

Explanation and Criticism of Augustine's Viewpoint on Angels

Maryam Zaeri Amirani¹
Enshallah Rahmati²
Mohsen Javadi³

(Received: 2019/10/12; Accepted: 2020/09/15)

Abstract

The current essay tackles Saint Augustine of Hippo's conception of the issue of angels; and is based on Augustine's book: *The City of God*, one of the most influential works of Augustine that contains a synopsis of the foundations of angelology in the era of Church Fathers. In his book, Augustine discusses such issues as the eternity and emergence of the angels and their spiritual and luminal creation; and claims that angels enjoy free will and therefore are divided into two groups: good angels and bad angels; and he focused his book on the former group (good angels). According to Augustine, angels do not have any role in creation and everything is an immediate creation of God; however, their knowledge based on the model of seminal creation influences the phenomena and the creation of other beings in the world. According to Augustine's belief that has its origin in Christianity, although angels have an influence on the life and orientation of mankind in some ways, they do not have a stature to mediate for the prosperity and happiness of mankind, and it is Jesus the Christ solely who is entitled and competent for such mediation.

Keywords: Augustine, Angels, Creation, *The City of God*.

1. PhD Candidate of Philosophy of Religion, Department of Law, Theology and Political Science, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. Email: Maryam.zaeri.a@gmail.com

2. Full Professor, Department of Islamic Philosophy and Thought, Faculty of Humanitarian Sciences, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran (Corresponding Author). E-mail: a-rahmati-phi@iaau.ac.ir

3. Full Professor, Department of Ethics, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Studies, University of Qom, Qom, Iran. Email: javadi-m@Qom.ac.ir

Introduction

The issue of angelology is one of the significant and interesting issues in the history of human thought, which preoccupied a host of thinkers and theologians; as a basis for several problems raised in various theological, philosophical and mystical systems. Some of the problems tackled under this category are closely interrelated with newly-emerging issues in the domain of philosophy of religion.

Augustine has offered a specific contribution to this issue in one of the most important titles in the field of Christian theology, and provided an explanation of the position of angels in the world. In Christian angelology, the discussions are centered on the belief in immortal, invisible and trans-physical entities which establish the relationship between God and humans. On the other hand, medieval interpretations consider the angels as mobile and immaterial entities whose nature, titles, functions and missions vary, overlap and resist straightforward depiction.

The questions outlined in *The City of God* by Augustine attempted to define and determine the nature of spirituality of angels in the Middle Ages; and focused on the creation and nature of angels and their resemblance to human beings; the invocation of angels by human beings; the influence of angels on the completion of Divine Providence; and angels as guides of man. In the following lines, we will discuss the creation and nature of angels.

Creation and Nature of Angels

The Scripture did not provide a clear answer to whether or when the angels were created; and it made an implicit mention of the angels under the metonym of "heaven" as in: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," or possibly referred to them as "light" (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 11. 9).

Regarding the creation of the heavens and the earth referred to in the Holy Scripture, Augustine generally interpreted it in spiritual and rational terms, claiming that the heavens had always been existent and that it does not refer to the material sphere (the sky) encircling the earth. Rather, he believed that the heavens, such a rational (intelligible) creature, is itself the angels; and he deemed them to be immortal entities who always enjoyed a holy and pious character. Thomas Aquinas later explained Augustine's belief by claiming that angels' rational thinking is not potential but actual (Aquinas 2006, 1583).

However, as to the concept of "light" or "luminosity", Augustine considered the angels as an extension of these concepts which are from the early creatures of God:

There is no question, then, that if the angels are included in the works of God during these six days, they are that light which was called "Day," and whose unity Scripture signalizes by calling that day not the "first day" but "one day." (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 11.9).

In another interpretation of the above verse, Augustine believed that spiritual and rational creation was spelled under the title of the creation of life, so that the essence of creation is construed in a way that includes all angels and all powers (Augustine, *Gen. ad lit.*, 2.8,16).

