge of the white hart while the angels in the roof of Westminster Hall carry his coat of arms (see Plate 32). Where better than God's own assistants to look to for confirmation of earthly rule.



Plate 84: Unknown artist, *The Wilton Diptych* paint and gold leaf on wood, 1395-1399. The National Gallery, London. Natasha Coombs, 2022. Richard II is surrounded by saints and faced by Mary with a host of angels.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 133-4.

Le Menagier de Paris (The Goodman of Paris) (see page 37) was written by an older man as a handbook for his much younger wife. This is not merely a housekeeping manual, but a treatise on how a wife should behave, including in religious matters. The first part of the book deals with spiritual matters, interspersed with advice on deportment, and in the Third Article *Le Menagier* outlines the procedure to be followed at mass. He speaks in echoes of the contemporary *Cloud of Unknowing*, advising that, especially when at mass, thought should focus on God and with every other idea put aside. For him, mass is clearly not just a ceremony enacted between a priest and a communicant, but a much more meaningful event involving other created beings. He says:

After the Introit, sung or said, is said nine times *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison*, to signify that there are nine hosts of angels called hierarchies, and of each host or hierarchy some come to the mass, not all the order, but of each order a few. Then should every man pray to these blessed angels to intercede with Our Lord for him...¹⁵⁰

The author knew of the nine orders and believed that they were present at mass. Later in the same article he says:

After this are sung the praises of the angels, namely: *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*. At which the angels come down and make ready and surround and defend the table whither God will descend and by His look alone feed His friends...¹⁵¹

Seldom are angels referred to as actively participating in a church service, perhaps because, as we have already seen, their presence was taken for granted. This presence must have brought angels and their powers nearer to the communicant. *Le Menagier* clearly believed, or at least wanted his young wife to believe, in the presence of angels and their efficacy as God's messengers.

¹⁵⁰ *The Goodman of Paris*, p. 39.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.



Plate 85: Simone Martini, *The Miraculous Mass*, fresco, c. 1321)
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Martino_Chapel#/media/File:Simone_Martini_044_bright.jpg> [Accessed 1 July 2022] In this fresco from Assisi two angels help the priest, in this case St Martin of Tours, who is elevating the host at mass.

Many devotional texts intended for personal use among the laity as well as the clergy were written during the Middle Ages and were widely read. They were intended to help with the Christian's daily life and personal journey through it to the goal of heaven. In the late fourteenth century, a number of devotional texts appear that were written and circulated not in Latin but in the vernacular. These include works by Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. It is not difficult to explain the phenomenon of the emergence of mystical devotional works of this high standard in Middle English. The impact of the Black Death was still to be felt, the Hundred Years War was ongoing, the Papacy was involved in controversy with the pope at Avignon: at a time of such confusion, it is no surprise that vernacular mysticism was thriving. An argument that is used by some scholars follows:

The reason why so many late medieval manuscripts with a mystical content have been preserved, both on the continent and in English lies ... in the religious change which took place in the High and Late Middle Ages. The individual was no longer satisfied with the security of the institutionalized church for his own private certainty of salvation, but was beginning to look for ways of attaining a quite personal and,

immediate relationship with God. The mysticism of the Late Middle Ages is the clearest expression of this new piety.¹⁵²

Of the Middle English writers who are part of this cultural phenomenon, I have selected the work by the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. The author was probably an English rural priest, but had some learning, as seen in his reference to St Denis (Pseudo-Dionysius) and St Augustine, clearly having read their works.¹⁵³ While this book is not about angels, they recur throughout, and the author points out that they are to be seen neither as objects of devotion nor as perfect beings. In *The Cloud* the author acknowledges their position in the hierarchy of creation: they are God's assistants, but are not perfect; like humanity, they cannot perceive God intellectually but only through love; they can be a distraction from God; they, like us, need God's help. This sentiment echoes that of St Augustine whose *City of God* is referenced in Peter Brown's *The Cult of the Saints* as stating that truly God's servants could have more impact on other men than could the angels.¹⁵⁴ Although he mentions angels, none of the other eight orders are included in the *City of God*, perhaps because angels and archangels, so closely related, are the only ones who communicate with people.

Performance Literature

Although much has been written about medieval drama, little is said about the angels who make frequent appearances in them. They are seldom described in any detail in the text of the plays, and modern writers seem to take them for granted. Keck refers only briefly to angels in drama, giving theatricals only two pages. He does, however, state that '... medieval drama offers another important source for understanding the significance of angels in the minds of the laity of the Middle Ages.'¹⁵⁵ Whether the angels were played by boys or men, Keck's analysis of angels in medieval drama is too brief to be of much use. He states that the whole angelic hierarchy appears in only two plays but does not say which ones.¹⁵⁶ Miracle and morality plays from the medieval period often include angels amongst their *dramatis personae*, including Michael and the other archangels, with the occasional cherub or seraph making an appearance.

¹⁵² Wolfgang Riehler, *The Middle English Mystics* trans. by Bernard Standring (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 13.

¹⁵³ In Walters's introduction to *The Cloud of Unknowing* we learn almost as much as there is to be learnt about the author. *The Cloud of Unknowing*, p. 14.

¹⁵⁴ Peter Brown. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 61.

¹⁵⁵ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 184.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

Plays in the medieval period were meant as entertainment, but the religious dramas also had a primary didactic purpose, to act out and explain biblical stories.¹⁵⁷

Church in the medieval period could be full of drama.¹⁵⁸ Mass, of course, is ritualistic, even dramatic, and special masses such as at Easter could be even more so.¹⁵⁹ This can be seen as the starting point for drama in the medieval period, and many plays which later spilled out of the church and onto the streets were religious in content. People in church rituals had assigned roles, with lines to learn and actions to perform. Out of the mass came short dramatic episodes telling, for example, the story of Mary Magdalen visiting Jesus's tomb only to find no body, but two angels in attendance, told in John 20:11-17. The play acted as a teaching tool: the church is using the enactment of an important biblical story to reinforce that story in the minds of the congregation.

Choirboys could be required to dress as angels as part of liturgical performance. At the church of St Omer in the town of that name in northern France they did so at Christmas and Easter, and the records of the church include the following reference to wings, surely for angels:

425/6, fol. 6v: Item: to Wauter Pinque, painter, for completely remaking and repainting the four wings serving for the choirboys at Matins on Christmas and Easter days and for remaking and regilding the three caskets of the three Marys which are used on Easter Day at Matins, for everything, 36s.¹⁶⁰

The same records hold similar entries for the years 1407-8 and 1442-3. Andrew Kirkman in *The Seeds of Medieval Music* tells us in a footnote that choirboys had been taking angelic roles including that of Gabriel in such dramas from as early as the eleventh century as well as other roles, not only at St Omer but in other churches.¹⁶¹ He further remarks that the boys' youth and innocence played a part in highlighting the value role of angels as intercessors able to shorten the time in purgatory, with the boys singing also forming a metaphor for the heavenly choir.¹⁶² Here the boys are not only dressed as angels, but are hoped to be of the same purity as the angels they represented.

¹⁵⁷ Francis Edwards, *Ritual and Drama: The Mediaeval Theatre* (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1976), pp. 99.

¹⁵⁸ For an overview of mass and other church ritual see Nicholas Orme's *Going to Church in Medieval England*. Orme, *Going to Church*, pp. 210-217.

¹⁵⁹ Edwards, *Ritual and Drama*, p. 12.

¹⁶⁰ Andrew Kirkman, 'The Seeds of Medieval Music: Choirboys and Musical Training in a Late-Medieval *Maîtrise*' in *Young Choristers, 650-1700* ed. by Susan Boynton and Eric Rice (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2008), pp. 112.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁶² Kirkman here quotes Psalm 8:3 and Matthew 19:14, both of which famously put innocent children in a deeply holy place. Kirkman, 'The Seeds of Medieval Music', pp. 115.

