

## Confounding

1

Angel-ologists didn't know what they were talking about, still they were prescient. This often happens. They had no idea they had predicted the behavior of subatomic particles.

The simplicity of angels confounded them. Angels, they reasoned, had no distinctive qualities. And yet millions, billions, perhaps an infinite number were thought to exist. There was a baffling blandness in this excess.

Many believed that angels, like electrons in an atom, could move between two places without passing through the intervening space, which calls the nature of space into question.

Most believed angels, being emanations, had no will of their own, though some had managed to rebel—or at least behave unpredictably.

It was thought that, as with photons, more than one angel could occupy the same space, and that, above all, threw *one* into confusion.

2

There came a time when everyone publicly congratulated themselves for having survived—but perhaps neither congratulation nor survival was to be taken literally. This was clearly no celebration. The mood was dark, even bitter. First there was the issue of what each had survived, which required a lengthy drop-down menu. Then came a list of those absent – about whom, perhaps, the less said the better, as the public and the dead could easily be confused.

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The angel lore in this poem is indebted to Eliot Weinberger's *Angels and Saints*.

## Angel

When I was almost a woman  
the men in the radio  
called someone I thought  
might be me  
an angel and a baby.  
I wasn't offended.  
What did I know?  
I knew I would have to  
empty myself to fit inside  
the songs. And I wanted  
to be in them as long as  
they lived, to be called to  
and never come. To be full of  
my lighter and lighter self,  
with literally no place to go  
  
as it is in heaven

## Where will you spend Eternity

How would you describe a God  
who *could* use magic  
but doesn't,

who prefers elaborate  
widgets and toggles,

seconds toppling  
one by one,

the careful recording  
of endless instructions?

2

We're riveted  
by the Hell Show.

The Devil plays a huckster.  
What will he come out with next?

Demons banished for dramatic effect

are brought back to lobby

for poisoning children.

We can't believe

they let us watch.

In fact, they make us.