However, about the time of creation of angels, in one of the chapters of *The City of God*, Augustine points out that God has always been governing, and thus some creatures ever-existed. However, why these creatures were not granted eternity as God? (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 12.16).

The issue remained challenging for Augustine. On the one hand, he considered the angels an extension of the entities that ever-existed, while God was the eternal governor; and on the other hand, he could

not admit the premise that an entity that is equal to the Creator in terms of eternity, existed.

By "continuously existing", Augustine referred to a being that exists at all times. He did not comprehend time in the case of angels as a product of the movement of celestial bodies that create the day and night. Rather Augustine believed that the cause of time should be sought for in a changing movement, and if there is a movement among the angels, the requirement of which is the emergence of time, then they have existed at all times (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 12.15). Therefore, Augustine suggested that angels have always existed and due to their ever-changing being, they did not share divine eternity with God.

The Role of Angels in Creation

In this discussion, there is a noteworthy point that will help explain Augustine's view; that is, his extraordinary emphasis on the immediate and direct creation of all things by God. It seems that acknowledging the role of each mediator or cause can damage the Unity of Actions and the tenet of essential dependence of all creatures on God. As he argues:

The creation of the world by its Creator is handled and established by Him, through Him and in Him. Thus, it becomes clear that Divine Will is the first and foremost factor that gives rise to all appearances and material movements. (Augustine, *Trin.*, 3.4, 9).

According to Augustine, the creation of all things in the eternity took place based on archetypes; or in other words, *rationes seminales*⁴

4 . Augustine's theory of "*rationes seminales*", a Latin expression that can be translated into "seminal formulae" or "seminal causes", the roots of which can be traced back to Plotinus and finally to Stoicism, is a model for explication of the way of the creation of the creatures in the world. The idea on which a creature is fashioned is there in the Word of God, before it was realized in the fashioning of the creature. In fact, it is in the seminal formulae that the totality

which emerge and grow in the course of time. This creation included all causes and influences as well as the laws of the material world and nature; and its direct creator is God. Therefore, although angels are an intelligible world beyond the material world, they are not the cause of the material world. According to Gilson, seminal causes have the law of agency and growth that allows them to be the cause of the effects of the objects ... Creation was completed since its inception. All things were built simultaneously, because all the faculties whose effects were revealed later – had been inherent in the elements in advance; and those things that carry such preliminary faculties in the course of time, add nothing to the totality of what exists. (Gilson 1960, 207).

Thus, in Augustine's perception, the mediators of creation between God and objects are eliminated and only God is held as the Origin of Effects. And even though he considers other creatures than the angels, or even the essences of the things themselves, as the source of an effect; and that this effect is merely external, and no cause is deemed existent alongside with or higher than the causality of God. Finally, all these actions and effects in a seminal form are traced back to God.

In four consecutive chapters of *The City of God*, Augustine deals with this issue. In response to philosophers, like Plato who believed that all creatures stand on the chain of creatures after angels (or Gods as in the words of Platonists) have not been created by God who has given rise to the world, but by the angels with a permission and order from God. He writes: "And as for the angels, whom those Platonists prefer to call gods, although they do, so far as they are permitted and commissioned, aid in the production of the things around us, yet not on that account are we to call them creators, any more than we call

of beings was created based on God's knowledge and in time their essential seed becomes flourished. (Augustine, *Gen. ad lit.*, 2.8,16).

gardeners the creators of fruits and trees" (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 12.25).⁵

Therefore, angels are not mediators in the creation of any creature by God.

The Extent of Knowledge of the Angels

According to Saint Augustine, the angels have a first-hand knowledge of all world affairs even transitory and changeable events. Their knowledge is gained by gazing at the Word of God, through which the world has been created. The spiritual and intellectual capability of mind and thought of angels easily gives them the power to perceive many things at the same time (Augustine, *Gen. ad lit.*, 4.32, 49).