We have seen that angels were not restricted to appearance in literature intended to be read, but they were also popular figures in song, both sacred and secular. There are hymns and chants from the church, songs in plays, carols for dance and songs such as those found in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. This collection of over four hundred songs was written in Galician-Portuguese during the thirteenth century, either composed or collected by Alfonso X 'El Sabio' and includes many references to angels. The songs concern the many miracles performed by or in the name of Mary, and angels are often part of the miracles spoken of in the songs, as for example in *Cantiga* number 294:

In Apulia on the Virgin's feast day, a German woman was playing dice in front of a church dedicated to the Virgin.

She began to lose the game and became furious.

She picked up a rock and threw it at a stone statue of the Virgin and Child placed above the doorway. Stone angels flanked the image. Each held a book in one hand and rested the other on its breast.

When the woman threw the rock, one of the angels raised its hand to intercept the blow. Nevertheless, its arm was undamaged.

Seeing this, the people seized the woman and cast her into a fire.¹⁶³

How widely known the *Cantigas* were is a matter for debate, but they are mentioned by Malcolm Barber in *The Two Cities* as providing evidence of popular ideas about interactions between humanity, the saints and angels through the tales told therein where such evidence is otherwise often lacking.¹⁶⁴

Carols are another source about angels and their significance in medieval piety. In the medieval period these were not just songs sung in church at Christmas, but often were more secular and vernacular songs, frequently accompanying dances.¹⁶⁵ Geoffrey Chaucer in *The Miller's Tale* introduces the carol *Angelus ad virginem*.¹⁶⁶ The words were written about one hundred years earlier and the carol appears here in a transgressive setting: the singer is committing adultery. Originally written in Latin this song has an English version, *Gabriel fram evene king*, which follows the story but changes many of the words. The carol is named by

¹⁶³ The Oxford Cantigas de Santa Maria Database

<https://csm.mml.ox.ac.uk/index.php?p=poemdata_view&rec=294> [Accessed 22 July 2022].

¹⁶⁴ Malcolm Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe 1050-1320* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 172.

¹⁶⁵ Percy A Scoles, *The Oxford Companion to Music* (London: OUP, 1972), p. 156.

¹⁶⁶ Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Miller's Tale' in *The Canterbury Tales* ed. by Constance Hieatt & A Kent Hieatt (New York: Bantam Classics, 1964), p. 150.

Chaucer in its Latin form, presumably to highlight the fact that the singer was a student rather than a (presumably unlettered) carpenter, as was the cuckolded husband. This is a sacred song that has moved into the secular world, telling the story of the Annunciation for all to enjoy and with the archangel central to its theme. Gabriel is a popular character in song, appearing in many carols in many languages, especially those about the Annunciation such as the fourteenth-century ‘*Cuncti Simus Concanentes*’ from the *Llibre Vermelle de Montsarat*.¹⁶⁷

A carol from the later fifteenth century lists the nine orders of angels. Now usually known as *Welcome Our Messiah*, this is a Christmas carol in the original sense of that phrase. It includes these verses:

Whe[r] his aungels
And archangels
 Do syng incessantly,
Hys princypates
And potestates
 Maketh gret armony.

The cherubyns
And seraphyns
 With ther tunkykes mery,
The trones al,
Most musycall,
 Syng the hevenly Kery.

The vertues clere
Ther tunes bere,
 There quere for to repayre,
Was manyfold
 Of domynacyons fayer.¹⁶⁸
Whose song to hold.

¹⁶⁷ Keith Kreitner, *The Church Music of Fifteenth Century Spain* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), p. 22.

¹⁶⁸ R L Greene, *The Early English Carols* (Michigan: Scholarly Press, 1971), p. 58, no. 93. The original is found at Bodl. MS Eng. Poet. E.1 (20734), f.45b.

A list of all the orders is unusual, and this list in a popular song written in the vernacular makes it clear that the author of *Le Menagier* was not the only layman to know about the nine orders. This knowledge was widespread, although its depth and understanding remain unclear. Since there is no list of the orders in the Bible, this information must have come from preaching and other sources accessible to the laity. These songs are not only about angels, but sometimes performed by angels, for example *In dulci jubilo*.

Verse Narratives

This chapter closes with brief observations on verse narratives that in different ways involve the knightly class. Angels have roles in medieval romance literature and often they have a didactic role, teaching about the necessity for piety and other good behaviours. They show the rewards to come for the good and the potential peril for the wicked. As they do in the Bible, they serve as guides and protectors, helping heroes and other protagonists through perilous situations. Much romance literature of the medieval period is written in narrative verse, and this is included here.

In the tale of *Amis and Amiloun* from the late thirteenth century, an angel appears to the two heroes who have always been good men. Here the angel gives advice which will help one man to keep his oath to the other, although this means killing his baby sons. He does this and subsequently finds his friend cured of sickness and the children alive and well. Here the angel is the vector for God's miraculous cure of a much-feared disease.¹⁶⁹

The Song of Roland is the story in verse of a battle in the year 778CE between the Frankish and the Hispano-Moorish forces, found in a manuscript of the mid-twelfth century. The eponymous hero is nephew of Charlemagne, tasked with commanding the rear guard on the way home. Among the stories of bloodied swords and gilded armour found in the text there are prayers to the angels and angelic visions, with Gabriel repeatedly appearing to Charlemagne. The angels here are sometimes warning or predicting, at other times advising and encouraging, on occasion guarding, even blessing. When Roland confesses, believing he is soon to die, he holds out his glove to God and angels come down to him.¹⁷⁰ Gabriel takes the glove and, with Michael and a cherub, bears Roland's soul to heaven.¹⁷¹ This use of a glove is interesting, deriving from the passing of a glove from one to another as a symbol that the one

¹⁶⁹ *Amis and Amiloun, Robert of Cisyle, and Sir Amadace* ed. Edward E Foster (Rochester: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008).

¹⁷⁰ *The Song of Roland* trans. & ed. Glyn S Burgess (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990), l. 2371 p. 104.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, l. 2390-2396 p. 105.

receiving the glove will carry out the wishes of the giver, the glove usually passing from the superior to the lesser figure. Here Roland is offering his glove to his superior.¹⁷² Presumably Roland is wishing Gabriel to ask God for his redemption as a martyr. Gabriel is enacting the meaning of the word angel: messenger. This time though the direction of the message is reversed. Angels usually bring messages from God to the world, but here he takes a message to God. These visions and prayers demonstrate that, even though our heroes may die, God's hosts are on the side of the Christians. After all, dying was only the gateway to eternal life.

A figure of the knight also features in *The Vision of Tundale*: there an angel guides a wicked knight through heaven and hell, as mentioned earlier on p. 37. In the vision Tundale dies in his sin and his soul is beset by demons. His soul is rescued by an angel who first appears as a star and calls him by name. The angel conquers the demon which is harassing Tundale.¹⁷³ Once again, an angel helps in saving a life and a soul.



Plate 86: Hieronymus Bosch, *The Visions of Tundale*, oil on panel, late 15th Century.
<<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/tondals-vision-hieronymus-bosch.html>> [Accessed 1 July 2022]
Tundale and the angel can be seen at the bottom left.

Angels are present in all forms of medieval literature, from the most learned to the most popular. They are found singing, saving, guiding, and helping, much as they are in visual representations. Once again, as in other art forms, angels are ubiquitous.

¹⁷² 'The Song of Roland', (In Our Time) BBC Sounds 04/11/2021 Professor Luke Sunderland,
<<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m00114m8>> at 22 min. 30 sec.

¹⁷³ *The Visions of Tundale*: see earlier reference p. 37.

Chapter 5: Everyday Angels



Plate 87: Mittelrheinischer Meister, *The Holy Family with Angels*, painting, 1420.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mittelrheinischer_Meister_um_1420_001.jpg>
[Accessed 10 February 2022] Here angels help with the everyday chores surrounding the Nativity.

