Guardian Angels in Early Modern Jesuit Theology

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Guardian Angels—A Catholic Theme of the Post-Tridentine Era

The veneration of guardian angels has ancient roots within the Church, extending beyond the early modern era. Its foundations lie in the traditions of the ancient Church, and during the Middle Ages, it experienced rapid proliferation, reaching its zenith in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[1] However, Ulrich Lehner aptly notes that the formal recognition of the Feast of the Guardian Angels by Pope Paul V in 1608,[2] followed

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1 See Georges Bareille, "Angélologie d'après les Pères," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* [*DThC*], 15 vols. in 24 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1918–1950), 1:1192–222 (cols.), esp. 1216–219; Alfred Vacant, "Angélologie de saint Thomas d'Aquin et des scolastiques postérieurs," in *DThC*, 1:1228–248 (cols.), 1245–248; Joseph Duhr, "Anges," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire* [*DSAD*], 17 vols. in 21 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–1995), 1:580–625 (cols.), esp. 586–606; Christian Pesch, *Die heiligen Schutzengel: Ein Büchlein zur Belehrung und Erbauung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1917), 107–84; David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), esp. 161–66; Philippe Fauré, "Les anges gardiens (XIII^{e}–XV^{e} siècles): Modes et finalités d'une protection rapprochée," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales* (online) 8 (2001), journals.openedition.org/crm/380; Bianca Schnupp, *Schutzengel: Genealogie und Theologie einer religiösen Vorstellung vom Tobitbuch bis heute*, Neutestamentliche Entwürfe zur Theologie 9 (Tübingen: Francke, 2004).

2 This decision is also sometimes used as an argument by theologians; see Francesco Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19 (*De Angelis*), sec. 1, nos. 7–8 (vol. 2 [Douai, France, 1640], cols. 245b–46a). Theophil Raynaud reports that the Officium was introduced "urgente Ferdinando secundo" (at the insistence of Ferdinand II) and that it was written by Cardinal Bellarmine, as was the mass formular (*Angelus Sanctus Filiorum Dei Paedagogus*, in *Opera omnium*, vol. 9, *Hierologium exoticum* [Lyon, 1665], 765–84, at 767).

by its confirmation by Clement X a few decades later in 1670, signifies that this devotional practice can be considered distinctly characteristic of post-Tridentine Catholicism.

The Jesuit order emerged as a pivotal force in the promotion of the veneration of guardian angels.[3] Lehner, in this regard, highlights the significance of the *Trattato dell'Angelo Custode* authored by the Italian Jesuit Francesco Albertini (1552–1619), published in Rome in 1612.[4] Albertini also wrote important works on Scholastic theology and was closely associated with Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621). Furthermore, Jeremias Drexel (1581–1638), a friar born in Augsburg and a prominent preacher of his time, adds to the Jesuit influence by contributing to the literature on guardian angels.[5] Prior to Albertini and Drexel, spiritual texts on guardian angels were authored by Aloysius of Gonzaga (1568–1591) and the aforementioned Cardinal Bellarmine. These early contributions laid the groundwork for subsequent treatises by Jesuit scholars.

While the veneration of guardian angels flourished within spiritual contexts, academic theology also exhibited a keen interest in this subject, maintaining continuity with medieval Scholasticism.[6] In their discussions

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3 Ulrich L. Lehner, *The Inner Life of Catholic Reform: From the Council of Trent to the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 138, with reference to Trevor Johnson, "Guardian Angels and the Society of Jesus," in *Angels in the Early Modern World*, ed. Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 194–213.

4 See Carlos Sommervogel, "Albertini, François," in *DThC*, 1:675–76 (cols.). Albertini's treatise, together with other seventeenth and eighteenth century texts on guardian angels, has been the subject of a new edition: *Gli Angeli Custodi: Storia e figura dell'"amico vero,"* ed. Carlo Ossola, with Nikolai Leskov (Turin: Einaudi, 2004), 165–224. For the content, see Bernard Dompnier, "Des anges et des signes: Littérature de dévotion à l'ange gardien et image des anges au XVII[e] siècle," in *Les signes de Dieu aux XVI[e] et XVII[e] siècles*, ed. Geneviève Demerson and Bernard Dompnier, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences humaines de l'Université Blaise-Pascal, n.s., 41 (Clermont-Ferrand: Faculté des Lettres et Sciences humaines de l'Université Blaise Pascal 1993), 212–23, and Johnson, "Guardian Angels," 197–200. According to Josephine von Henneberg, "Albertini's treatise was unique. Its descriptions were so charmingly vivid and full of so many surprising details that the modern reader is led to believe that its origins were in sermons presented to the community, at a time when preaching was used to strengthen the belief of the faithful and grip their emotions. The Jesuit's angels are pure spirits, but humanized and brought close to the human condition" ("Saint Francesca Romana and Guardian Angels in Baroque," *Religion and the Arts* 2 [1998]: 467–87, at 473).

5 Hieremias Drexel, *Horologium auxiliaris tutelaris Angeli* (Munich, 1621).

6 In *Sentences* II, dist. 11, chap. 1, Peter Lombard speaks about the guardian angels and thus defines the place where his commentators also took up the topic (3rd ed., vol. 1 [Grottaferrata: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1971], 381). When, in the post-Reformation

on the treatise of angels—whether as standalone works or integrated into more extensive dogmatic treatises—numerous early modern theologians dedicated chapters to the exploration of guardian angels. Notably, these scholarly investigations rarely made explicit references to primarily spiritually oriented writings. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the themes deliberated by Scholastic theologians also found resonance in these spiritually focused texts.[7]

In the subsequent paragraphs, I will draw upon a representative selection of texts authored by Jesuit theologians from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While acknowledging the limitation of presenting an exhaustive overview, this selection aims to elucidate the aspects developed in chapters on guardian angels, typically situated toward the conclusion of the treatise *De Angelis*. Beyond generally influential authors of the Jesuit School—especially Francisco Suárez (1548–1617), Luis de Molina (1535–1600), Gregory of Valencia (1549–1603), and Gabriel Vázquez (1549–1604)—particular attention is directed to the nuanced discussions within the theology course of the Italian Francesco Amico (1578–1651).[8]

The Universal Mission[9] of Guardian Angels

Catholic theologians of the early modern period universally upheld the

period, Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* [*ST*] replaced Lombard's *Sentences* as the textbook in most theological schools, question 113 in *ST* I, which divides into eight articles dedicated to the guardian angels in the context of discussing the relationship of angels to the corporeal world, became the key reference text.

7 The reference to Albertini's writing by Adam Tanner in *Universa theologia scholastica*, disp. 5 (*De angelis*), q. 6, dub. 8, no. 23 (vol. 1 [Ingolstadt, 1626], col. 1592), is rather an exception. Overall, it is clear that a boundary was drawn between the Scholastic (academic) treatment of theological questions and their catechetical mediation or spiritual reflection. However, exegetical works such as the well-known scriptural interpretations of the Jesuits Juan Maldonado and Cornelis Cornelissen van den Stehen (Cornelius a Lapide) were cited without reservation.

