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**Review of the PhD thesis by
OVIE VALENTINE AGHOGHOPHIA, B.A., M.A.D**

entitled:

CREATION AND FALL OF ANGELS.

**THE ANGELOLOGY OF AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO FACING THE MANICHAEANS
AND PLATONISTS**

written under supervision of Father Professor Tomasz Stępień, Ph.D.

Warsaw 2023, pp. 369

The list of abbreviations of works, which appears just after the Table of Contents, is not included in it. The introduction (before the Table of Contents) seems too exalted, as do the Acknowledgments.

In the second introduction, he once again discusses the purpose of the work, presents the state of research and areas still requiring investigation (too detailed polemics and analyses - there will be room for this later, in the main part of the dissertation). Next, the author presents the chapters:

Chapter I: Main Sources of Augustine's Theology on Angels (pp. 23-75).

Chapter II: Good and Unchangeable God — Creator of the Angels and the Universe (pp. 77-132)

Chapter III: The Sin of the Angels And the Nature of Evil (pp. 134-185)

Chapter IV: The Intellect and the Will of the Angels (pp. 186-234)

Chapter V: Angelic Guardianship and Demonic Assaults (pp. 235-304)

Methodological and formal assessment of the dissertation

In principle, the work has been prepared correctly in terms of methodology and form, although it lacks a clearly formulated thesis (there is only the goal). The introduction also lacks a presentation of the methodology used, although the analyses carried out in the work and the conclusions drawn are correct. The division into chapters is correct. The author skilfully uses footnotes and bibliographic references, in line with the reservations presented below. The language of the dissertation is usually correct and understandable (selected reservations below). The undoubted advantage of the work is that it is based on a rich source material, which proves a very good orientation in the writings of St. Augustine.

Despite the overall positive assessment of this aspect of the work, it is worth pointing out its imperfections and at least some of the shortcomings. I shall do it in no particular order.



1. Artificial volume stretching:

For example: "There are three creations according to the Manichaeans: the first creation, the second creation and the third creation." (p. 24)

2. Inconsistencies in literature citation and bibliographic records:

- "Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Wien 1865." – should be: (1864 -) or (1866 -) either the beginning of the work on a series or the first volume; there is no reason to give 1865;
- "Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina. Turnhout 1953"- there should be a range of years, as in PL;
- In the bibliographic record, after the year sometimes "." and sometimes "," is used;
- Bibliography usually includes a comma between the author's surname and first name, but not always;
- No period needed after "Translations of Selected Works by Augustine".

3. Typographical errors and awkward language structures - examples:

- "by profoundly delving into a myriad of theological subjects" (p. 2)
- "serves as a complex and comprehensive or extensive on the subject matter" (p. 2)
- "the possible purpose of the Angelic Fall" p. 162
- prof Tomasz Stępień (without the "." after prof.) (p. 3)
- Porphyry written in lower case (p.32)
- *Serm* written in lower case (p. 143, note 469)
- Lots of double spaces

4. Inconsistent use of quotations in the original languages:

- On p. 151, there are quotations in Greek and Latin that have not been translated into English, although there is no philological analysis to justify their use. A much better solution, which the author usually uses, is to provide a citation from the original in a footnote or possibly a *terminus technicus* in brackets.

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Substantive issues:

The work is original and source-based, and the author freely uses the wide range of Saint Augustine's thought, as well as the latest literature on the subject. He deals very well with subtle philosophical and theological issues, and he freely breaks down the topic of Augustine's angelology into basic factors. The structure of the work is clear and the topic has been sufficiently developed.

To describe the topics of individual chapters, I will use the author's own words: "The first chapter will focus on the main sources of Augustine's theology in relation to the subject matter—angels. How the problems posed by the Manichaeans, the Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophers' doctrines on the subject matter served as the background to his treatment of the problems." (p. 20); "In the second chapter, we address properly the creation of the angels." (p. 20); "In the third chapter, we also intend to discuss the nature of evil in general and in particular the sin of the angels." (p. 21); "In the fourth chapter we discuss angelic knowledge." (p. 21) "In the fifth chapter, we will treat the ministry of the holy angels beginning with the events of the Garden of Eden, and then all through the Old Testament, the New Testament, the activities of the angels in the church and the Final Judgment Day." (p. 22).

The work is extensive and comprehensively discusses many issues related to angelology (beginning with their creation, through downfall, and angels' intellect and will, as well as angelic guardianship); even going beyond the necessary issues/topic. I even feel a little bit overwhelmed with the multitude of sub-topics and plots. However, referring to the structure of the work, it is worth noting that it is difficult to understand why there are two separate introductions. As I have already mentioned, the introduction lacks methodological issues and direct information that the author used Augustine's entire works, as well as a specification whether the texts used were originals or translations. There is also no information - did the doctoral student gain knowledge about the teachings of the Manichaeans only and directly from Augustine or was it based on other researches. Instead, there is an overly detailed presentation of the state of research and literature on the subject.