This chapter will look at the presence of angels in everyday life for the ordinary person in the medieval period. For all medieval people, but particularly for those who were not ‘professionally’ religious, the constant presence of angels must have been a comfort, while being occasionally worrying. If one were up to no good, to however small a degree, the idea of being perpetually watched by God’s representative on earth would be disconcerting. While angels were always present at the good death, as we shall see, were they also shown as being present at other key life events? Did they attend the unexpected death? While angels are often depicted and mentioned as attendants at deathbeds, it is perhaps surprising that they are not shown at many births or baptisms, with the notable exception of those of Jesus, which are frequent subjects for paintings which were presumably inspirational.

The Seven Sacraments



Plate 88: Rogier van der Weyden, *The Seven Sacraments Altarpiece*, oil on panel, 1445-1450.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Sacraments_Altarpiece#/media/File:Seven_Sacraments_Rogier.jpg>
[Accessed 20 February 2022] Angels hover above the dramatis personae wearing robes coloured to match the sacraments which they represent.

Life for the medieval Christian was marked by rites or sacraments of the church given at key stages beginning with baptism, then confirmation, confession, the eucharist, ordination, marriage, and extreme unction, given at death. Rogier van der Weyden's mid-fifteenth-century altarpiece featuring the Sacraments shows each of the rites with angels hovering above. However, here the angels are not really participants in the rituals but an elegant way of labelling each rite and each angel wears a robe coloured according to its rite, from white for baptism to black for extreme unction. This juxtaposition of angels with the sacraments seems rare: with the exception of appearances at the death bed, angels are seldom represented as part of these life events. Often, the only images of angels at these rites are in representations of the life of Christ. As Danielou says: 'This manifestation of the angels fills especially two moments in the life of Christ: its beginning and its end...'¹⁷⁴ The Seven Sacraments was a popular theme for font ornamentation in the later medieval period and several examples of varying calibre are found in England, particularly in East Anglia.

¹⁷⁴ Jean Danielou S J, *The Angels and Their Mission According to the Fathers of the Church*, trans. David Heimann (Texas: Christian Classics, 1957), p. 25.

Angels at Births

Although prayers to saints such as St Margaret of Antioch and St Margaret of Scotland and the use of holy chemises and girdles is recorded, thus bringing religion into the birthing chamber, angels seem not to be considered appropriate birth attendants.¹⁷⁵ The great exception is the Nativity of Christ, such a popular theme in medieval art that it must surely have been inspirational to labouring women at that most perilous time of their lives. We know that Julian of Norwich, for example, had a crucifix held before her when it seemed that she was about to die.¹⁷⁶ Would not women in labour have found similar consolation in images of the Nativity? In *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?* Robert Bartlett relates the story of the Duchess of Bourbon who clasped a painting of St Peter of Luxembourg to her belly during a prolonged labour with the happy result of delivering a healthy baby girl.¹⁷⁷ Miracles were therefore often wished for at births, but they seem never to have included angelic intervention. Books of Hours, a later medieval phenomenon and part of the growing trend towards personal devotion, were often owned by women and frequently included Nativity scenes. However, angelic attendants do not always appear in these miniatures except, for example, in the Hours of Joanna of Castille, created around 1500. In this miniature angels hover among the rafters of the byre, apparently giving praise (Plate 88). Other helpful angels are found in the miniature from a French Book of Hours from 1420 (Sloane MS 4268, Plate 89) in which an angel is helpfully preparing a bath for the baby. Unless their very presence is seen as spiritually helpful at the dangerous time of childbirth, they do not physically act as midwives. Although angels were involved in many of the events leading up to, surrounding, and following the Nativity, in the Bible they are not recorded as being present at the birth. They are there at the beginning of the wider Nativity story with Gabriel making his announcement to Mary; they appear to Joseph before his marriage to her; they tell the shepherds about the birth; they warn the Magi not to return to Herod; they tell Joseph to flee to Egypt, but they are not present at the birth event itself. Perhaps this biblical omission explains their absence from the birthing chamber in real life. In the real world, was the presence of angels in that space unnecessary, or just taken for granted? If guardian angels are constantly with us, why not show them in this context?

¹⁷⁵ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, p.246, p. 354.

¹⁷⁶ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* trans. by Clifton Wolters (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1988).

¹⁷⁷ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, p. 502.



Plate 89: Unknown artist, *The Nativity*, paint and ink on parchment, c. 1500. https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_35313_fs001r [Accessed 12 February 2022] In this miniature from the Book of Hours of Joanna of Castille angels worship the Christ child while others frolic in the roof.

Plate 90: The Master of the Royal Alexander, *The Nativity*, paint and ink on parchment, c. 1420. <https://blogs.bl.uk/.a/6a00d8341c464853ef026be41c0d46200d-popup> [Accessed 12 February 2022] Here an angel helpfully prepares a bath for the baby.



Plate 91: Sandro Botticelli, *The Mystical Nativity*, oil on canvas, 1500. National Gallery, London. Natasha Coombs, 2022. Many angels interacting with each other, with the visitors to the Holy Family, and with humanity.

Not all Nativity scenes were straightforward. While at first sight Botticelli's *Mystical Nativity* is a standard Nativity scene, with all the traditional elements (the Holy Family, the

Magi and shepherds, ox, and ass) it is so much more. The swarm of angels circles above the shed, some straining towards a golden heaven while others look down at the demons at the foot of the painting, with yet more angels just above them, embracing humans. This is a depiction of the end of the world with angels playing a great part in the action. If, as is thought, the painting is a personal meditation for Botticelli rather than a commission, it displays his commitment to the teachings of Savonarola, especially his vision of the Nativity.¹⁷⁸ His inclusion of so many angels in a scene where they are absent in the Bible is interesting and demonstrates Botticelli's belief in angels as, at the very least, allegorical messengers of God if not active participants in worldly events.

Angels at Baptism

Baptism is the first of the Seven Sacraments, intended to be performed as soon after birth as possible and normally by total immersion. Are angels more apparent at the baptismal ceremony? Again, we begin with Christ, and His baptism as an adult by St John the Baptist. No angel is mentioned in the biblical account of the event, although they often appear in iconography of the event. In a late thirteenth-century miniature inserted into a fourteenth-century Psalter (Plate 91), John is helped by an angel who holds Christ's clothing, a role frequently assigned to angels in representations of this event. But are they present at the baptisms or christenings of ordinary mortals? Presumably 'ordinary' Christians would have wanted the same for themselves: to be ushered into and out of the world under the protection of angels. One way in which angels are present at many baptisms is in the ornamentation of the font. These often, although not always, bear angelic iconography, such as at St Mary's, Harkstead in Suffolk. We can only assume that the iconographic presence of God's messengers gave heart to parents and sponsors of the baby at the most perilous time in its life.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Rab Hatfield, 'Botticelli's Mystic Nativity, Savonarola and the Millennium', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* Vol. 58, pp. 88-114 (1995).

¹⁷⁹ Deaths in childhood are responsible for the apparently low age at death during the medieval period.

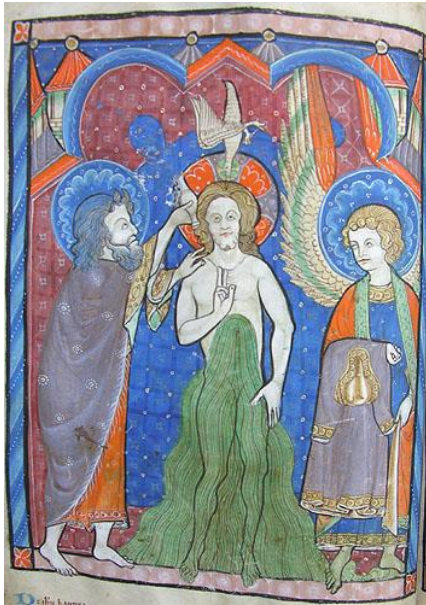


Plate 92: Unknown artist, *Christ's baptism*, paint and ink on vellum, 1397-1400.

<https://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/library/special_collections/manuscripts/medieval_manuscripts/medman/A/K26/K26f16v.htm> [Accessed 12 February 2022] An angel holds Christ's garments while He is baptised by John. The Holy Ghost appears as a dove.