8 Cf. Carlos Sommervogel, "Amico, François," in *DThC*, 1:1112–113 (cols.).

9 When speaking of the "mission" of the guardian angels into the world, this concept must be distinguished from that of the mission of divine persons: Angels, Gabriel Vázquez explains, are sent by divine command (*secundum imperium*), but the mission of the Son or the Spirit is merely the extension of an inner-divine procession into the created world, and to be understood *secundum substantiam*; *Disputationes in primam partem S. Thomae*, disp. 244, chap. 1 (vol. 2 [Lyon, 1631], col. 531a); cf. Diego Alarcon, *Prima pars Theologiae Scholasticae*, tr. 6 (*De angelis*), disp. 10, prooem. ([Lyon, 1633], col. 632a). In the case of the angels, Aquinas (*ST* I, q. 112, a. 2, ad 1) distinguishes between the mission directed into the visible world (*missio externa*) and the mission within the angelic world (*missio interna*, the enlightenment of a lower angel by a higher angel): Tanner,

existence of guardian angels as an essential tenet of faith.[10] In the context of denominational disputes with Protestantism, the contentious point was not the existence of these celestial beings per se, but rather the assertion of individual guardian angels for each person. Jean Calvin (1509–1564) consistently emerges as an opponent on this issue, as evident in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, where he articulates reservations about this doctrine.[11] Although Catholic authors recognize the absence of a formal Church definition on this matter, Vázquez captures the prevailing sentiment by characterizing the rejection of individual guardian angels as "theologically audacious."[12]

In defense of Catholic doctrine, beyond biblical evidence,[13] proponents reference the consensus of the Fathers and Scholastic theologians and draw parallels from the pagan world.[14] Various rational arguments are articulated in support of this belief. The orchestration of the physical world through angelic intervention aligns with the broader principle of God's providence, encompassing secondary causes and guidance of lower beings through the higher.[15] Additionally, a crucial distinction is made between the natural preservation of all creatures and the specific support

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Universa theologia scholastica, disp. 6, q. 6, dub. 8, no. 3 (col. 1586), with reference to Francisco Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 9, no. 17 (*Opera omnia*, vol. 2 [Paris, 1886], cols. 680b–81a).

10 See the qualification as a proposition *de fide* in Luis de Molina, *Commentaria in primam D. Thomae partem*, q. 113, disp. unica ([Lyon, 1622], col. 648D); Jean Prévost (Ioannes Praepositus), *Commentaria in primam partem S. Thomae*, q. 64, dub. 3, no. 8 ([Douai, France, 1632], col. 627a); and others.

11 See Jean Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis* (1559), bk. 1, chap. 14, no. 7 (*Opera selecta* III, ed. Peter Barth and Wilhelm Niesel, 2nd ed. [Munich, 1957], 159–160).

12 See Vázquez, *Disputationes in primam partem*, disp. 245, chap. 1, no. 2: "communis sententia Patrum et Scholasticorum, quam sine gravi temeritatis nota negare non licet"—"the common opinion of the Fathers and the Scholastics, which one may not deny without incurring the charge of grave rashness" (col. 533b); Gregorius de Valentia, *Commentarii theologici*, disp. 8 (*De angelis*), q. 6, punct. 3 (vol. 1 [Ingolstadt 1603], cols. 1568D–569A); Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 17, no. 8 (col. 749a); many others, such as Agustin de Herrera, *Tractatus de angelis*, q. 20, sec. 5, no. 57 ([Alcalá, 1675], 496).

13 Scriptural references include Gen 48, Dan 10, various passages in the Psalms, Matt 18 and Acts 12. See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 1, no. 6 (col. 245a–b).

14 One can recall the *daimónion* to which Socrates refers in Plato's *Apology*; cf., with further evidence, Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 1, no. 9 (col. 246a–b); Dionysius Petavius (also known as Denis Pétau), *De angelis*, bk. 2, chap. 7, nos. 1–2 (*Dogmata theologica*, vol. 4 [Paris, 1866], cols. 28b–30a).

15 See Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 17, no. 1: "per superiora gubernat inferiora" (col. 746b). Silvester Mauro raises a subtle objection: it could be inappropriate for humans, who are equal in nature, to be protected by angels, who, according to Aquinas's teaching,

provided to human beings on their journey to supernatural salvation.[16] In this context, it becomes apparent that a special requirement of justice dictates that, when God allows temptations by demons, he compensates for humanity by providing assistance through angels.[17] Calvin's argument, positing that, based on traditional doctrine, God's intervention for humans could be reduced to the work of a singular angel, can easily be rejected.[18]

The notion of a single guardian angel concurrently overseeing the well-being of multiple individuals is typically deemed inappropriate, if not outright impossible. The question of whether an angel is confined to a specific location in its actions comes into play here.[19] Rodrigo de Arriaga (1592–1667) refuses the idea that an individual could be attended by different guardian angels sequentially, contending that this scenario would be less favorable than continuous care by a single angel. The rationale

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differ in kind; see *Opus theologicum*, tr. 13, q. 207, no. 9 (vol. 1 [Rome 1687], col. 610a). However, the argument is quickly rejected with reference to God's providence.

16 See Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 17, no. 3 (col. 747a).

17 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, prol. (col. 244a); sec. 1, no. 11 (cols. 246b–47a). The argument from providence is taken up by many authors with different emphases. Cf., e.g., Georges de Rhodes, *Theologia scholastica*, disp. 2 (*De angelis*), q. 4, sec. 2: "Si autem praesunt Angeli naturae irrationali, movent caelos, et sidera, elementa regunt, bruta et plantas curant, quanto magis decuit, ut cohaeredes et regni socios homines regerent, propter quos universa haec visibilis creatura condita est, statque in gradu suo, ut hominibus famuletur"—" But if the angels preside over irrational nature, move the heavens and the stars, govern the elements, and care for brute animals and plants, how much more fitting it was that they should govern human beings, who are co-heirs and companions in the kingdom, for whose sake all this visible creation was made, and remains in its proper order so as to serve humankind" (vol. 1 [Lyon, 1676], col. 278b); Martin de Esparza, *Quaestiones disputandae de angelis*, q. 32, a. 6, ad 2: "Deus nihil praestat mediantibus causis secundis, vel in ordine ad mores, vel in ordine ad effectus pure physicos, propter indigentiam eius adiutorii, sed ut servetur in rebus ordo congruens naturis ipsarum, utque ostendat divitias infinitae suae potestatis, dum alia facit participare vires et efficaciam ipsius"—"God grants nothing through the mediation of secondary causes—whether in matter of morals or in pure physical effects—because he is in need of their assistance, but so that an order consonant with the nature of things might be preserved, and so that he might show forth the riches of his infinite power by allowing other beings to participate in his strength and efficacy" ([Rome, 1659], 578).

18 See Gregory of Valentia, *Commentarii theologici*, disp. 8, q. 6, punct. 3 (col. 1581A): The assumption of a special guardian angel does not restrict God's care for human beings, but rather expands it. Cristóbal de Ortega provides various scriptural evidence for the possibility that other angels also look after an individual protected by a special guardian angel; see *Theologia controversiarum dogmaticarum et scholasticarum*, contr. 8 (*De angelis*), disp. 6, q. 2, cert. 1, no. 3 (vol. 2 [Lyon, 1680], cols. 287b–88a).

