**THE ANGELIC HIERARCHIES**

**The Canonical Divisions**

**Malvin Artley 2005**

What follows is a listing and description of the Canonical divisions of the Army of the Voice (that is, according to the Christian tradition) along with some correspondences with what we are given in Alice A. Bailey’s *Esoteric Astrology*. These divisions of the angelic host were originally delineated in the work, *De Coelesti Hierarchia* (Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, ca. 5th century CE). This work was elaborated later by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica* (I.108, 13th century CE), in which he divided the angelic host into three hierarchies, each containing three orders, giving us a total of nine hosts in descending order.

**Highest Hierarchy, Order 1**: **Seraphim.** The Seraphim are the mightiest and highest of the Angelic beings as they are known to us at present. They are the closest to the throne of God and their mission is said to be to “circle the throne in perpetual adoration of the Lord”. Their powers of concentration are said to be absolute and it is their delight and honor to labor at their task. They are almost always identified with fire, which fire is the Flame of Love. The Seraphim are literally the Living Flames. The intensity of their adoration and pure love of God pour out of them as a flawless reflection of the divine Love that emanates from God. The intensity of the Light they radiate is said to be so intense that none of the other angelic hosts can even look upon them. Each Seraph is said to have 6 wings (Isaiah 6:1-3)—two of which cover the face of the Lord, two of which cover His feet and two of which He uses to fly. From Revelation (4:8): “And the 4 living creatures, each of them with 6 wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to sing ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty who was and is and is to come!” Satan was said to be a Seraphim before his fall.

**Order 2, Cherubim.** The Cherubim are said to be next in the order of the Heavenly Host. Next to the Seraphim, they are the most powerful of all the Angels, and some of the most awe-inspiring. It is said that their knowledge and power of illumination is so complete as to be utterly incomprehensible to the mortal mind. To behold them is to be struck blind by the intensity of their wisdom. They are the first of the Angels listed in the Bible, being posted outside the gates of the Garden of Eden to prevent anyone re-entering after the expulsion of Adam and Eve. Their chief task is said to be to sing the praises of God, but they also have the responsibility of driving the chariot of the Lord. They are also given the task of maintaining the records of Heaven and seeing to the details of order within all the lower of the Heavenly Host. They have the bodies of a winged bull, eagle or sphinx and the faces of lions or men, symbolizing their eternal vigilance and knowledge. They are also presented with peacock feathers bearing a host of eyes as an allusion to their all-seeing omniscience.

**Order 3, Thrones.** The Thrones complete the first trinity of the Angelic Hosts. They are also known as “The Wheels” or “Many-eyed ones”, because it is said that they are the wheels of the chariot of the Lord. “The 4 wheels had spokes, and their rims were full of eyes round about.” Theirs is the task of pondering the disposition of divine judgments, and they are thus the executors of the justice of the Lord. Like the other two Hosts in this first triad, the Thrones come the closest of all the Angels in to spiritual perfection, and they are direct emanations of the Light of God with mirror-like goodness. They dispense their justice with absolute objectivity and intense humility due to a complete lack of pride or ambition.

**Middle Hierarchy, Order 1: Dominations.** The Dominations begin the next trinity of the Angelic Hosts, whose task it is to oversee the order of the Cosmos. They are also called the Dominions or the Lords. According to Dionysus, they have the responsibility of regulating the activities of the lesser Angels. Through their efforts, the order of the cosmos is maintained. They handle all the minute details of cosmic life. It is the custom that Dominations wear green and gold and their symbols are the sword and scepter, denoting their lordship over all created things. They receive their instructions from Cherubim and Thrones.

**Order 2: Virtues.** The Virtues specifically reside over the elements of the world and the processes of celestial life. Thus, all of the stars and planets are kept in their courses and appointed times and progress. Their counterparts of Earth oversee the processes of Nature, marking and guiding every facet of natural life. The speculation is that the Virtues are in charge of miracles. They are also said to bestow the human heart with grace and valor, encouraging humans to turn always to the good and by enhancing the human will to endure hardship, suffering and to have always the strength to turn to God. As the Angels in charge of miracles, they are closely interlaced with the saints, though they give their instructions directly to the Powers.

**Order 3: Powers.** These are also known as the Potentates, the Authorities, the Dynamics and the Forces. These were supposedly the first Angels created by God, although this disagrees with the theory that all the Angels came into being in a single moment. The task of the Powers is to defeat the efforts of the demons toward overthrowing the world. They are thus the awesome defenders of the Cosmos against all evil, as well as still having the task of maintaining cosmic order. They are the guardians of the heavenly paths, policing the routes to and from Heaven and Earth. They assist each Soul to overcome temptation before it can do evil. Their symbol is the flaming sword.

