

ANGEL

One of the myriads of incorporeal creatures whose natural abode is heaven and who, on certain occasions, appear to man in the shape of human beings to reveal God's will and carry out His commands. The appellation "messenger" or "angel" used in the prophecy of Malachi was confirmed by [Christ](#) when He said of [John](#) the Baptist, "This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger [or angel] before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee'" (Mt. 11:10 quoting Mal. 3:1). The same usage was applied to some bishops in charge of churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 1:20; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14).

The fathers of the [church](#) recorded their views of the celestial hierarchy. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (c. 150-215) holds that "the grades here in the church of bishops, presbyters, deacons, are imitations of the angelic glory . . ." (*Stromata 13, in Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 505; Jurgens, 1970, Vol. 1, p. 184*). According to CYRIL OF JERUSALEM (c. 315-386), "After this we make mention of heaven . . . of the Angels, Archangels, Virtues, Dominations, Principalities, Powers, Thrones, of the [Cherubim](#) with many-faces: in effect repeating that call of David's, "Magnify the Lord with me.' We make mention also of the Seraphim . . ." (*On the Mysteries 5.6, in A Select Library, 1955, Vol. 7, p. 154; Jurgens, Vol. 1, p. 362*).

BASIL THE GREAT (c. 330-379) states that "Accordingly the mode of [creation](#) of the heavenly powers is passed over in silence, for the [historian](#) of the cosmogony has revealed to us only the creation of things perceptible by sense . . . , glorify the Maker by whom all things were made, visible and invisible, principalities and powers, authorities, thrones, and dominions, and all other reasonable natures whom we cannot name . . ." (*On the Spirit 16.38, in A Select Library, Vol. 8, p. 23; Jurgens, Vol. 2, p. 17*).

For GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS (329-389), "The Angel, then, is called

spirit and fire; Spirit as being a creature of the intellectual sphere; Fire, as being of a purifying nature. But, relative to us, at least, we must reckon the Angelic Nature incorporeal, or at any rate as nearly so as possible. Do you see how we get dizzy over this subject, and cannot advance to any point, unless it be as far as this, that we know there are Angels and Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, Princedoms, Powers, Splendours, Ascents, Intelligent Powers or Intelligencies . . ." (*Oration 28.31, in A Select Library, Vol. 7, p. 300; Jurgens, Vol. 2, p. 31*).

[JOHN](#) CHRYSOSTOM (c. 347-407) states that "If visible things are sufficient to teach us the greatness of the power of the Creator, and if you then come to the invisible powers, and you strain your mind to the armies of Angels, Archangels, Virtues above, Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, Powers, Cherubim, Seraphim, what thought, what word can declare His indescribable magnificence?" (*Homilies on Genesis 4.5, in Jurgens, Vol. 2, p. 102*). And Augustine (354-430) writes "Certainly the Apostle says: 'Whether Thrones, whether Dominations, whether Principalities, whether Powers.' And therefore I do most firmly believe that in the heavenly splendors there are Thrones, Dominations, Principalities and Powers, and I believe with an unhesitating [faith](#) that they somehow differ among themselves. But . . . what they are and how they are different from each other I do not know." (*To Orosius against the Priscillianists and Origenist 11.14, in Jurgens, Vol. 3, p. 115*).

[See also: Archangels, [Cherubim](#) and Seraphim, Guardian Angel, Demons.]

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