Augustine divides knowledge into two types: Morning knowledge and evening knowledge. Angels attain their knowledge through the Word and the latter is an eternal and unchanging knowledge; and according to Augustine, it is different from the partial knowledge of other creatures. In his interpretation of *The Book of Genesis*, he describes the knowledge of the angels as follows:

There is, of course, a very great difference between knowledge of a thing, whatever it may be, in the Word of God and knowledge of in its own specific nature. The former rightly belongs to the day, the latter to the evening... (Augustine, *Gen. ad lit.*, 4.23, 40).

One may say that, by this distinction, Augustine intended to distinguish between the knowledge of primal intention, and the knowledge of real situations, and since he believes that everything has been determined and necessitated in the Word of God, this knowledge to which he refers as the morning knowledge is infallible and decisive

5 . Perhaps the word "gods" as used in ancient Greek philosophy would have dissuaded Augustine not to allocate any existential influence for the angels because in this case there could be a threat of paganism.

versus the evening knowledge that belongs to the current existence of things.

Types of Angels

Although Augustine, in some cases based on his citation of the Holy Scripture, ascribes certain titles and terms to the angels; the study of his works and ideas does not lead to a conclusive view of the types and classification of angels. For example, in *The City of God*, he considers the angels as good gods who reside in sacred and heavenly houses; and in the *Book of Colossians*, he calls them seraphim, archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 8.24). Or in one of his sermons, after the classification of creatures into two groups of visible and invisible creatures—he considers seraphim, archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers as part of invisible heavenly creatures (Augustin 2015, 4).

According to Augustine, we have no decisive knowledge of the arrangement and organization of the community of angels; and what is more important than classification and arrangement of types of angels for Augustine is paying attention to two general classes of good and bad angels and the different roles and functions of each. He even refuses to decisively comment on whether the sun or moon or other stars are part of the society of angels; though several thinkers considered them as merely glowing and luminous bodies that lack any sensation or consciousness (Augustine 2006, 46).

Thus, we cannot find any particular idea or view on the difference of types of angels in the works of Augustine.

The City of God

By the term, *The City of God*, Augustine refers to the earthly church where all believers and saints assemble; an invisible and insensible

city that is at the same time real and existing in the current age. In the beginning of the Book XII of *The City of God*, Augustine states:

It has already, in the preceding book, been shown how the two cities originated among the angels... there are not four cities or societies—two, namely, of angels, and as many of men—but rather two in all, one composed of the good, the other of the wicked, angels or men indifferently. (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 12.1).

In fact, the result of concentration on the themes and issues discussed by Augustine in *The City of God* on the spiritual world of angels – is that the angels are real and true citizens of the City of God; and that the angels, being an example of divine guidance, love and accompany the good citizens in the earthly city (Chase 2002, 78).

However, in accordance with Augustine, the angels, despite their actuality and incorporeity, are changeable and have the possibility of error; so some of the humans may follow these angels and do wrong. If this distinction was not affected among the angels and if they lived under the perfect guidance of God, the humans and other creatures would have never erred or deviated from the true and natural path. He even explains the existence of some evils in the world, including natural or human evils, based on the presence and action of bad angels.

According to Augustine, we have cases which we can ascribe to the angels without a doubt; including the death of animals, death of newly-born infants, and the thing from which all such negative affairs originate, i.e., the hardening of hearts that dissuades humans from the path of God. (Augustine 2007, 648).

Before turning to the study of the role of angels as guides of the creatures, it is necessary to lay out the thought of Augustine as regards the problem of mediation of angels for guiding mankind.

Mediation of the Christ

As to human happiness and salvation, Augustine takes one principle as a presumption and basis to believe that one of the philosophies of divinity and incarnation of the Christ and perhaps the most important one of all is that: Man, as a creature who lies between the angels and animals, because he shares mortality with animals and intellect with the angels, thereby being an intellectual mortal animal; and as long as he is mortal, he is miserable; so he should seek for a mediator, who is both a human and a god, to lead mankind from moral misery into prosperous existence through his own prosperous mortality (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 9.15).