The first chapter raises most doubts and reservations. I am aware that the general presentation of such extensive topics as the views of the Manichaeans, as well as Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy, is necessarily doomed to simplifications and shortcuts. However, I

consider the very idea of presenting the teachings of the Manichaeans and Neoplatonists as the sources of Augustine's angelology as too far-reaching, especially in connection with the topic of the entire dissertation. The author also points to the Holy Bible as a chronologically third source for Augustine's teaching, but completely ignores the tradition of the ancient Church. Therefore, we do not know whether Augustine completely ignores these sources and he is absolutely innovative, or whether the author of the dissertation did not mention such inspirations. In the subsection about the Bible, only Origen is mentioned (p. 65). In Chapter I, the problems are presented in the order in which they will be presented later in the work, but this is not stated anywhere. I wonder whether it would not be better to confront these views directly with Augustine's teaching on specific issues. In the second chapter, the doctoral student takes up the topic of polemics with the Manichaeans again.

Now, I would like to highlight particularly interesting fragments of the work, and then point out some of its weaknesses. The following issues deserve special attention: clear explanation of the problem of matter in creation of the angels; angels' perception (p. 129); time of the sin of angels (p. 156nn) with very interesting plot about foreknowledge of angels.

My reservations are raised by the following issues:

1. Chapter III lacks a proper summary of a complex content;
2. General and simplified statements are used, e.g. "Augustine's conception of God is conventional in every aspect." (p. 84). And then the author devotes several paragraphs to describing the attributes of God and Augustine's approach to them;
3. Straying too far from the main topic; for example, the description of the 6 days of creation (pp. 104ff), where we can find too detailed considerations and descriptions unrelated to the main subject;
4. The description of what is intellectual and how Augustine understands the intellect is chaotic (pp. 187-193);
5. On p. 230, the author wrote: "pathos which means perturbation". This is not the common definition and there is no further explanation why he defines it us such;
6. There are sub-points in the work in which the reliance on sources from Augustine is weaker, e.g. Divination as a Demonic Action (pp. 271-276). There are only a few references to two texts, and at the same time a lot of diverse content coming more from secondary studies. In my opinion, it can be doubted that this is actually an analysis of Augustine's views;



7. The author mentions Christ as the Mediator (p. 279ff), but presents the subject as if it had never appeared in the teaching of the Church before;
8. Chapter five is too descriptive and it would be better if some of the content was presented more synthetically. This would prove the maturity of the researcher's skills.

Finally, we must present the most interesting and valuable issue, and at the same time the one that raises the greatest doubts and reservations. Although it seems paradoxical.

The title "The Angelology of Augustine **facing** the Manichaeans and Platonists" suggests that the author will show how the Bishop of Hippo corrects the ideas that do not suit the main Christian doctrine. But he simultaneously points to the Manichaean and Platonic thought as the sources on an equal level with the Holy Scripture. The author nuances the sources well and shows the multi-faceted relationship with Manichaeism and Neoplatonism. At the same time, he discusses other angelological issues of Augustine, so he does more and somewhat differently than the title of the work suggests. A doubt arises as to whether in all chapters and subchapters the doctoral student is confronting the teachings of the Bishop of Hippo with the Manichaeans and the followers of Plato's teachings, or is he simply presenting the teachings of Augustine? It seems that the further we go, the fewer references to the Manichaeans and Neoplatonists there are. It is obvious that Augustine's attitude to the legacy of the Manichaeans and Neoplatonists is complex, as the doctoral student himself aptly demonstrates when he writes, among other things, about substances: "Drawing inspiration from various philosophical sources, including Manichaean and Platonic thought, the work's reflections on the primary substance were not confined to a singular influence. Rather, its ideas were shaped by a confluence of perspectives, which encompassed its belief in the existence of a formless substrate with the remarkable capacity to assume any conceivable form." (p. 310). However, this nuance is not reflected in the title of the dissertation, and there are no synthetic summaries in individual parts of the work, so that the reader can better understand the ambiguity of these influences and even more appreciate the work done by the author of the doctoral thesis.

Questions:

1. Which version regarding the creation of angels (from heaven or light) is more established in the teachings of Augustine and can they be treated as complementary?



2. Do vespertine and matutine knowledge appear only in Augustine and does it apply only to angels? Where could this idea come from?

Final conclusion

The discussed doctoral dissertation meets the requirements for doctoral dissertations. The selected topic is original and has been developed with due care, both in terms of the research methodology as well as the source material and studies used. The conclusions from the conducted research were generally presented in a transparent manner. The monograph is of a source nature and its author made an enormous effort to confront the views of St. Augustine with the trends of Manichaeism and Neoplatonism in many aspects and in different fields.

Without a doubt, the reviewed dissertation by Ovie Valentine Aghoghophia meets all the requirements (formal and substantive) that Polish state law places on doctoral theses and their authors. Therefore, **I evaluate it positively and put forward a proposal to admit Ovie Valentine Aghoghophia to further stages of the doctoral degree registration and conferment procedure.**

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