**Lowest Hierarchy, Order 1: Principalities.** The Principalities are the highest order within the last trinity of the Angelic Hosts. They are also called Princedoms and Princes. This last trinity has the responsibility of overseeing humanity on Earth and they traditionally have the role of caretaker. The Principalities are the national, provincial and community Angels. They have direct charge over the guardian angels who function as the protectors over communities and humans. They are said to be the administrators and technical writers of this lowest trinity.

**Order 2: Archangels.** This is the most confusing of the Angelic orders because their name is used to describe all the other orders above them as well. They are among the few orders that are actually mentioned in the Old Testament. It is clear from the scriptural references that it is the primary duty of these Angels to carry out the Will of God specifically as it relates to humanity. They bring to the world the blessings of the Lord. Traditionally, there are 7 Archangels, although their name and function differs widely between sources. The best-known list is from Dionysus Areopagite: Gabriel (Moon), Raphael (Mercury), Michael (Sun), Uriel (Saturn), Chamuel/Samuel (Mars), Zadkiel (Jupiter), Jophiel/Anael/Hamiel/Lucifer (Venus). [Planetary correspondences are from Blavatsky, SD III, p. 253]. Even with Blavatsky there are different correspondences to the planets in her various mentions of them, being in the nature of blinds.

**Order 3: Angels.** The primary scope of their caretaker capacity is over humanity and the world. They are the messengers (Angel=Messenger), and they are beings of pure spirituality. They deliver the word of impending woe or good tidings, and this is done through both physical and through spiritual means. They are the ones who provide humanity with the omens and portents and who oversee the symbolism of life. They are also the keepers of records.

**Additional:**

* Each of the divisions of the Heavenly Host appears to be associated with one of the Creative Hierarchies. Indeed, they may even *be* those Hierarchies, either in fullness or in part.
* The term “Archangel” is a generic term in the common usage and it is used to denote each of the angelic Hosts by people who are not familiar with the Canon.
* A primary assumption made here is that all the angels of the canonical groups are beyond human consciousness and are thus self-conscious beings. The reason for that assumption is because they are the messengers for the divine and are thus intermediaries between the Godhead and humanity, although their work involves everything aside from humanity as well.
* The correspondence of the nine angelic Hosts with each of the Hierarchies above the human persona is “convenient”. The correspondences in the table below took what was given in the Canonic works and put that beside the 12 Creative Hierarchies as suggestive only – not to be taken as fact. There are other ways these could be examined, for sure, and this is but one. One could just as easily go “from the bottom up” with equally suggestive results. The Seraphim are placed with Pisces because they are the closest to the Godhead.

The rest works out rather suggestively, as seen below. The correspondences work out thus:

The Seraphim are connected with the highest of the unknown Hierarchies – that associated with Pisces/Ray III/Intelligent Substance. The remainder fall in line below that one. The lowest of the Angelic Hosts would thus be connected with The Human Hierarchy/Scorpio/The Word made Flesh. We therefore have the following correspondences:

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| **Hierarchy** | **Canonic Division** | **Astrological Sign/Name** | **Energy** | **Canonic****Activity/****Expression** | **Canonic Manifestation** | **Ray** |
| **Hierarchy 1** | Seraphim | Pisces | Intelligent Substance | Perpetual Adoration [Concentration] | Intensity of Adoration | Ray III |
| **Hierarchy 2** | Cherubim | Aries | Unity Through Effort | Power of Illumination | Eternal Vigilance | Ray IV |
| **Hierarchy 3** | Thrones | Taurus | Light Through Knowledge | Divine Justice | Pondering the Dispensations of God | Ray V |
| **Hierarchy 4** | Dominations | Gemini | Desire for Duality | Minute Detail of Cosmic Order | Attention to Order | Ray VI |
| **Hierarchy 5** | Virtues | Cancer | Mass Life | The Processes of Nature/ Overseeing the Elements | Regulators of Activity/ Miracles | Ray VII |
| **Hierarchy 6** | Powers | Leo/ Divine Flames | Supreme Energy | Authorities, Potentates, Forces | Defenders & Guardians | Ray I |
| **Hierarchy 7** | Principalities | Virgo/ Monads/ Divine Builders | Materializing Ideal | Caretakers of Humanity | National Devas, for example | Ray II |
| **Hierarchy 8** | Archangels | Libra/ Lesser Builders | Force of Mind | Transmitting the Will of God relative to Humanity | Greater Angels | Ray III |
| **Hierarchy 9** | Angels | Scorpio/Human monads/Initiates | The WORD Made Flesh/ The Human Monads | Messengers/Soul’s Records | Guardian angels | Ray IV |

**Source Material**:

Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*: <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/1108.htm>

Dionysius: <https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/areopagite_13_heavenly_hierarchy.htm>