19 E.g., Amico notes that an angel cannot intervene in Europe and Asia at the same time (*Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 1, no. 4 [cols. 244b–45a]).

behind this is that the latter possesses a more precise knowledge of the actions of the one under his protection and can consequently offer more effective support.[20] Similarly, Arriaga dismisses the inquiry into whether the same guardian angel could assume responsibility for different individuals in succession. This frequently debated problem is intricately linked to speculation about the relationship between the number of angels sent into the world and the human population. Some argue that the multitude of angels is so extensive that a sequential mission of guardian angels is unnecessary,[21] while others reach the opposite conclusion (supported by further arguments)[22] or simply deem the question unanswerable due to insufficient information from reason and revelation.[23]

Regarding the commencement and termination of angelic protection in human life, early modern theology recognizes three distinct theories, each with historical roots and two persisting with contemporary support. The first perspective, drawing on the authority of significant Scholastics from the thirteenth century, including the young Thomas Aquinas,[24] posits that the guardian angel initiates its protective activity at the moment of human conception. At this point, a person embarks on their earthly pilgrimage, facing potential dangers from demons in the womb, against which the angel provides assistance. In contrast, the second viewpoint associated with Origen,[25] which posits that angelic protection commences at the time of baptism, no longer garners widespread support. This contradicts the conviction that God extends angelic protection to all individuals, including unbaptized and unbelievers.[26] Among early modern Jesuits, the

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20 Rodrigo de Arriaga, *Disputationes in primam partem D. Thomae*, disp. 22 (*De angelis*), sec. 8, subsec. 1, no. 45 (vol. 2 [Antwerp, 1643], col. 240b).

21 See Molina, *Commentaria in primam*, q. 113, disp. unica (col. 649bA); Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 1, no. 4 (col. 244b); Tanner, *Universa theologia scholastica*, disp. 5, q. 6, dub. 8, no. 21 (col. 1591).

22 See Valentia, *Commentarii theologici*, disp. 8, q. 6, punct. 3 (col. 1570B–C); Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 17, no. 11 (col. 750a–b); Diego Granado, *Commentarii in Summam Theologiae S. Thomae in primam partem*, disp. 5 (*De angelis*), sec. 4, no. 15 (vol. 3 [Pont-à-Mousson, 1624], 550). In medieval Scholasticism, this view is supported by Peter Lombard, *Sentences* II, dist. 11, chap. 1, nos. 3–4 (380–82).

23 See Francisco de Lugo, *Theologia scholastica in primam partem D. Thomae*, disp. 22, chap. 2, no. 10 ([Lyon, 1647], col. 1077a–b).

24 Amico points to the *Summa Halensis*, Albertus Magnus, Bonaventure and Aquinas, *In* II *sent*., dist. 11, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3 (*Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 2, no. 19 [col. 248b]).

25 St. Basil's name is associated with the similar view that only believers have a guardian angel; see evidence from the works of both Fathers in Petavius, *De angelis*, bk. 2, chap. 7, nos. 4–5 (cols. 30a–31b).

26 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 2, no. 25 (col. 249a–b).

prevailing opinion is the third theory: humans are safeguarded by their angels from the moment of birth.[27] This stance finds support in the belief that the fetus, before birth, remains connected to the mother, akin to a fruit still hanging on the tree, invoking the oft-quoted comparison from the *Summa theologiae* [*ST*].[28] Consequently, it is inferred that the unborn child receives protection from the guardian angel of the mother.[29] While the prevailing sentiment among seventeenth-century authors leans toward the belief that angelic protection begins at birth, many acknowledge the possibility of supporting the first view.[30] For some authors, a definitive resolution of this issue seems elusive.[31] Conversely, theologians agree that the activity of the guardian angel ends as soon as a person has reached his or her final state in the afterlife. There is no longer any danger in heaven; in hell, there is no hope of reaching the supernatural goal. Although people in the purgatory group no longer need protection in a proper sense, the guardian angel may continue to offer solace and guard against demonic apparitions.[32]

The rejection of the notion that only the baptized or righteous possess a guardian angel leads to the conclusion that even hardened sinners are not abandoned by their celestial protectors.[33] The alternative perspective implies a denial of divine attention, a stance deemed untenable for anyone in this mortal existence. The enduring presence of the guardian angel thus represents sufficient grace that is always available to all *viatores*. It can

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27 E.g., Amico describes this view as "probable" (*Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 2, no. 19 [col. 248b]); Peter Lombard, *Sentences* II, dist. 11, chap. 1, no. 1 (380; in the quotation from Jerome); Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 113, a. 5 (against his earlier view).

28 See Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 113, a. 5, ad 3.

29 See Molina, *Commentaria in primam*, q. 113, disp. unica (col. 649aE–bA); Valentia, *Commentarii theologici*, disp. 8, q. 6, punct. 3 (col. 1573C–D); Tomasz Młodzianowski, *Praelectiones theologicae*, tr. 1 (*De angelis*), q. 2 (vol. 1 [Mainz-Danzig, 1682], col. 97a); Ortega, *Theologia controversiarum*, contr. 8, disp. 6, q. 2, cert. 1, no. 6 (col. 288b); Carlos de Echeverria, *Tractatus de angelis*, chap. 2, nos. 11–12 ([Alcalá, 1697], 356).

30 See Prévost, *Commentaria in primam partem*, q. 64, dub. 3, no. 10 (col. 628b).

31 Alarcon, *Prima pars Theologiae Scholasticae*, tr. 6, disp. 10, chap. 2, no. 4 (col. 633a–b); de Lugo, *Theologia scholastica in primam partem*, disp. 22, chap. 2, no. 8 (col. 1077a).

32 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 2, nos. 26–27 (col. 249b). This is supported by Ortega, who even sees an accompaniment by the angel at the Last Judgment as probable (*Theologia controversiarum*, contr. 8, disp. 6, q. 2, cert. 1, no. 7 [col. 289a]).

33 See J. Duhr, "Anges": "'No,' the enthusiastic Cardinal Aguirre would later exclaim, 'angels are not swallows that fly away in winter'" (*DSAD*, 1;580–625 [cols.], at 587, citing José Saenz d'Aguirre, Theologia S. Anselmi, disp. 125, sec. 4 [vol. 3 (Salamanque, 1685), col. 457]). Suárez remarks that, in a similar way, the demon does not abandon a person performing works of justice (*De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 17, no. 15 [col. 752a]).

also be noted that God's chosen ones benefit from the work of the angels in favor of the wicked insofar as it prevents greater evils.[34] According to Amico, if "abandonment of the sinner" is understood only to mean that God allows a person to sin despite the presence of the guardian angel, there is nothing wrong with this way of speaking.[35]

Thus, the work of guardian angels not only encompasses the entire lifespan of the earthly pilgrim but also extends to all people, without exception, righteous and sinners, predestined and nonpredestined. Even the Antichrist, as Aquinas teaches, will have a guardian angel.[36]

A separate inquiry emerges regarding whether figures such as Adam before the Fall, the incarnated Christ, and Mary, the Mother of God, also had guardian angels. In the case of Adam, there does not seem to be a necessity, provided that he was sufficiently protected by primordial righteousness and that there were no external dangers to the body or soul in Paradise. Like Thomas Aquinas[37] or Suárez[38] before him, Amico does not consider these arguments to be sufficient: Adam needed supernatural protection from the very beginning because demonic temptations were possible due to the fall of the angels.[39] In addition, there was a need for human freedom to be motivated to do good and to be kept from sinning—the recourse to the help of angels arises not least from man's awareness of the uncertain nature of finite freedom.[40]

Amico extends this discussion to ponder whether humans would

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34 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 2, no. 68 (col. 258a); Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 17, no. 12 (col. 750b–51a).