The Angels—due to their eternity and despite being prosperous—cannot be a mediator for miserable and mortal humans who are distant from them. Indeed, he admits that the angels, in different ways, contribute to the life of Christianity, but since they are diametrically different from humans in terms of eternity, prosperity and nature; they cannot be a mediator and they lack the competency for mediation between God and humans. He believes that it is only the Christ who, due to his dual nature, can be a mediator and facilitator of human salvation.

Augustine clearly refutes the idea of Neo-Platonists concerning the mediation of angels and in the *Confessions*, he points out:

The path drawn by the Neo-Platonists does not lead us to God. O' Lord! Whom could I find to reconcile me to you? Should I go courting the angels? ... What we needed was a mediator to stand between God and men who should be in one respect like God, in other kin to human beings. (Augustine, *conf*, 10.42.67)

Therefore, according to Augustine, it is only Jesus the Christ who can serve as mediator of human happiness and salvation. And having reached this point, we will allocate the next section to the discussion of the role of angels.

Guidance of the Creatures

In his works Augustine insists that God accomplishes several missions through the angels; and in his interpretation of the verses of the Holy Scripture where God ascribes certain actions to Himself and at the same time uses plural pronouns, he prefers to attribute these actions to the angels. For example, in *The City of God*, he writes of the descending of God:

“Go ye down and confound,” but, “Let us confound their speech”; showing that He so works by His servants, that they are themselves also fellow-laborers with God, as the apostle says, “For we are fellow-laborers with God” (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 16.5).

Thus, although according to Augustine, angels are not the main mediator of the happiness of mankind, they play a role in guiding mankind; and through them, God acts on the world. Hence, angels’ love for mankind is true; and eager for their own prosperity and equally to the salvation of mankind.

According to Augustine, angels aim and intend to invite the humans into their own city and society, and lay the ground for their nearness to the Lord; as they love humans and sincerely want to see humans prosperous.

The angels live a life dedicated to God and not to their worldly wishes, and invite humans to this type of life. Perhaps this is the main path of guidance and happiness of humans prepared by the angels; and thus, the destination shall be clear. As Augustine remarks.

The holy man and the holy angel, even when we are weary and anxious to stay with them and rest in them, set themselves to recruit our energies with the provision which they have received of God for us or for themselves; and then urge us thus refreshed to go on our way towards Him, in the enjoyment of whom we find our common happiness. (Augustine 2012, 23).

Thus, humans continuously benefit from the aids and inspirations of angels in their path towards God, and from their ascension onto Him; and even according to Augustine, the origin of many of our religious beliefs is not merely traced back to other humans, but to the angels.

Augustine interprets this verse of the Holy Scripture: “Let your needs to be known to God” (Phil 4:6) in the following words: Here we are not invited to convey our needs and desires to God, because he certainly knows them in advance and even, He knows the future. Thus, he continues to attribute one of the accepted interpretations of this verse to the angels, and argues that perhaps here we are supposed to reveal our needs to the angels, because they attend the presence of God; so, we in a way, present our needs to God and consult Him concerning them, which informs us of the divine orders that should be accomplished by us. (Augustine 2003, 192-93).

Criticism of Augustine’s View

In order to study the view of Augustine on the angels, we need to take his intellectual realm into account. Augustine was an early Middle Ages thinker; and for him the principles of Christianity lied on top of all beliefs. In fact, we should consider him as a theologian⁶ who leans more on rational methods to prove religious beliefs, than to traditional methods. Therefore, his method and theological ratiocination are, in a way, close to the theologians; and we cannot consider him a mature philosopher. He is essentially a medieval Christian bishop whose conception of the angels was influenced by Greek and Judaic doctrines; and in essence inspired by the Holy Scripture. Therefore, his conception was bounded by all the limitations of his sources of inspiration.