Plate 93: Unknown artist, *Font*, carved stone, 19th century recreation. St Mary's church, Harkstead, Suffolk. Natasha Coombs, December 2021. Did the angels give the parents and godparents comfort in being present at the baptism of their children?

Guardian Angels

In the medieval period, the phrase 'good angel' was used rather than 'guardian angel', with the latter being recorded from the seventeenth century, but I have used the latter throughout this dissertation, unless for a direct quote, for the sake of familiarity and clarity.¹⁸⁰ Throughout life the Christian is accompanied by a guardian angel, and this may be why the iconography of life events so seldom includes angels: these angels may have been taken for granted, just as breathing is. There are three schools of thought regarding the moment at which the angel is assigned to its human charge: they are allocated at conception, as St Bonaventure (thirteenth century) believed; his contemporary St Thomas Aquinas believed this happened at birth; or later, when the infant is welcomed into the church, according to the thinking of Peter Damian (eleventh century) and others.¹⁸¹ Honorius of Autun (twelfth century) stated that the guardian angel was assigned as soon as the soul was put into the body with which Aquinas agreed, believing that these were angels, the lowest rank of the nine orders.¹⁸² Origen (third

¹⁸⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* ed. by Elizabeth Knowles (Oxford: OUP, 2005), p. 307.

¹⁸¹ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 161.

¹⁸² See the chapter on The Nine Orders of Angels.

century) demonstrated the ubiquity of guardian angels in writing that ‘... the guardian angels could be treated as his ‘kinsfolk and friends’...who make their presence felt intimately to those who pray to them.’¹⁸³ Aquinas in *Summa theologiae* quoted St Jerome (fourth century): ‘Jerome says *every soul has its angel appointed to guard it.*’¹⁸⁴ It would seem that every medieval theologian who considered celestial beings had something to say about guardian angels.

So important were they that in 1500 the Memorial of the Holy Guardian Angels was created by the Franciscans as a feast day to be held on 2 October.¹⁸⁵ However, this theological thought tells us little of how the ordinary Christian considered the matter. To judge from texts of the period, belief in guardian angels was widespread. Here follows a prayer, taken from the *Commonplace Book of Richard Hill*, compiled in the early sixteenth century and now in the library of Baliol College Oxford (MS 354). Unfortunately, I had to rely on the transcription by Eleanor Parker as I was not able to find a high-resolution image of the page:

O angell dere, where-euer I goo,
Me that am comytted to thyne awarde,
Saue, defende, & govern also,
That in hewyn what the be my reward.

Clense my sowle from syn þat I have do,
& virtuously me wysse to godward!
Shyld me from þe fende evermo,
& fro the paynes of hell so hard,

O thou cumly angell, so gud & dere,
Pat ever art abydyng with me;
Thowgh I may nother the se nor here,
Yet devoutely with trist I pray to the.

My body & sowle thou keep in fere,

¹⁸³ Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, p. 52.

¹⁸⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae: A Concise Translation* ed. & trans. by Timothy McDermot (London: Methuen, 1989), p. 158.

¹⁸⁵ Anonymous, ‘The Holy Guardian Angels’, *Franciscan Annals* Vol IX No 106, October 1885, pp. 289-294.

With sodden deth departed þat they not be!
For þat ys thyn offes, both fere & nere,
In every place where ever I be.

O blessed angell, to me so dere,
Messenger of god Almyght,
Govern my dedis & thowght in fere,
To þe plesaunce of God, both day & nyght.¹⁸⁶

Other similar prayers exist as exemplified by the fifteenth-century prayer in the Beaufort/Beauchamp Book of Hours, now in the British Library (Plate 94).¹⁸⁷ Here a woman kneels in prayer to her guardian angel. The inclusion of such a prayer in a high-status book indicates that all groups of society needed support from their guardian angels.

¹⁸⁶ Eleanor Parker, 'Medieval Prayers to a Guardian Angel', A Clerk of Oxford, July 25, 2012. <<https://aclerkofoxford.blogspot.com/2012/07/a-medieval-prayer-to-guardian-angel.html>> [Accessed 1 July 2022].

¹⁸⁷ The Beauchamp Book of Hours is held at the British Library, Royal MS 2 A XVIII.



Plate 94: Unknown artist, *Prayer to a guardian angel*, ink and paint on parchment, 1401-1450. https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_2_a_xviii_f025r [Accessed 13 February 2022] It is thought that the kneeling woman could be Margaret Beauchamp, the book's owner.

In Winchester Cathedral a side chapel has a ceiling emblazoned with images of angels and with three dimensional stars (see Plate 48). This is the Guardian Angels Chapel, made for Henry III in the thirteenth century. Did Henry, like his descendant Richard II, have more reason to feel a special devotion to guardian angels in general rather than just to his own? Henry was born in Winchester, a possible reason for siting the Angels chapel in that cathedral, but did he see his political survival during the early part of his reign as a reason to give thanks to his guardian angel?

The figure of the angelic guardian also occurs in the Cathar religious movement. As Duffy says “Christ had come to earth to re-establish contact between the guardian spirits and the lost souls entrapped in matter...” Although these do not seem to be guardian angels in the strict Christian sense, they presumably serve a similar purpose, guarding souls from spiritual and earthly harm.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Barber, *The Two Cities*, p. 184.



Plate 95: Unknown artist, *Angel*, paint on wood, 15th century. St Michael and All Angels' church, Barton Turf, Norfolk. Natasha Coombs, 2021. Here the angel from the Barton Turf rood screen protects two human souls.

After the Reformation and the Council of Trent in 1543 devotion to the guardian angels amongst Catholics became stronger with churches and chapels being dedicated to them throughout Catholic Europe. Was this to protect the faithful from the Protestant 'heretics', or just a way to demonstrate their faith? As has been said in the introduction, even amongst the new Protestant communities, guardian angels retained and often increased their popularity.

Angels at the Deathbed



Plate 96: Gerard David, Gerard Horenbout, Simon Bening et al. *A Deathbed Scene*, paint on parchment, 1510-1520. <<https://patrimonioediciones.com/portfolio-item/breviario-grimani/?lang=en>> [Accessed 13 February 2022] A priest administers supreme unction to the dying man in the presence of friends and neighbours while above the bed an angel and a demon struggle for the soul. Below the roundel the legend of the Three Living and the Three Dead is played out between a mounted hunting party and very aggressive cadavers.

As death approaches the importance of the guardian angel increases in the minds of the dying, their friends, and relatives. In the later medieval period, the *Ars moriendi* became increasingly popular. These were texts explaining to the Christian the necessity of a good death: death prepared for, with the attendance of a priest and family members. The idea of an unprepared death was abhorrent. If one could not make a final confession or receive extreme unction one's fate in the next phase of existence would be less certain. In the *Ars moriendi* texts and the related work, *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, angels are often shown struggling with demons for possession of the soul or encouraging the soul towards them. The death chamber is filled with the relatives, friends, and spiritual attendants of the dying, as well as the supernatural beings, including the guardian angel:

On one side [of the bed] are the Trinity, the Virgin, the whole court of heaven, and the guardian angel; on the other side, Satan and his monstrous army of demons. The court of heaven no longer resembles a court of justice. St Michael no longer weighs the good

and the evil in his scales. He has been replaced by the guardian angel, who is more spiritual attendant and confessor than advocate or court official.¹⁸⁹

In Plate 96 an angel lifts the soul to safety out of the dead body and away from the demons. This tension between heavenly and infernal forces had a place at the deathbed, as Kinch says, ‘to place the individual at the center [sic] of a metaphysical struggle that escalates the stakes of the individual’s death.’¹⁹⁰

While the dying man is breathing his last, his soul is being disputed by St Michael and Satan. The archangel’s role of cosmic combatant is combined with that of conductor of souls.¹⁹¹

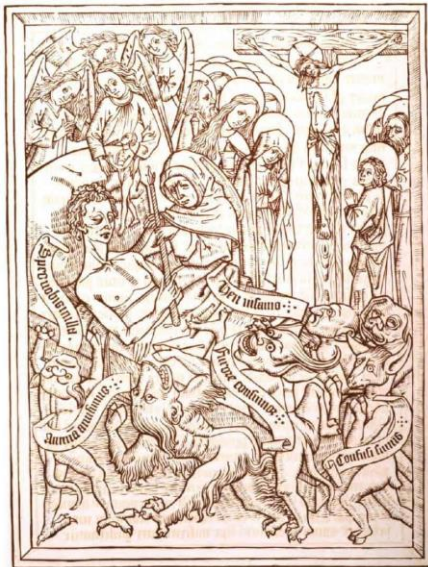


Plate 97: Heinrich Quentell, *Triumph over Temptation*, ink on paper, c. 1495. <<https://blog.lib.uiowa.edu/hardin/tag/ars-moriendi/>> [Accessed 13 February 2022] In this woodcut angels have triumphed, saving the soul of the dying man.