35 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 2, no. 31 (col. 250b). This is also taught by Aquinas in *ST* I, q. 113, a. 6, corp.

36 See Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 113, a. 4, ad 3. On the inclusion of all men in the work of the guardian angels, see Molina, *Commentaria in primam*, q. 113, disp. unica (col. 649bA); Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 17, no. 14 (col. 751b); Arriaga, *Disputationes in primam partem*, disp. 22 , sec. 8, subsec. 1, no. 50 (cols. 241b–42a); de Lugo, *Theologia scholastica in primam partem*, disp. 22, chap. 2, no. 4 (col. 1076b); Amico, *Cursus theologicus*, disp. 19, sec. 5, nos. 65–71 (cols. 256b–57b). Amico mentions earlier that angels do not need other angels as their protectors (nos. 51–52 [col. 254b]). One reason is that, unlike humans, they do not have a long road to achieving the supernatural goal.

37 See Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 113, a. 4, ad 2.

38 See Suárez, *De angelis*, l. 6, chap. 17, no. 20 (cols. 753b–54a).

39 See Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 113, a. 4, ad 2.

40 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 5, nos. 72–74 (cols. 257b–58a); ibid. no. 74 (col. 258a): "eo quod homo non fuisset in eo statu impeccabilis, sed potuisset, etiam non suggerente diabolo, pro sua tantum innata libertate peccare"—"inasmuch as man would not have been impeccable in that state, but could have sinned even without the suggestion of the devil, solely by his innate freedom." See also Esparza, *Quaestiones*

require angelic assistance in the hypothetical state of pure nature (*status naturae purae)*.[41] Although the negative response is considered, including the argument that supernatural protection is unnecessary without a supernatural goal for human life,[42] Amico finds it unconvincing. The Jesuit posits that, under conditions lacking grace, angelic protection would have pursued a different goal than in the present order of salvation: it would not have been aimed at achieving supernatural beatitude, but possibly only natural. However, ultimately, "one argument" remains valid, according to which, in the hierarchically ordered cosmos, lower beings are dependent on the higher[43]—even assuming that the angels were not elevated to the supernatural order either.

The assumption that Christ, as a human being, could have had a guardian angel on his side is generally dismissed by theologians.[44] Within the hypostatic union, where his human nature is directly protected by the divine Word, the arguments asserting the existence of guardian angels for other individuals hold no relevance.[45] As the head of the angels, Christ did not need their support; rather, the Gospels emphasize the worship and service rendered to him by the celestial beings.[46]

Similar skepticism surrounds the question of whether Mary had a personal guardian angel. Some argue negatively, asserting that Mary, under

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disputandae de angelis, q. 32, a. 6 ad 7 (581–82); Echeverria, *Tractatus de angelis*, disp. 15, chap. 2, no. 9 (355).

41 See the detailed treatment in Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 5, nos. 75–91 (cols. 258a–61a). The Jesuit notes that he had not yet found this question dealt with by any other author (no. 75 [col. 258a]).

42 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 5, no. 76 (col. 258a–b).

43 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 5, nos. 80–81 (col. 259a–b). Arriaga rather supports the negative answer: "Si homines non fuissent ad finem supernaturalem elevati, forte nec indiguissent Angelorum custodia, nec illam de facto habuissent"—"If human beings had not been elevated to a supernatural end, perhaps they would not have needed the guardianship of angels, nor in fact would they have received it" (*Disputationes in primam partem*, disp. 22, sec. 8, subsec. 1, no. 44 [col. 240b]). He substantiates his argument by pointing to the absence of an authentic concept of guardian angels within the philosophical frameworks of pagan thinkers.

44 See, e.g., Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 17, no. 21 (col. 754a–b), following Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 113, a. 4, ad 1.

45 See Martin Becanus, *Summa theologiae scholasticae*, q. 11 (*De angelis*), chap. 6, nos. 8–9 ([Paris, 1666], cols. 178b–79a).

46 Amico identifies Bishop Alonso Fernández de Madrigal (Alphonsus Tostatus, 1400/10–1455) as a proponent of the opposing viewpoint in his renowned commentary on Matthew (*Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 5, no. 56 [col. 255a–b]). Amico acknowledges the puzzling nature of the Mount of Olives scene, where Christ is strengthened by an angel (Luke 22:43).

the direct protection of God, required salvation from sin by divine intervention alone. The magnitude of Mary's grace is considered so profound that associating her with a guardian angel is deemed potentially undermining her primacy. Thus, there are theologians who, even in the case of Mary, want to speak only of the "company" or "service" of angels but not of "protection."[47] However, the majority of Jesuits express the opposite view.[48] Apart from biblical infancy narratives, the universal character of angelic work in the created world is cited. If Mary was entrusted to the protection of the human disciple John, then, Amico argues, one may all the more affirm her protection by an angel who kept every opportunity to sin away from her and instructed her.[49] Amico rejects the comparison with Christ on this point, noting his distinctive condition of existence due to the hypostatic union. In this context, Mary aligns more with other saints, whose angelic protection is undisputed.

With the assumption that good angels support all individuals (excluding the God-Man Christ) to protect against demonic influences, a parallel question arises: must every person also contend with the existence of an evil angel personally assigned to them? Amico, delving into this issue, deems an affirmative answer "undoubtedly more probable." Scriptural evidence (such as 2 Cor. 12:17) and references to tradition,[50] alongside the rational argument that the devil imitates divine protection for his goals and uses the spirits subject to him, contribute to this assertion. This is something God could allow.[51]

Guardian Angels for Public Officials and Communities

According to early modern theologians, the role of guardian angels extended beyond individual care to encompass public figures and communities. It was widely believed that public figures enjoyed the protection of distinct angels compared to those assigned to them in private capacities. This is exemplified by persons crucial to the history of salvation, with

47 Examples from the Jesuit school are Młodzianowski, *Praelectiones theologicae*, tr. 1, q. 2 (cols. 97b–98a), and Ortega, *Theologia controversiarum*, contr. 8, disp. 6, q. 2, cert. 1, no. 8 (col. 289a–b).