⁶ . Theologian is a term usually used to refer to Augustine and other medieval thinkers. Theologian is an expert in theological issues.

When Augustine turns to the question of the essential contingencies and the quality and time of creation; the philosophy of existence; hierarchy and classification; or the exact relationship of the angels with God and humans -- he either pays no heed to them, or wherever the Bible allows, he delivers answers and interpretations; and thus, he always asserts that Jesus the Christ is above all the creatures and powers, including the angels.

According to Augustine, a theologian who discusses the issue of creation, the world has been created based on the Divine Will, and not out of necessity. He considers the creation as a volitional act of God ensuing from His will. Thus, the creation is not assumed to satisfy a necessary need of God; but because God is essentially good, and the creation is an act of goodness, then creation happened (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 11.24).

If we believe that, from a philosophical perspective, there is no possible dimension in the necessity of being; and that God's action is necessary⁷, then the issuance of creatures will be out of necessity, not out of will -- which is a function of accident, rather than a function of its essence. Therefore, there are certain beings between creatures and God, and there is no mediation, including matter or tool or time. Nevertheless, the existence of these creatures, regarded as the effect of God, is necessary for something else and belongs to the cause. If we believe that the basis for the need of something to cause is its essential originated-ness (*ḥodūth e dha:ti*)⁸, then a being could be contingent and temporally-eternal at the same time (*ghadam*).

7 . Because the Necessary Being is knowledgeable of His Essence and it is via this divine essential knowledge that He becomes a Necessary Intellect and there is no contingent aspect in His Essence. In other words, His Existence requires and suffices to effuse other entities without any further intention extra to the Divine Essence itself.

8 .The contingent (*ḥodūth e dha:ti*) entity could be temporally eternal because the existence of a temporally eternal effect is preceded by its inexistence and

However, given the meaning of the “Divine Will” in Augustine’s thought, he cannot believe in essential contingency. It is the main reason why Augustine refuses to consider the angels as temporally eternal (ghadim). Creatures put the emphasis on their state of being creatures. It seems that there is a contradiction between the temporal eternity and the created-ness of the angels, because Augustine insists that, from their continuous existence, one should not conclude that they have not been created.

This contradiction also receives attention in the thoughts of some Islamic theologians, who consider originated-ness (ḥodūth) as the basis of the creature’s need for the creator. What is noteworthy here is the same solution offered by the philosophers, i.e., distinguishing between the essential and temporal originated-ness (ḥodūth). Angels have temporal eternity; and since they are still contingent beings, and have essential originated-ness at the same time (ḥodūth e dha:ti); they remain within the circle of God’s creatures. In their essence need for God, they are not self-subsistent. Augustine clearly pronounced his inability to explicate the issue stating: “If there were not always a creation subject regarding how a creature was created and if it were not rather co-eternal with its creator, I fear I might be accused of recklessly affirming what I know not, instead of teaching what I know.” (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 12.15).

However, the other outcome of Augustine’s view of creation is the problem of emergence of diversities. Several models and solutions

this posteriority is essential. The contingency of an essentially contingent being is not limited to a determinate second in time (contrary to the temporally contingent being), rather essential contingency is the case in all time and sempiternity (Avicenna, 2001: 542-43).

attempted to explain the creation of diverse entities by the unique God. Peripatetic philosophers employed the rule of Alvahed⁹, according to which any single cause can lead to a single effect only. Therefore, one cause cannot lead to many effects, and the first creature which was necessarily created by God – according to the rule of Alvahed – is the One, and the intellects or angels were issued from it in a hierarchical manner. Then, the diverse beings were gradually created in the world.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the rule of Alvahed has no necessity for Augustine, who attributes the creation of all diversities and even the creation of man directly to God: “God is an immaterial being with an immaterial soul, but there is a being which is unchangeable and has a changing soul because it is not a creature, but its soul is a creature.” (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 13.24).

