Propter nostrum materialem intellectum: Angelic Bodies, Divine Accommodation, and Metaphysical Manuduction in Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas
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Like other theologians of the thirteenth century who commented on distinction 8 of Book II of Peter Lombard’s Sentences, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas grappled with a constellation of questions related to the relationship between angels and corporeality. They asked, for example, whether angels, inherently spiritual and incorporeal creatures, possess bodies and if so in what way and for what ultimate purpose. Furthermore, can embodied angels perform natural functions of life such as eating and the production of offspring? The proposed paper will consider how Albert and Thomas approached and answered such questions. We will see that both thinkers understand the angelic assumption and use of bodies within the general framework of God’s self-accommodation to the human being’s material and sensible mode of knowing. Indeed, we will argue that for both Albert and Thomas the corporeal functioning of angels depends on and is best understood according to what Rudi te Velde has called the “manuduction of metaphysics.”

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