48 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 5, nos. 60–64 (cols. 255b–56b); Prévost, *Commentaria in primam partem*, q. 64, dub. 3, no. 9 (col. 628a); Tanner, *Universa theologia scholastica*, disp. 5, q. 6, dub. 8, no. 18 (col. 1591); Luis de Torres, *Tractatus de angelis*, disp. 73, dub. 2 ([Madrid, 1630], col. 111b).

49 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 5, no. 63 (col. 256a–b).

50 See also Petavius, *De angelis*, bk. 2, chap. 7, no. 13 (col. 35a–b).

51 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 4, no. 47 (col. 253b).

Mary frequently cited as an illustration. Guardian angels were also posited for popes, bishops, prelates, founders of religious orders, and secular authorities.[52] Amico justifies this perspective by drawing an analogy with the secular order, where princes have different advisors for public and domestic matters.[53]

Special attention is given to particular cases, such as the widely accepted belief that a unique guardian angel is present during the celebration of the Holy Mass. Amico argues that, if angels were present at the birth of Christ, their presence is reasonable where Christ is sacramentally present on the altars daily.[54]

Beyond public officials, kingdoms and communities are also believed to be under the protection of angels.[55] This concept finds its roots in Old Testament times.[56] The conviction of the "angels of the nations" was adopted into Christian theology by the Church Fathers;[57] in the seventeenth century, it continued to be shared. One argument is that God cares for communities no less than for individuals because the *bonum publicum* is no less important than the *bonum privatum*. Like Thomas Aquinas, Amico assumed that the guardian angels of a community belong to a higher order than do those of individual persons, adhering to the principle that the more universal the mission, the greater the position of the entrusted

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52 See Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 17, no. 24 (col. 755a–b), with the core statement: "Unde mihi probabile fit, quod communiter creditur, has personas publicas, duos habere Angelos custodes, nimirum, inferiores quatenus tales personae sunt, et superiores ratione muneris"—"Hence it seems probable to me, as is commonly believed, that such public persons have two guardian angels: namely, lower angels inasmuch as they are individual persons, and higher ones by reason of their office" (col. 755b). Arriaga finds no biblical basis and is skeptical about the whole question (*Disputationes in primam partem*, disp. 22, sec. 8, subsec. 2, no. 53 [col. 242b]). In some cases (as with Mary), however, he considers the assumption of special guardian angels to be justified. The negative answer can also be found in Esparza, *Quaestiones disputandae de angelis*, q. 32, a. 6, ad 4 (579–80).

53 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 1, no. 15 (col. 247b).

54 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 1, nos. 17–18 (col. 248a), with reference to the *Supplices* stanza in the Canon of the Mass; Granado, *Commentarii . . . in primam partem*, disp. 5, sec. 5, nos. 19–21 (552).

55 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 6, nos. 92–97 (cols. 261a–62a).

56 On the exegetical question of whether the "angelic prince of the kingdom of Persia" (Dan 10:13) was good or evil, there was already disagreement in the time of the Church Fathers; see Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 113, a. 8 corp.

57 See Petavius, *De angelis*, bk. 2, chap. 8 (col. 37a–44a); Duhr, "Anges," cols. 584–85; Jean Daniélou, *Les anges et leur mission d'après les Pères de l'Église* (Paris: Éd. de Chevetogne, 1952), 153–78 (appendix).

angel.[58] The question of whether the protective (arch-)angel of a kingdom is identical to the official guardian angel of the king in charge remains speculative, with Amico considering it likely, given the shared interests of the king and the kingdom.[59] Cristóbal de Ortega (1597–1686) supports this view but suggests retaining special guardian angels for individuals with universal responsibilities, akin to the apostles charged with proclaiming faith globally.[60]

The discussion extends to the protection of animals and inanimate beings. While patristic opinions vary, the affirmative stance supported by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas influenced early modern theologians. With Aquinas,[61] the assumption is considered probable that angels are assigned at least for the various types of non-rational entities or larger cosmic structures (but not all individual things and living beings).[62] In addition to certain scriptural passages (such as Rev 7 and 14), Amico refers to the medieval conviction that angels move heavenly spheres and emphasizes that the guidance of the whole of nature by angels is ultimately for the benefit of human beings.[63] The more restrictive position of Thomas de Vio Cajetan (1469–1534), according to which guardian angels are active in the material world only when things have a function in the realm of God's supernatural providence, is not universally embraced by the Jesuits.[64]

Guardian Angels in the Hierarchy of Angels

Thomas Aquinas asserted that angels from the five lowest choirs (third and second hierarchy) are assigned earthly tasks, while those from the four highest choirs (Dominions from the second hierarchy, Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones from the first) never serve as guardian angels.[65]

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58 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 6, no. 100 (col. 262a–b).

59 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 6, nos. 101–2 (col. 262b).

60 See Ortega, *Theologia controversiarum*, contr. 8, disp. 6, q. 2, cert. 2, nos. 2–3 (cols. 289b–90a).

61 See Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 110, a. 1.

62 See Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 17, nos. 25–28 (cols. 755b–57a).

63 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 6, nos. 103–5 (col. 263a–b), and Arriaga, *Disputationes in primam partem*, disp. 22, sec. 8, subsec. 2, no. 54 (cols. 242b–43a), the latter of whom calls the assumption "highly absurd" that every horse etc. could have an individual guardian angel (no. 55 [col. 243a]).

64 See Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 19, no. 11 (col. 764a–b).

65 See Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 112, a. 4, corp., who refers to the relationship between the names of the lower five choirs of angels and an "external ministry." For the roots in the theology of the Fathers, see Petavius, *De angelis*, bk. 2, chap. 6, no. 2 (col. 22a).

This distinction aligns with the categorization of *angeli assistentes* and *angeli ministrantes*—angels with a purely "internal and spiritual ministry" versus those with an "external and somewhat physical ministry."[66] According to this view, guardian angels for ordinary individuals are drawn from the lowest order (simple angels),[67] while angels from the two upper choirs of the third hierarchy undertake a "higher and more universal" function.[68] Archangels, for instance, safeguard "certain prominent persons," such as Mary, Apostles, Prophets, Popes, Bishops, and Kings. Principalities, exemplified by Michael, oversee communities.[69] Angels from the second hierarchy play a crucial role: Powers protect the human race and the entire universe by thwarting demons, and Virtues have dominion over all "corporeal natures," moving celestial spheres and performing miracles.[70]

In early modern theology, the Thomistic perspective underwent modifications. Many theologians entertain the possibility that angels could be sent from all hierarchies, with higher angels entering the human realm in specific cases and a gradation based on the importance of the salvific task or the dignity of the individual. Gabriel Vázquez notes the uncertainty in Aquinas's position due to a lack of secure foundations in Scripture and Tradition.[71] Aligning with some medieval theologians,[72] he contends that God might send higher angels for important missions, just as an earthly king chooses noble messengers. Certain biblical scenes involving angels are repeatedly discussed in this context, especially Gabriel's mission to Mary to announce the Incarnation, which is one of the highest mysteries of faith. According to Vázquez, it is not possible to prove whether the biblical designation of Gabriel as an "archangel" is meant in the strict sense of hierarchical assignment or is intended only to name a "high" angel in general, so that no convincing argument for one of the two views

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66 See (following Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 112, a. 3 corp.) de Lugo, *Theologia scholastica in primam partem*, disp. 22, chap. 1, nos. 8–9 (cols. 1074b–75a); Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 3, no. 35 (col. 251b); and others.