As far as the remaining sacraments are concerned, angels seem noticeable by their absence. Although van der Weyden’s altarpiece (Plate 88) shows angels present at church ceremonies, confirmation, confession, the taking of the eucharist, ordination and marriage all seem to have no other angelic appearances, despite the mention of angelic attendants at mass in *Le Menagier de Paris*. Surely, they are all occasions when the presence of God’s messengers

¹⁸⁹ Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, p 108.

¹⁹⁰ Ashby Kinch, *Imago Mortis: Mediating Images of Death in Late Medieval Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 44.

¹⁹¹ Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, p 115.

and one's personal guardian would have been desirable? Once again, is this because they were seen as ubiquitous, so much part of life that they need not be mentioned?

Plagues of various types were a recurring feature of the medieval period, and during the fifteenth century *The Vision of Edmund Leversedge* was written by a plague sufferer. Even though there was a chance of survival, such an illness must have brought intimations of mortality. This account of the near-death experience of a Somerset gentleman includes reference to his 'good angell' who seems to have conducted him part of the way through purgatory towards Judgement.¹⁹² The angel appeared to him as a four- or five-year-old child.¹⁹³ Guardian angels are usually shown as adults, so why does this man see a young child? Perhaps it seemed more comforting to him to be led by a being who was so clearly innocent, although it is also reminiscent of the souls carried in cloths to the bosom of Abraham and reminds one of the use of children to portray angels in plays. The angel advises him during the journey back to the world, telling him which priest he should consult and how much he should spend on prayers for his soul. Edmund survived his illness, and so the work of his guardian angel is not over. He will remain with Edmund until, and after, his death. Escorting the soul to, and hopefully through purgatory was the final task of a guardian angel.

An instance of angels singing at a death occurs at the death of St Martin, a fourth-century bishop of Tours who died in 397 as described in *The Golden Legend*. As Martin died, 'many heard choirs of angels singing around him'.¹⁹⁴ The bishop of Cologne also heard angels singing at this time and reportedly said "It is my lord Martin who has migrated from the world, and now the angels are carrying him to heaven!"¹⁹⁵ No doubt stories such as this were used to illustrate good deaths, as were the many medieval artworks depicting the deaths of saints.¹⁹⁶

The iconography of angels extends to funerary monuments, such as paintings seen on the Bruges tomb from the thirteenth century (Plate 98) and in the transi tomb of Alice de la Pole, referenced earlier. In both cases an angel wields a censer, ushering the soul towards the next stage of its existence. These would be only a part of the programme of paintings in the tomb, such programmes also including the Virgin and Child at the foot and Christ at the head.

¹⁹² Peter Marshall, *Invisible Worlds: Death, Religion and the Supernatural in England, 1500 - 1700* (London, SPK 2017), p. 53.

¹⁹³ Wiesje F. Nijenhuis, Truncated Topoi in "The Vision of Edmund Leversedge", *Medium Ævum*, 1994, Vol. 63, No. 1 (1994), pp. 84-97 The Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature p 86.

¹⁹⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, p. 684.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 685.

¹⁹⁶ Keck in *Angels and Angelology*, (p. 204) tells us that such works 'expressed the hope of the viewer that an angel might lead his or her soul to heaven as well.'

The angelic presence, perhaps, echoes that at Christ's tomb, the first Christian report of angels appearing at a grave. John 20:12 reads: 'And she [Mary Magdalene] saw two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid.' In this case the angels speak to Mary, and she replies to them. Another event not appearing in the Bible is Mary's assumption into heaven where, as seen in the late twelfth-century miniature (Plate 100), Mary is carried from her tomb by angels. Apart from the sacredness of the people involved there is a major difference between what happens to Jesus's and Mary's bodies and those of mere mortals: both Jesus and Mary take their bodies with them into heaven, whereas everybody else must leave theirs behind. A more familiar funerary context for angels is on carved monuments and the tradition of including angels in funerary monuments can be seen in late Roman art. It is not uncommon for tombs of the later Roman period to feature angels, as seen on the tomb of Publius Vibius Marianus from the second century CE on the Via Claudia in Rome, shown in Plate 99.¹⁹⁷ This monument has angels on two of its corners above the inscription. Does this mean that this man was a Christian? It is possible, especially since part of his name references Mary and one of the names of his daughter who erected the tomb was Maria, although given the winged beasts on the other corners of the monument he or his family may simply have found the image appealing. More has been said about angels on tomb monuments in the chapter on Angels in Church.



Plate 98: Unknown artist *A Censing Angel*, paint on plaster, c. 1270.

<<https://www.museabrugge.be/en/virtual-tours/o-l-v-kerk-museum-1>> [Accessed 15 February 2022] A censing angel inside a tomb in Bruges.

¹⁹⁷ James Stevens Curl, *Death and Architecture* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2002), p. 71.



Plate 99: Unknown artist, *The Tomb of Publius Vibius Marianus*, carved stone, 2nd century.
 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_of_Publius_Vibius_Marianus#/media/File:Tomba_di_Nerone_sulla_Cassa_23.jpg> [Accessed 13 February 2022] Winged angels ornament the top corners of this tomb.



Plate 100: Unknown artist, *The Assumption of Mary*, ink, paint and gold leaf, 1170.
 <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/files/special/images/psalter/H229_0019vwf.jpg>
 [Accessed 15 February 2022] The shrouded body of Mary is borne up to heaven while Her Son watches. At the top and bottom of the page, angels hover above the tomb, swinging censers.

Angels and the Afterlife

The work of the angel does not end with the death of the person they guard. We have seen that angels usher the souls of the saintly to heaven, sometimes carrying them to Abraham's bosom in a cloth, as was the case with the beggar Lazarus in Luke 16:22: 'And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell.'



Plate 101: Unknown artist *The Ascension of Lazarus*, ink, paint, and gold leaf on parchment, mid-14th century. <<https://blogs.bl.uk/.a/6a00d8341c464853ef0263e96f9279200b-popup>> [Accessed 05/04/2022] In the lower part of this page from the *Breviari d'Amour* two angels raise the soul of the dead man towards heaven. Interestingly a demon can be seen leaving the page to the right. Just as much as medieval people seem to have believed in angels, they believed in their satanic counterparts.