He endorses the changeability of contingent beings; but one can still ask him why God, as a being in whom there is no change and contingency, directly proceeds to create the creatures?

However, for Augustine this issue is not of importance or relevance; and hence in his view, diverse things can be attributed to

9. The rule of (Alvahed) seeks to express the idea that Necessary Being is One and Unique from all perspectives. In other words, God is absolutely simple and indivisible; thus, from the Necessary Being nothing can be issued as the One but the one (Avicenna 1983, 403).

10 Of course, here we should not neglect an important point; what is underlined in philosophy in general and Islamic philosophy in particular as regards the influence and role of angels in creation, by no means leads to the denial of attribution of creation of all creatures to God. God has created the first creature, i.e. First Intellect, without the mediation and other creatures have received their existence from God by mediation because they all have an aspect or aspects of contingency and thus, they need God to come to existence *ex nihilo*. However, diverse forms of things are not issued from God as an unchangeable entity in a direct fashion.

God, and thus his intellectual system does not need to believe in the existential status and mediation of intellects or angels in creation of diversities; and the necessity of the existence the angels has not been taken into account from this perspective¹¹. According to him, the form from which the life of all living creatures originated, only belongs to the Unique God who, is the Creator of the world and angels, without God requiring any need to the angels (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 12.26).

In the doctrine of Augustine, all forms are created by the mediation of the Word, and all realities become known through it; the Word of God is an equivalent of divine knowledge, and the abode of “rationes seminales” or in other words, ideas and forms and preliminary semen of things, from which the creatures emerged within the course of time; meanwhile the Word has become incarnated outside the essence of God in the form of Jesus Christ and has an external existence. In the words of Augustine: “We believe, we maintain, we faithfully preach, that the Father begot the Word, that is, Wisdom, by which all things were made, the only-begotten Son, one as the Father is one...” (Augustine, *De Civ.*, 11.24).

Here two problems emerge. Firstly, if in an a priori way and a seminal form, divine knowledge includes all forms of the material world, then diversity and change should occur in the divine knowledge; the issue that can turn problematic as noted by Augustine:

But this really is problematic; ... but having these formulae mentally impressed upon it from God’s unchanging wisdom like so many intelligible utterances, and then transmitting them to lower level so that time-measured movements should be set up in time-measured

11. Although, as it previously mentioned, from other perspectives like accomplishment of divine missions and guidance of humans, they are of important role in the world.

things, whether for giving them specific form or for controlling them; how this could happen it is practically impossible to grasp. (Augustine, *Gen. ad lit.*, 1.17).

Secondly, if all creatures and phenomena in the world existed already in the Word, albeit in a seminal form, what is the role of nature in this context? When every effect is directly and initially a creature of God, all types of vertical and horizontal causality are denied on all creatures, including the angels and natural causes. Of course, Augustine does not explicitly deny the role of natural causes. What can be inferred from his works is that, for every creature except God, he accepts the efficient role in the domain of phenomena that leads to the efficiency of creatures and he deems God alone as the true cause. Thus, he believes in the influence of creatures and phenomena, including material and spiritual creatures, not in the causal relation between them; because causality refers to an existential relationship between the cause and effect; and Augustine considers God only to be the Cause that gives existence to its effects; and at the inception of creation, God created all creatures in a seminal form.

Thus, some commentators (e.g., Gilson 1960, 207) assess that Augustine was against natural causes. While if we pay attention to the function and role of angels or the chain of intellects in the creation of the world, we will recognize that these objections are relatively tackled. The vertical system of inventors, or intellects, serves as mediators in creation of diversities and effusion of form onto creatures and brings matter about to the world of sensible entities. The philosophy of existence of these intellects (angels) is this real mediation between the Unique and Hidden Essence of God and the world of contingent creatures and diverse beings.