67 See Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 18, nos. 3–6 (cols. 757b–59a). At an earlier point, however, Suárez admits that God can make exceptions when sending angels: chap. 10, no. 47 (cols. 699b–700a).

68 See Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 113, a. 3 corp.

69 See Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 18, nos. 9–10 (cols. 759b–60a).

70 See Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 18, nos. 11–12 (col. 760a–b); chap. 19, no. 2 (col. 761a).

71 See Vázquez, *Disputationes in primam partem*, pt. 2, disp. 244, chap. 2 (cols. 531a–33a). He is followed by Mauro, *Opus theologicum*, tr. 13, q. 206, no. 18 (col. 607a).

72 Among them are Peter Lombard (*Sentences* II, dist. 10, chap. 2 [378–79]), Scotus, and Durandus.

can be gained from this. The distinction between regular protection by simple angels and extraordinary intervention by higher orders (up to the highest) is prevalent in Jesuit authors, although specifics often remain speculative.[73] As Peter Lombard had already noted, the mission of the divine Son into the world suggests that even the highest angels can serve humanity—an enduringly persuasive view.[74] Denis Pétau (1583–1652; also known as Dionysius Petavius) challenged any limitation on angels serving humanity to specific hierarchies, citing many examples from the works of the Fathers.[75] Occasionally, Jesuits refer to the biography of their founder. Diego Granado (1571–1632) reports that the second Jesuit general Diego Laínez (1512–1565) asked Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) in response to a rumor to indicate whether his guardian angel was an archangel; the latter gave no answer but blushed, which was interpreted as tacit approval.[76] Granado asserts that this privilege extends beyond the founder of the Jesuit order.

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73 See Molina, *Commentaria in primam*, q. 111, disp. unica (cols. 647bD–48F); Valentia, *Commentarii theologici*, disp. 8, q. 6, punct. 2 (cols. 1566C–68A), Tanner, *Universa theologia scholastica*, disp. 5, q. 6, dub. 8, nos. 6–10 (cols. 1587–89); Ortega, *Theologia controversiarum*, contr. 8, disp. 6, q. 2, cert. 2, no. 4 (col. 290b); Prévost, *Commentaria in primam partem*, q. 64, dub. 2, no. 7 (col. 627a); Echeverria, *Tractatus de angelis*, chap. 4, no. 28 (364); no. 42 (371).

74 See Valentia, *Commentarii theologici*, disp. 8, q. 6, punct. 2 (col. 1567D), with reference to Peter Lombard, *Sentences* II, dist. 10, chap. 1, no. 2: "Nec debet indignum videri si etiam superiores mittantur, cum et iIle qui creator est omnium, ad haec inferiora descenderit"—"Nor should it seem unworthy if even the higher [angels] are sent, since he who is the Creator of all descended to these lower realms himself" (377).

75 See Petavius, *De angelis*, bk. 2, chap. 6, nos. 3–16 (cols. 22a–28b).

76 Granado, *Commentarii . . . in primam partem*, disp. 5, sec. 2, no. 7: "Pater Iacobus Lainez secundus Generalis Societatis Iesu vir litteris, et sanctitate conspicuus, et in Tridentina synodo magni habitus, cum a quodam audivisset Beatum Patrem in tutelam Archangelo datum fuisse, ab ipso filiali fiducia quaesivit, num id verum esset: cui ne verbum quidem respondit, sed vultus immutatus, ac rubore suffusus est: quod quidem non levi argumento est, re vera Archangelum fuisse eius custodem, nam si id verum non fuisset, certe constanter negasset vir egregie humilis, et quae Dei gloria est, tanta sanctitate decoratus"—"Father Jacob Lainez, the second General of the Society of Jesus, a man distinguished in learning and holiness and held in high esteem at the Council of Trent, once heard from someone that the Blessed Father [St. Ignatius] had been given into the guardianship of an Archangel. Out of filial trust, he asked him [St. Ignatius] whether this was true. The latter, however, said not a word, but his countenance changed and was suffused with a blush. This indeed is no small indication that an Archangel truly was his guardian; for had it not been true, he, a man of outstanding humility and (which is the glory of God) adorned with such sanctity, would surely have steadfastly denied it" (548). Tanner, *Universa theologia scholastica*, disp. 6, q. 6, dub. 8, no. 22 (col. 1592),

Functions and Tasks of Guardian Angels

The tasks assigned to guardian angels by early modern theologians often draw from lists compiled by medieval authors. Amico cites the twelve-point summary of Gabriel Biel (1410–1495), which encapsulates these functions, including warning against sins, preparing for release from sin, removing obstacles to good deeds, keeping demons at bay, instructing and enlightening, revealing mysteries, providing comfort in affliction, strengthening in godly ways, guiding on the path to eternity, overcoming enemies, mitigating temptations, and presenting prayers and vows before God.[77] Two points added by Amico include the angel rescuing from impending dangers and guiding the departing soul into purgatory or heaven.[78]

Other theologians offer more concise descriptions.[79] Francisco de Lugo (1580–1652) outlines five tasks: averting external dangers, stimulating the soul toward good and turning away from evil through inner enlightenment, restraining demons, and administering beneficial punishments. In addition, there are previously mentioned activities concerning unreasonable creatures.[80] Granado emphasizes prayer, offering the good deeds to God, imparting inspirational thoughts, and shielding from evil. One Scholastic theologian takes up the interpretation of Exod 23:20 by the Jesuit exegete Cornelius a Lapide (1567–1637),[81] who sees "five offices" of the guardian

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also refers to the biography of St. Ignatius (according to Ribadeneira). He also mentions St. Francesca Romana, whose life was characterized by an intimate relationship with her own guardian angel. Raynaud, *Angelus sanctus*, chap. 3 (col. 771b) adds on this occasion that, in apparitions, the guardian angel always chooses the male sex, since this is "dignior et absque illecibrositate" (while demons often appear in female form). Von Henneberg, "Saint Francesca Romana," points to the role of the Jesuits in the canonization of St. Francesca, which took place in the same year as the introduction of the feast of the Guardian Angels (1608).

77 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 7, no. 109 (col. 264a–b). These points are also referred to in Valentia, *Commentarii theologici*, disp. 8, q. 6, punct. 2 (cols. 1571B–72A; subsequently, seven functions of the angel according to Jean Gerson are listed), and in Tanner, *Universa theologia scholastica*, disp. 5, q. 6, dub. 8, no. 23 (col. 1592).

78 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 7, no. 110 (col. 264b).

79 In addition to the theologians referred to below, see Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 19, nos. 1–9 (cols. 760b–63b); Arriaga, *Disputationes in primam partem*, disp. 22, sec. 8, subsec. 4, no. 59 (col. 244a; six points); Raynaud, *Angelus sanctus*, chap. 3 (col. 771a; six points); de Rhodes, *Theologia scholastica*, disp. 2, q. 4, sec. 2 (col. 279b–80a; five points).