The iconography of the soul carried to heaven by angels is a popular one in most forms of medieval art, from books of hours to angels in church roofs. The soul, represented as a tiny person or a little child, often holds the hands in prayer as they are lifted. This image, once again, is one of comfort, Abraham's bosom having been seen as a kind of celestial waiting room, in which the soul awaited entry into heaven. The archangel Michael is involved in the afterlife and is responsible for weighing souls at the Judgement Day, relying on the report of the angel who keeps the *liber vitae* in which all deeds, good or bad, are recorded.¹⁹⁸ Most Christians souls, except those who went straight to heaven or hell, suffered and struggled

¹⁹⁸ Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, p. 103.

towards the Judgement Day when the final decision would be made as to which of them, after a stay in purgatory, would be either saved or condemned to hell. At death most souls were destined for purgatory where they would be punished for every sin left unrepented in life. This would last for the *post-mortem* equivalent of many thousands of years, during which time the souls would undergo various torments appropriate to their evil deeds. Prayers said for the departed by the living could shorten this time. However, according to *The Arte or Crafte to Lyve Well and to Dye Well* (1505) and other *ars moriendi* texts, good angels consoled souls in torment in purgatory, reminding them of the heaven to which they aspired.¹⁹⁹ *The Gast of Gy* says that the poor soul entered purgatory “with his goode aungel, and wickid aungels schul wend away from hym”.²⁰⁰



Plate 102: Unknown artist, *The Last Judgement*, caved stone, early 12th century. <<https://www.tourisme-conques.fr/en/en-conques/the-tympandum>> [Accessed 05/04/2022] The angel with the *liber vitae* is just above Christ’s left shoulder. On the open pages is written *signatur* (signed).

¹⁹⁹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400 – 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 345.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 345.



Plate 103: Unknown artist, *The Angel of the Liber Vita*, carved stone, early 12th century. <<https://going-postal.com/2020/08/the-conques-tympanum-decoded/>> [Accessed 15 April 2022].

Portable Angels

A way in which angels and their protective abilities could be brought into everyday life is as namesakes. In eleventh-century Byzantium, for example, Michael was the second most common male name after John as far as biblical and saintly names are concerned.²⁰¹ It would be interesting to see to what extent these names rose or fell in popularity over time. Other names referring to angels were used, as in medieval Italy, for example, where we find Michele, Raphaele, Gabriele, Angelo and Arcangelo, not to forget Michelangelo, in use as forenames.

A small but significant object which many people of the period would have owned and displayed is the pilgrim badge. These are small and inexpensive brooches made usually of pewter, rarely gilded or of precious metal, intended to be pinned or sewn to the clothing or hat and produced in the thousands at churches and shrines throughout Christendom during the late medieval period. While some people would have had none, many people had multiple badges. As the name suggests, pilgrim badges are items marking the making of a pilgrimage to a particular church or shrine and showing either the relevant saint or the saint's attribute, the pilgrimage usually undertaken as an act of penance or to achieve an indulgence, granting relief from a period in purgatory.²⁰² They could also be brought back to someone on whose behalf the pilgrimage had been made or to a person the pilgrim wished to have protected or helped by the relevant saint. Although the great majority represent human saints, there are some that show Michael and others which depict angels accompanying the saint. These badges served several purposes: they were in part protective amulets, carrying a scrap of the saint's power; they

²⁰¹ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 468.

²⁰² Orme, *Going to Church*, p. 189; Malcolm Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2002).

demonstrated devotion and piety; they could be a gift to someone unable to go on pilgrimage themselves and, of course, they were decorative souvenirs. Pilgrim badges were not only worn on the clothing: they were also often placed or sewn into books, particularly books of hours. Sometimes they were added to a blank page, but they could also be included at an appropriate place in the book, perhaps a calendar page or facing the relevant office. Undertaking a pilgrimage could represent great expense and varying degrees of risk. Unless one lived near to the shrine of the saint, the journey could take many weeks, perhaps even more than a year and so the act of pilgrimage demonstrated devotion. Pilgrimages could be undertaken to atone for sin, but another purpose was for the relief from illness or other trouble, either for oneself or for another. For the poor, the elderly or sick the journey could be too onerous an undertaking. While inexpensive, badges were produced in such numbers that they could also provide at least part of an income to a pewterer in the right place.²⁰³



Plate 104: Unknown artist, *St Michael pilgrim Badge* , cast pewter, 13th century. <<https://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/424837.html>> [Accessed 15 April 2022] A badge for St Michael from Mont Saint Michel, found in the Thames.

Plate 105: Unknown artist, *An Ampulla*, cast pewter, 6th century. <<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0752/8/4/128/htm>> [Accessed 15 April 2022] A portable container for holy water, held at Monza Cathedral and originally brought from the Holy Land. Angels can clearly be seen hovering around Christ in Majesty.

While pilgrim badges could be owned by even the most lowly, the late medieval coin known as an angel was reserved for the higher status members of society. Being made from gold it had a high value, and was called an angel because of the representation of St Michael

²⁰³ For much of the detail on pilgrim I am indebted to Colin Torode of Lionheart Replicas who has spent many years researching and recreating pilgrim badges and other small pewter objects from the medieval period. For further reading on pilgrimage see Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: an Image of Medieval Religion*, (London: Faber & Faber, 2011).

on its obverse side. Michael is shown fighting the dragon and has wings outstretched, perhaps the inspiration for the tracery head on the rood screen at St Mary's Silchester (Plate 40) which has a banner in place of the spear. This use of angel iconography hints at a desire to protect wealth, both personal and national, with the image of Michael conferring strength and protection. Did ownership of coins decorated in this way also bring a similar blessing as the ownership of a relic? Coins have been used as keepsakes and mementoes: are they here used as holy objects?



Plate 106: Unknown artist. *A Gold Angel Coin*, stamped gold, late 15th century.
 <<https://www.coinarchives.com/65531995182f58faf617fcc85c858ea0/img/baldwin/105/image00185.jpg>>
 [Accessed 15 April 32022] Michael kills the satanic dragon on this high value coin of the reign of Edward IV.

Personal Devotions

In the previously mentioned Wilton Diptych (see Plate 84), Richard II is shown on one wing with three saints behind him: St Edmund, St Edward the Confessor and St John the Baptist. The facing wing shows the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child and surrounded by angels, each of whom wears the white hart, Richard's livery badge, on their breast. We can characterize the attributes of these angels (coats of arms and personal badges) as royal, the angels bearing them having been pressed into service as holy supporters of a king who was, by this time, unstable. Indeed, Michael Rimmer comments on Richard's use of angels:

There is certainly much evidence that angels played a prominent part in the iconography of his regime, as the king sought to establish a more absolutist, non-consultative form of monarchy than had previously been seen in England.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ Rimmer, *The Angel Roofs*, p. 4.

The Gloucester cathedral choir roof angels, a possible inspiration for the Westminster angels, are apolitical, playing musical instruments being used in God's worship, one of the tasks allotted to the cherubim as contrasted with the angels at Westminster, clearly demonstrating celestial support for the king. It is likely that this beautiful diptych was exclusively a tool for personal devotion for Richard, although its iconography must have been reassuring for him during times of stress.

Conclusion



Plate 107: Pietro Perugino, *The Virgin and Child with an Angel, The Archangel Raphael with Tobias and the Archangel Michael*, oil and egg tempura on poplar, 1496-1500. The National Gallery, London. Natasha Coombs, 2022. In the central panel a small angel holds the Infant Christ while three more hover above.

In this brief examination of the subject of the lay perception of angels in the medieval period we have seen that, although they may be ubiquitous, angels are not always portrayed as being present. This assumed conflict between the angelic presence and angels depictions (or the lack of such) suggests that angels were taken for granted: they were such a part of both everyday life and of special events that they did need not need to be shown. They were believed to be all around: in church, in books and song, in the mind. Medieval people were just that: people. They did the same things as we do today: they raised their families; they mourned the dead; they earned a living, they played, sang and danced. They experienced the same feelings that we do, although some will say that because women had so many children and infant mortality was high, babies were mourned less than they would be today.²⁰⁵ This is countered by, for example, the poem *Pearl* in which a bereaved father mourns his little daughter with such depth of feeling.²⁰⁶ The memorial to the unknown lady at Kinlet with her tiny, swaddled infant also hints at grief for not only the mother but the baby too (Plate 66). There was a major difference between people then and many people now: for most medieval people there was the comforting sense that a personal guardian w

as ever present, watching over each person, a belief to which few adhere now.

²⁰⁵ Barbara A. Hanawalt, 'Medievalists and the Study of Childhood', *Speculum*, Apr., 2002, Vol. 77, No. 2 (Apr., 2002), pp. 440-460.