However, regarding the mediatory role of angels, the Christ is an incarnated Word and in the Christian dogma, he is the means of

human salvation. It is only the Christ who has the real stature of mediation between humans and God.

According to Augustine, immortal spirits and angels, given their existential inconsistency with humans in view of their immortality, cannot be involved in creation, emanation or human salvation. On the one hand, though, God is unchangeable and eternal, and can¹² create the whole creatures including human and animal souls and sensory objects without mediation, and no objection whatsoever can exist against it; and the incarnation of the eternal and absolute God is possible either.

Basically if one takes into account the role of angels as mediators between God and His creatures, including mankind¹³; and the property of angels as creatures who own a super-human status and share the virtue of reason with humans; then angels' role, their potential guidance of humans and the necessity of their existence under the guardianship of their intellectual radiation—would be comprehensible, and in this case Christianity could have not been forced to adopt the notion of incarnation of God.

Nevertheless, Augustine's belief is not separable from the Christ and the main doctrine of the church, i.e., God's revelation in human form. According to Augustine, angels are the main inhabitants of the

12. This "can" refers to divine capability from philosophical point of view.

13. Of course, the role of angels in universe does not imply denial of the necessity of the existence of prophets and revelation; rather prophecy without angelology is not possible. Revelation is possible in the rational domain of existence and in fact, the angel of knowledge is the same angel of revelation. The prophet is the man who has a sacred intellect, and is connected with the angel of Active Intellect and receives every knowledge in an immediate way and without having any previous training. But this is not possible for all and only some people among humans reach the degree that allows them to have a sacred soul. The soul of prophet is of such a status that can be connected to the otherworld; but ordinary people need the prophet for receiving many of the divine inspirations and effusions and they are not able to receive a revelation.

City of God, and are good companions and friends of humans in this City. And despite the angels share similarities with humans and contribute to the Christian life, they are not sufficiently competent to mediate between God and mankind; and they differ fundamentally from humans; and share no similarity with humans in terms of nature. That said, Augustine believed that only the Christ is the mediator of salvation of mankind. Seemingly, a true mediator shall have a notion of mortality and miseries of human life, so to have the stature of mediation.

According to Augustine, man is an incarnated God; and as Jaspers suggests, the content of this belief is as follows:

God became man. God spoke as a man (though He might have done everything through the angels) because it was only in this way that human dignity could be preserved. It would have been cast away if God had let it appear as though He were unwilling to proclaim his Word to man through men. (Jaspers 1957, 84).

Certainly, the mediation of the Christ is different from angels' mediation; for indeed the Christ is not a mediator; he is united with God, he is a "God by God" (Augustine 2006, 222).

However, regarding the nature of angels, Augustine considers them homogenous with intellect and describes them as spiritual and immortal creatures. A significant issue here is that, although the ideas of Augustine suggest that the angels are spiritual and immortal creatures whose intellect is actual, and so they are unchangeable; the implication of segregating angels into good and bad ones leads us to admit that a degree of change in angels' nature is possible, even an essential change that may render the angels disliked and outcast from the City of God. This is because he believes that angels are not simple creatures and therefore the possibility of change and error exists in them.

Augustine, in this connection, is obviously influenced by the traditional doctrines of Christianity that believe in good and bad

factions of angels. Although the exact nature of bad angels is unknown and hence their distinction from jinn, demons and devils is not possible, it is still clear that some of the angels' insistence on obeying their will and interests and disobeying divine will leave them indulged into earthly life, akin to bad people.

At the same time, believing that angels are intelligible creatures with perfect immateriality, and admitting that an aspect of necessary will exists in them would rule out the possibility of violation divine orders and committing a wrongdoing. According to philosophical rules, thinking of the lack of simplicity, changeability and deficiency in immaterial creatures – who do not own a bodily aspect and have a perfect intellect – is contestable.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to reveal some significant principles of Augustine's angelology, who is one of the Church Fathers and an influential medieval theologian. Augustine believed that the angels, as intellectual creatures, are an extension of the notions of "luminosity" and "heavens" referred to in the Bible; and pointed out that the angels are the main inhabitants of the City of God. The angels, he claimed, remain informed of all the happenings across the universe owing to their access to the Divine Knowledge and; according to him, there are six levels of knowledge and understanding of the angels that led to the creation of the six classes of creatures and the ensuing diversity of creatures.