80 See de Lugo, *Theologia scholastica in primam partem*, disp. 22, chap. 2, no. 15 (col. 1078a).

81 See Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram*, vol. 1, *In Pentateuchum Mosis: Genesis et Exodus* ([Paris, 1866], col. 623b), quoted by Echeverria, *Tractatus de*

angel indicated in this passage: "He goes before you, protects you on the way, leads you to the place I have prepared, does not leave you when you sin, and my name is in him." Jean Martinon (1586–1662) refers his readers to the Book of Tobit because all the angel's services for people are named there: "The angel protects Tobias against demons and other dangers, guides and instructs him, inspires him to do good and brings his prayers and alms before God."[82] A short formula for the work of the guardian angels from the monastic theologian Petrus Cellensis (ca. 1115–1183) is quoted by Ortega: "The whole ministry of the angels in relation to men is to protect us from evil and keep us in good."[83] One can express just as succinctly how we should relate to the guardian angel when thinking of the good we receive through them: "Reverence—devotion—trust" (*reverentia—devotio—fiducia*) are three terms Georges de Rhodes (1597–1661) mentions with recourse to St. Bernard of Clairvaux,[84] and Francisco de Lugo explains that we must treat the guardian angel with the same reverence that we pay to the saints (*adoratio duliae*).[85]

While most angelic functions pose minimal interpretative challenges, elucidating their enlightening work in the intellect and will requires a speculative approach. On the one hand, angelic influence should be effective; on the other hand, it must not jeopardize the freedom and personal responsibility of human beings. Furthermore, the difference between the influence that purely spiritual creatures exert on man and God's work within the soul must become clear. In their treatment of the question, which is often separate from the subject of guardian angels, Jesuit theologians advocate models of indirect, mediated influence akin to Aquinas[86] and other medieval theologians. A pivotal distinction lies

angelis, disp. 15, chap. 3, no. 18 (359). On Cornelius's doctrine of guardian angels, see Johnson, "Guardian Angels," 201–3.

82 Jean Martinon, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. 43, sec. 10, no. 77 (vol. 1 [Bordeaux, 1644], col. 805a).

83 Petrus Cellensis, *Mystica et moralis expositio Mosaici tabernaculi* 1 ("Totum officium Angelorum, quantum ad nos esse, ut nos a malo defendant et in bono conservent"), quoted in Ortega, *Theologia controversiarum*, contr. 8, disp. 6, q. 2, cert. 3, no. 1 (col. 291a). He subsequently explains this statement in several steps.

84 See de Rhodes, *Theologia scholastica*, disp. 2, q. 4, sec. 2 (col. 280a–b); these attitudes are developed by Raynaud, *Angelus sanctus*, chaps. 10–13 (cols. 780a–84b).

85 See de Lugo, *Theologia scholastica in primam partem*, disp. 22, chap. 3, no. 1 (col. 1078b).

86 See Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 111, a. 3, corp. Various other attempts at explanation from late medieval theology are referred to in Vázquez, *Disputationes in primam partem*, pt. 2, disp. 218, chap. 4 (col. 417a–b).

between "visible" (external) and "invisible" (internal) enlightenment.[87] External enlightenment involves overcoming obstacles and providing suitable objects for understanding, often culminating in visible appearances (such as Gabriel appearing before Zechariah and Mary) or sensually perceptible signs (such as in 1 Kgs 3, God's words to Solomon in a dream). In contrast, "invisible enlightenment," the "ordinary" work of the guardian angel, takes place entirely within the human being. It involves altering or preparing inner senses to better follow the angel's inspiration, facilitated by an inner sensual imagination (*phantasma*) that moves the mind and will.[88] This inspiration follows the basic principle of human cognition, according to which man moves from the sensual to the spiritual. At the same time, the angel remains within his limited sphere of action. He generates sensual ideas by moving physical organs and components of the human being; the corporeal organs will then "change and modify the intellect itself due to their connection with the intellect, and through it the will, always safeguarding its freedom, and only in a dispositive manner."[89] The (negative) influence of the evil angel on humans is explained in a similar way. Other authors describe in even more detail the physical influence of angels,[90] who change the imagination of humans via organs, bodily fluids,

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87 See Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 16. no. 5 (col. 738a).

88 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 7, nos. 114–15 (col. 265a–b).

89 Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 7, no. 115: "Nam et connaturalis modus intelligendi hominis in hac vita, est per sensibilia devenire ad intelligibilia: et Angelus mediante motu locali potestatem habet in totam naturam corpoream; atque adeo in organa ipsa corporea hominis, ea per motum localem alterando, immutando atque disponendo: quae immutata et alterata propter connexionem cum intellectu, immutabunt et alterabunt ipsum intellectum, eoque mediante voluntatem, salva semper eius libertate, et tantum dispositive"—"For, the natural way of human understanding in this life is to arrive at intelligible things through sensibles; and the angel, through local motion, has power over the entire corporeal nature, and thus also over the bodily organs of man, by altering, changing, and disposing them through local motion. And these organs, when altered and modified, will in turn change and modify the intellect itself due to their connection with the intellect, and through it the will, always safeguarding its freedom, and only in a dispositive manner" (col. 265b).

90 See Mauro, *Opus theologicum*, tr. 13, q. 205, no. 14: "Ut hoc melius intelligatur, supponendum est ex lib. de anima, phantasmata esse imagines rerum corpusculis quibusdam impressas, quae conservantur in organo imaginationis, et cum applicantur organo, causant actus imaginationis. Angeli igitur movendo corpuscula, quibus impressae sunt imagines accidentales rerum, movent etiam concomitanter imagines, illasque debite applicando organo imaginationis, causant actus imaginationis. Et quia angeli praesertim boni optime sciunt, quo pacto debeant haec corpuscula, et humores moveri, ac localiter ordinari, ut phantasmata convenienter applicentur organo imaginationis in ordine ad causandos actus imaginationis, ex quibus sequantur in intellectu apprehensiones aptae

and life spirits and, with their help, ultimately reach intellect and will.[91]

ad persuadendum quod intendunt: ideo possunt phantasmata movendo, intellectum illuminare, et roborare ad cognoscendas veritates, quas intendunt illi persuadere"—"To understand this better, one must presuppose from [Aristotle's] *De anima* that phantasms are images of things impressed upon certain corporeal particles, which are preserved in the organ of imagination, and when applied to that organ, they cause acts of imagination. Therefore, by moving the corporeal particles upon which the accidental images of things are impressed, angels also concomitantly move the images themselves; and by duly applying them to the organ of imagination, they cause acts of imagination. And because angels, especially the good ones, know best how these particles and humors should be moved and locally arranged so that the phantasms may be suitably applied to the organ of imagination to produce acts of imagination, from which follow apprehensions in the intellect suited to persuading what they [the angels] intend, they can, by moving phantasms, illuminate and strengthen the intellect for the knowledge of the truths they intend to persuade it of" (cols. 603b–4a). At least in this kind of action, a physical proximity of the guardian angel to the client seems to be needed, which is not necessary in the performance of other functions (such as intercession with God); see Granado, *Commentarii . . . in primam partem*, disp. 5, sec. 3, no. 11 (549).