²⁰⁶ The unknown author of *Pearl*, a contemporary of Chaucer, refers in stanza xciv to 'legions of angels' scattering incense in the presence of Jesus and with his little daughter in attendance. *Pearl* ed. & trans. by Israel Gollancz (New York: Cooper Square Publishing, 1966), p. 97.

Angels were present everywhere, in church, at home, in the fields and towns, visible and invisible. If one could not see the representation of an angel, there was the belief that at least one was nearby, on guard. If one wore pilgrim badges, there was a good chance that there was a tangible representation of an angel around a person. Literate people could read about them in poetry and prose, anyone could see them enacted in plays and represented in churches. People were warned to listen to their angels but not to place too much stress on them: they were God's representatives, but not God Himself. Everywhere in dealing with angels there were fine lines to tread.

When a craftsman created the image of an angel, did he believe that the figure was the embodiment of an angelic spirit? Did he give them the faces of people he knew? Was it just a way to earn a living or did he create them from faith? To what extent was the image intended to channel the angel? Some questions may be answered in relation to medieval imagery and texts that stress the role of materiality in devotions and it seems likely that all these things are true: just like everybody else, the depth of faith would vary from craftsman to craftsman, and while to some it may have been just a job, to many it would be an enduring expression of faith. One conclusion to be drawn from this research is that, however little the medieval laity may have known of academic angelology, they were constantly reminded and felt the nearness of angels in their everyday lives and most especially while in church. They were surrounded by these messengers and guardians from God even if the angels were invisible. The sense to be taken from this is that angels were a clear and present help, to be relied upon.

While theologians and philosophers throughout the Middle Ages may have considered it necessary to describe and categorize all types of celestial beings, this was of little interest to the medieval lay person. For them, angels were a matter of fact, co-existing with them while not usually visible, except sometimes *in extremis*. Guardian angels were ever-present, and Michael was a source of help and support as a last resort. Whatever befell the medieval Christian, there was an angel somewhere nearby who could help.



Plate 108: Unknown artists, *A Festival of Angels*, mixed media, 2021 St Giles' church, Wrexham, Clwyd. Natasha Coombs, 2021. Here musical angels in the sixteenth-century roof look down a host of less permanent angels created by community groups in a successful blend of ancient and modern.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources

Alighieri, Dante, *The Divine Comedy I: Hell*, trans. by Dorothy L. Sayers & Barbara Reynolds (London: Penguin Books, 1955)

Alighieri, Dante, *The Divine Comedy II: Purgatory*, trans. by Dorothy L. Sayers & Barbara Reynolds (London: Penguin Books, 1955)

Alighieri, Dante, *The Divine Comedy III: Paradise*, trans. by Dorothy L. Sayers & Barbara Reynolds (London: Penguin Books, 2004)

Anonymous, *Pearl*, ed. & trans by Sir Israel Gollancz (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1966)

Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, Vol 9 trans. & ed. by Kenelm Foster OP (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1963)

Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*, trans. by J. B. Shaw (Washington DC: Regenery Publishing, 1961)

Augustine, *The City of God*, Vol. 1 trans. by John Healey (London: J M Dent & Sons, 1945)

Augustine, *The City of God*, Vol. 2 trans. by John Healey (London: J M Dent & Sons, 1945)

Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation etc.*, (London: J M Dent, 1910)

Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Consideration*, trans. by Ailbe J. Luddy (Ireland: Brown & Nolan, 1921)

Bonaventure, *Collations on the Six Days*, trans. by José de Vinck (USA: St Anthony's Guild, 1970)

The Book of the Craft of Dying and Other Early English Tracts Concerning Death, trans. & ed. by Frances M. M. Comper (London: Longmans, 1917)

The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works, trans. & ed. by Clifton Walters (London: Penguin Books, 1961)

The Dream of the Rood, trans. by R. M. Liuzza in *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature* Vol. 1 (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2014)

Dionysius the Areopagite *see* Pseudo-Dionysius

Douay-Rheims Bible, trans. by English College, Douai (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2007)

Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays, ed. by A. C. Cawley (London: J M Dent, 1965)

Exornatorium Curatorum, ed. Niamh Pattwell, MET 49 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag WINTER Heidelberg, 2013)

Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966)

The Goodman of Paris, (Le Menagier de Paris: A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy by a Citizen of Paris c. 1393), ed. & trans. by Eileen Power (London: The Folio Society, 1992)

Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, trans. by Bruce Hozeski (New Mexico: Bear, 1986)

Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993)

Mirk, John, *Festial*, 2 vols, ed. by Susan Powell, EETS OS 334, 335 (Oxford: OUP, 2009, 2011)

Julian of Norwich *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. by Clifton Wolters (London: Penguin Books, 1988)

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, (Scotts Valley, California: Limovia.net, 2013)

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysius the Areopagite*, trans. by Revd. John Parker M A (London: Skeffington, 1894)

Richard Hill's Commonplace Book ed. by EETS

The Song of Roland, ed. & trans. by Glyn S. Burgess (London: Penguin Books, 1990)

The Visions of Tundale; together with metrical moralizations and other fragments of early poetry, hitherto inedited, ed. by William B Turnbull (Edinburgh: T. G. Stevenson, 1843)

The York Plays, ed. by Richard Beadle (London: Edward Arnold, 1982)

Secondary sources

Ariès, Philippe, *The Hour of Our Death: The Classic History of Western Attitudes Towards Death Over the Last One Thousand Years*, trans. by Helen Weaver (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1981)

Barber, Malcolm, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe 1050-1320* (London: Routledge, 1993)

Bartlett, Robert, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013)

Binsky, Paul, *Medieval Death* (London: British Museum Press, 1996)

Boase, T. S. R., *Death in the Middle Ages: Mortality, Judgement and Remembrance* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1972)

Bottomley, Frank, *The Church Explorer's Guide* (London: Kaye & Ward, 1978)

Brooke-Hitching, Edward, *The Devil's Atlas: An Explorer's Guide to Heavens, Hells and Afterworlds* (London: Sion & Schuster, 2010)

Brown, Peter, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981)

Brown, Peter, *The Ransom of the Soul: Afterlife and Wealth in Early Western Christianity* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2015)

Browne, Clare and others, *English Medieval Embroidery: Opus Anglicanum* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2016)

Carr, Wesley, *Angels and Principalities: the background, meaning and development of the Pauline phrase *haiarchai kai hai exousiai** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)

Cassell, Sarah, *Structure and Image in Late Medieval East Anglian Angel Roofs*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, UEA (2018)

- Chase, Steven, *Angelic Spirituality: Medieval perspective on the ways of angels*, ed. & trans. by Steven Chase (New York: Paulist Press, 2002)
- Collins, Roger, *Charlemagne* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998)
- Coogan, Michael David, 'Raphael', in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. By Coogan, Michael David & Metzger, Bruce M. (Oxford: OUP, 1993)
- Cooper, Trevor, *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War*, ed. by Trevor Cooper (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2001)
- Craig, Hardin, *English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955)
- Curl, James Stevens, *Death and Architecture* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2002)
- Danielou, Jean, S. J., *The Angels and their Mission According to the Fathers of the Church*, trans. David Heimann (Texas: Christian Classics, 1957)
- Dickinson, John, *Misericords of North West England: their nature and significance* (Lancaster: Centre for North-West Regional Studies, 2008)
- Duffy, Eamon, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (London: University Press, 1992)
- Edwards, Francis, *Ritual and Drama: The Mediaeval Theatre* (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1976)
- Falk, Seb, *The Light Ages: A Medieval Journey of Discovery* (London: Allen Lane, 2020)
- Gardiner, Eileen, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell: A Sourcebook* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2018).
- Ginzberg, Carlo, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, trans. by John & Anne Tedeschi (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980)
- Hanawalt, Barbara A., 'Medievalists and the Study of Childhood' *Speculum*, Apr., 2002, Vol. 77, No. 2 (Apr., 2002), pp. 440-460.
- Harkins, Franklin T., 'The Embodiment of Angels: A debate in mid-Thirteenth Century Theology' *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales*, Vol. 78, No. 1, pp. 25-58 (2011)
- Harvey, John, *English Medieval Architects: A biographical dictionary down to 1550* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1987)
- Henry, Françoise, *Irish Art during the Viking Invasions 800-1020 A.D.* (London: Methuen, 1967)
- Hoffmann, Tobias ed., *A Companion to Angels in Medieval Philosophy* (Leiden: BRILL, 2012)
- Hoffmann, Tobias, *Free Will and the Rebel Angels in Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021)
- Huizinga, J., *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, trans. by F. Hopman (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1955)
- Jager, Eric, *The Tempter's Voice: Language and the Fall in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993)
- Jaritz, Gerhard, *Angels, Devils: The Supernatural and its Visual Representation* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011)
- Johnson, Richard E., *Saint Michael the Archangel in Medieval English Legend* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005)
- Jolly, Karen Louise, 'Prayers from the Field: Practical Protection and Demonic Defence in Anglo-Saxon England' *Traditio*, Vol. 61 (2006), pp. 95-147
- Jones, Malcolm, *The Secret Middle Ages* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2002)