According to Augustine, angels have a transcendent status and can serve as a model for mankind leading humanity into the City of God. But since angels are different from humans in terms of eternity, happiness and existential status, they lack the sufficient competency to be mediators between God and man; and only the Christ possesses such competency. Of course, the explanation of the quality of redemption and salvation by the Christ and the quality of his guidance

to all humans, including the believers and nonbelievers, is among the issues that Augustine discussed without details.

Perhaps we can explore the character of Christ-Angels, instead of Christ-God from a different perspective of the domain of angels and the quality of their relationship with humans and at the same time, the place of Christ.

Moreover, according to Augustine, the God, who is not vulnerable to contingency and change in any way, creates the changeable creatures, and the angels do not have any role in such creation. While the belief in the chain of intellects, i.e., angels as mediators of existence, and the refusal of assigning the role of angel of Active Intellect to God, on the one hand, can help avoid this problem, what happens in the nature is dependent on the guidance and effusion of forms by intellects and all its causes do not necessarily exist in the Divine Knowledge, so the role of nature becomes less colorful.

Finally, if the Fathers of Church, particularly in the era of traditional medieval theorization, did not preoccupy themselves with Anglophobia¹⁴ and if the role of the angels in the universe was well explained, Christian theology would have averted a host of intellectual issues and problems.¹⁵

14. This angel-o-phobia is an effect of several factors including their misunderstanding of the angelology of Islamic philosophers. It is in this spirit that Lenz writes, "As it has been mentioned in the explanation of the view of Petrus Joannis Olivi, if the knowledge of angels of corporeal beings can be accepted, their discussions of the incorporeal intellects are thoroughly incorrect because as we can see in the works of Avicenna and many others – Muslim and atheist philosophers, they consider angels a type of gods (Lenz 2008, 30).

15 Of course, some scholastic of the thirteenth century had different views and beliefs about angels than their predecessors, particularly, about the role of them in the creation.

Sources

- Aquinas, Thomas. 2006. THE SUMMA THEOLOGICA. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province.
- Augustine 1871. The City of God. Edited by Marcus Dods. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark
- Augustine. 1991. The Trinity. Translated by Edmund Hill. New City Press.
- Augustine. 2003. Letters 100-155. Translated by Roland J. Teske. New City Press.
- Augustine. 2004. On Genesis/A Refutation of the Manichees. New City Press.
- Augustine. 2006. Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love “Foundations of Faith.” Translated by Albert Cook Outler. Relevant Books.
- Augustine. 2007. Expositions on the Psalms. Digital Psalms.
- Augustine. 2012. On Christian Doctrine. Translated by J. F. Shaw. Courier Corporation.
- Augustine. 2015. On the Creed: A Sermon to the Catechumens. Translated by Charles Lewis Cornish. Platform.
- Avicenna. 1983. Al-Shifa – Theology, edited by Ibrahim Madkur. Qom: Library of Ayatollah Mar‘ashi Najafi.
- Avicenna. 2001. Al-Najat. Edited by Mohammad Daneshpazhooh. Tehran: University of Tehran Press.
- Chase, Steven. 2002. Angelic Spirituality: Medieval Perspectives on the Ways of Angels. Paulist Press.
- Gilson, Etienne. 1960. The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine. Translated by L. E. M. Lynce. New York: Random House.
- Jaspers, Karl. 1957. Plato and Augustine. Harvest.
- Lenz, Martin. 2008. Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry: Their Function and Significance. Ashgate Studies in Medieval Philosophy. Routledge.