

# Preface

THE AIM OF THIS book is twofold: to identify the theological purpose underlying the depiction of angels at certain key points in the history of their use, and to explore how far that deeper theological rationale can be reappropriated for our own day.

This study first traces the progression of the angelic motif in the Hebrew Scriptures. By examining numerous pericopes in the Pentateuch, Major Prophets, and Daniel, I demonstrate that the metamorphosis of higher-order beings like the angel of the Lord, cherubim, and seraphim, is directly related to the writers' desire to enhance God's transcendence.

Next, I evaluate pseudo-Denys's hierarchical angelology, which prominent theologians like Luther and Calvin condemned as little more than a Neoplatonic scheme for accessing God through angels. I propose that not only has pseudo-Denys's Neoplatonism been overstated, but that his angelology is particularly noteworthy for the way it accentuates Christ's eucharistic immanence to the church.

Then I maintain that because assessments of Aquinas's angelology are often based upon the *Summa Theologiae*, his views are wrongly portrayed as overtly philosophical, rather than biblical and exegetical. In his lesser-known biblical commentaries, however, Aquinas pushes the semantic range of the word "angel" to include aspects of the physical world, which unveils an imaginative, Christocentric, and scriptural dimension of his angelology that is rarely acknowledged.

The conclusion considers how contemporary figures and movements relate to these three angelologies. Barth emphasizes the transcendent God, but unlike Hebrew Scripture, weakens connections between God and angels. New Ageism affirms the immanent angel, but unlike pseudo-Denys, does so at the expense of Christology and ecclesiology. Contemporary ecological discourse generally lacks Aquinas's appreciation for an

imaginative, supernatural approach to the world. Finally, I ground the angels' relationship to transcendence, immanence, and imagination in an experiential, eucharistic context.

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