- Keck, David, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: OUP, 1998)
- Kiilerich, Bente, 'The Sarigüzel Sarcophagus and Triumphal Themes in Theodosian Art' in *Akten des Symposiums Frühchristliche Sarkophage*, ed. by Guntram Koch (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1999) pp. 137-144
- Kinch, Ashby, *Imago Mortis: Mediating Images of Death in Late Medieval Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2013)
- Klein, Elizabeth, *Augustine's Theology of Angels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)
- Kreitner, Keith, *The Church Music of Fifteenth Century Spain* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004),
- Le Goff, Jacques, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991)
- Lunnon, Helen E., *East Anglian Church Porches and their Medieval Context* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020) Chapter 2: Functions of Church Porches, pp. 55-100
- MacCulloch, Diarmaid, *All Things Made New: Writings on the Reformation* (London: Penguin, 2017)
- Maggioni, Giovanni Paolo, 'How to Preach the Golden Legend: The legend of St George and the legend of the Cross in the Sermons *de Sanctis* of James de Voragine' For the *Hagiography Society, Leeds 19th Medieval Congress*, <https://www.academia.edu/1784681/How_to_Preach_the_Golden_Legend_The_legend_of_St_George_and_the_legend_of_the_Cross_in_the_Sermons_De_Sanctis_of_James_de_Voragine>
- Mâle, Emile, *Religious Art in France: The Twelfth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978)
- Mâle, Emile, *Religious Art in France: The Thirteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978)
- Mâle, Emile, *Religious Art in France: The Late Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Iconography and Its Sources* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986)
- Margolies, Morris B., *A Gathering of Angels: Angels in Jewish Life and Literature* (New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1994)
- Marshall, Peter, *Invisible Worlds: Death, religion and the supernatural in England, 1500 – 1700* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2015)
- Matin, Therese, 'The Development of Winged Angels in Early Christian Art' in *Spacio, Tiempo y Forma*, Serie VII, Historia del Arte t. 14 (2001) pp. 11-29
- Marx, C. W., 'British Library Harley MS 1749 and Popular Devotion' in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1992 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Nicholas Rogers (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1994), pp. 207-222
- Orme, Nicholas, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen & Co., 1973)
- Orme, Nicholas, *English Church Dedications with a Survey of Cornwall and Devon* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996)
- Orme, Nicholas, *Going to Church in Medieval England* (London: Yale University Press, 2021)
- Ovie, Valentine Aghoghophia, 'The Creation and Fall of Angels in Augustine's Interpretation of Genesis 1' *GWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 7. No. 2. (2021), pp. 212-227
- Ployd, Adam, 'Participation and Polemics: Angels from Origen to Augustine' *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol 110, No 3 (2017), pp. 421-439
- Rimmer, Michael, *The Angel Roofs of East Anglia: Unseen masterpieces of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2015)
- Rose, Martial, *The Wakefield Mystery Plays* (London: Evans Brothers Ltd., 1961)

- Rosewell, Roger, *Medieval Wall Paintings* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2008)
- Rosewell, Roger, *Medieval Wall Paintings* (Oxford, Shire Publications Ltd., 2014)
- Roston, Michael, *Biblical Drama in England: from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968)
- Schiller, Gertrude, *Iconography of Christian Art*, 2 vols, trans. by Janet Seligman (London: Lund Humphries, 1971-72)
- Smith, M. Q. & Rita Wood, *The Sculptures of the South Porch of Malmesbury Abbey: A short guide* (Malmesbury: Friends of Malmesbury Abbey, 2002)
- Sowerby, Richard, *Angels in Early Medieval England* (Oxford: OUP, 2016)
- Statham, Margaret, 'John Baret of Bury', *The Ricardian*, Vol. 13 (2003) pp. 420-431
- Straw, Carole, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (California: University of California Press, 1988)
- Sumption, Jonathan, *Pilgrimage: an Image of Medieval Religion* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011)
- Swanton, M. J., 'A Fifteenth-Century Cabalistic Memorandum Formerly in Morgan MS 775' *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (Apr., 1983), pp. 259-261
- Truitt, E. R., *Medieval Robots: Mechanism, Magic, Nature and Art* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016)
- Von Contzen, Eva & Chanita Goodblatt, eds., *Enacting the Bible in Medieval and Early Modern Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020)
- Wickham, Glynne, *The Medieval Theatre* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992)
- Woods, Patricia Hilary, *The Festival Hymns Of Peter Abelard: A Translation And Commentary Of The Hymnarius Paraclitensis Libellus II*, Unpublished PhD thesis University of Glasgow (1992)
- Wright, Steven K., 'The Twelfth Century Story of Daniel for Performance by Hilarius: An Introduction, Translation and Commentary' *Early Theatre*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2014), pp. 9-48

Photographic credits.

Natasha Coombs: 1; 3; 4; 10; 12; 23; 24; 29; 30; 31; 40; 42; 43; 44; 45; 46; 52; 57; 58; 59; 60; 61; 62; 66; 67; 68; 69; 71; 74; 75; 80; 81; 84; 91; 93; 95; 107; 108: Getty Open Content Program: 2: The National Gallery: 5; 6; 9: The Parker Library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge: 7: Société Suisse de Recherches en Symbolique: 8: Wikimedia: 11; 19; 35; 87; 88: Musée du Louvre: 13: Worldhistory.org: 14: All Saints North Street: 15: Florence Art Museums: 16: Musei Reali Torino: 17: Wikipedia: 18; 27; 85; 99: British Museum: 20: Worcester City Council: 21: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya: 22: The Victoria & Albert Museum: 25; 53; 54; 55: The British Library: 26; 82; 89; 90; 94; 101: geograph.org.uk: 28: www.angelroofs.net: 32: www.britainexpress.com: 33; 39: www.churchtimes.co.uk: 34: Lionel Wall: 36: Sean Breadin: 37; 38: Lucy Squire: 41: Simon Knott: 47: Tracy Silvester: 48: Hampshire History: 49: The Parochial Church Council of St Mary's Church, Chalgrove: 50: Chaldon Church: 51: www.artway.eu: 56: www.visit-amiens.com: 63: Dr. Allan Barton FSA: 64; 65: ULS Digital Collections: 70: www.irisharchaeology.ie: 72: Paroisse Notre Dame, Saint-Jaques de Reims: 73: France-Travel-Info.com: 74: www.christianiconography.info: 77; 78: The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum: 79: Yale University Art Gallery: 83: Fine Art America: 86: St. John's College, University of Cambridge: 92: Patrimonio Ediciones: 96: University of Iowa Libraries: 97: Musea Brugge: 98: University of Glasgow: 100: Tourisme Conques: 102: <https://going-postal.com>: 103: The Museum of London: 104: MDPI: 105: www.coinarchives.com: 106