[91] See Molina, *Commentaria in primam*, q. 111, a. 3: "Praeterea ex vario motu spirituum ac humorum in organo sensus interni, ex varia affectione corporis, varioque motu spirituum, humorum, et sanguinis in irascibili et concupiscibili, quibus passiones excitantur, evenit, ut homo, modo de hac re, modo de illa incipiat cogitare, et ut vehementius, aut minus vehementer cogitationem ad hoc, vel illud applicet, plusque aut minus in ea cogitatione persistat. Quare hac ratione, commovendo spiritus et humores organorum, tam sensuum internorum, quam irascibilis et concupiscibilis, commovendoque alias partes corporis, poterit excitare varias cogitationes, luxuriae, vindictae, avaritiae, rerum laetarum, tristium, piarum, etc. non quidem immittendo de novo speciem in sensum internum, aut cogitationem ipsam una cum sensu efficiendo, sed modis explicatis, efficiendo, ut potentia nunc concurrat cum specie huius obiecti, vehementiusque, aut minus vehementer ad id commoveatur, nunc vero cum specie alterius obiecti"—"Moreover, from the various motions of spirits and humors in the organ of internal sense, and from the various affections of the body, as well as from the various movements of spirits, humors, and blood in the irascible and concupiscible faculties, by which the passions are stirred, it follows that a person begins to think now about one thing, now about another, and applies his thought to this or that more or less intensely, and persists in it for a longer or shorter time. Therefore, by this means, by stirring the spirits and humors of the organs, both of the internal senses and of the irascible and concupiscible powers, as well as other parts of the body, [an angel] can excite various thoughts: of lust, vengeance, avarice, of joyful things, sorrowful things, pious things, etc., not by inserting a new *species* [impressed form] into the internal sense, or by producing the thought together with the sensation, but by the methods explained above, causing the faculty [of the soul] to now concur with the *species* of one object, and be moved more or less strongly toward it, and now with the *species* of another object" (col. 645bB–C). Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 16. no. 10 (cols. 739b–740a), refers to medieval guidelines (e.g., Aquinas *ST* I, q. 111, a. 3; *De malo* q. 16, a. 11) and, like many other authors, draws a parallel to the emergence of dream images (no. 11 [col. 740a]; in the background is Aristotle's writing *De somno*,

However, angels are limited, lacking the power to directly play sensory images into a person's imagination without mediation by their own senses, which some medieval theologians had assumed.[92] In line with Suárez,[93] Martinon teaches that no demon could enable a person born blind to see colors by transferring an image from a foreign brain into his or her own.[94] The analogy of the influence of a higher angel on a lower one is therefore valid only with restrictions.[95] The close connection between the physical and spiritual in Scholastic anthropology is evident, showcasing angels' knowledge of human physiology and their ability to even generate illusionary sensory images (especially in the case of demonic influence).[96]

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already quoted by Aquinas). Even if the angel ultimately cannot go beyond a "moral persuasion" (*persuasio moralis*) of man, he can nevertheless "make the will sufficiently inclined on the part of the object so that it can be led toward it if he [the angel] wills" (no. 28 [col. 746a]). Suárez even speaks of an influence "in excess" (*superabundanter*). Similarly, Arriaga, *Disputationes in primam partem*, disp. 22, sec. 8, nos. 41–43 (cols. 239b–40a), teaches that certain primary movements of the will can necessarily be brought about by the movement of the bodily fluids and the stimulation of the imagination, because will follows the desire (*appetitus*). Raynaud, *Angelus sanctus*, chap. 3 (cols. 771b–72b), in comparing the influence of the good angel on a human with that of the demon, contemplates the potential for the good angel to prompt movements in the human spirit contrary to its inherent freedom: "Nihil vero vetat angelum sanctum ab homine moto sua virtute angelica, elicere voces, et eidem immittere cogitationes non liberas, et meriti et demeriti expertes actus excudere"—" Nothing prevents a holy angel from eliciting voices from a human being, moved by its angelic power, and from inserting into him thoughts that are not free, and from producing acts devoid of merit or demerit" (col. 772a). The angel could therefore turn his client into an *energumenos* (possessed person), but will never actually do so.

92 Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 16, no. 8 (col. 739a–b), refers to Alexander of Hales and Albertus Magnus. The implantation of the angel's own thoughts into the mind of man is even more rejected (nos. 20–22 [cols. 742b–43b]).

93 See Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 16, no. 8: "Item alias posset Angelus naturaliter facere, ut caecus haberet phantasmata colorum"—" Otherwise, an angel could naturally cause a blind person to have phantasms [sense images] of colors." In the subsequent discussion, Suárez meticulously refutes the propositions of Scotus and certain Scotists, elucidating why both the "phantasmata" and the "spiritus vitales" cannot be detached from an individual's brain. For early modern variations on Galen's doctrine of the "spiritus" (col. 739a), see Jürgen Helm, "Zwischen Physiologie, Philosophie und Theologie: Die Lehre von den *spiritus* im 16. Jahrhundert," in *Religion und Gesundheit: Der heilkundliche Diskurs im 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 287–302.

94 See Martinon, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. 43, sec. 10, no. 78 (col. 805a–b); similarly (against Scotus), see Vázquez, *Disputationes in primam partem*, pt. 2, disp. 218, chap. 4, no. 14 (col. 417b).

95 This is explained by Echeverria, *Tractatus de angelis*, disp. 15, chap. 3, no. 24 (362).

96 See Molina, *Commentaria in primam*, q. 111, a. 3 (col. 645bF).

On the purely spiritual level, angels encounter limits. While they excel in manipulating the physical system, their knowledge is incomplete regarding human predestination or reprobation and the secrets of the human heart. According to Amico, humans, as free spiritual creatures, have the right to intimacy even against the guardian angel, but he or she can freely grant him a view of the heart.[97]

Although the work of guardian angels can fail due to human freedom, this does not mean that angels feel sorrow, which could diminish their own bliss.[98] Guardian angels are first and foremost servants of God—like educators who are placed by a king on the side of a lower-ranking person.[99] They have fulfilled their mission even when the desired effect cannot be achieved because the clients refuse their help. Guardian angels know that sin and its punishment have a place in God's eternal plan, which they are happy to serve. This orientation toward providence is also the reason why there can be no conflict between guardian angels when they advocate seemingly rival requests or interests of their human clients.[100] According to Suárez, their intercession is always linked to the clause "if it pleases God more,"[101] so that subordination to God's will is guaranteed in every case.

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97 See Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 7, no. 119: "An omnia nostri cordis secreta nostro tutelari Angelo pateant? Respondeo negative, nisi nos ipsi velimus, ut omnia nostri cordis secreta illi pateant. Primum constat, nam hoc postulat perfectum ius, quod omnis creatura intellectualis habet in sua cordis secreta, ut nulli absque proprio voluntatis nutu pateant. Secundum probatur, quia non minus ad perfectum dominium spectat, posse nostra secreta alteri manifestare, quando lubet, atque illa occultare, quando placet"—"Do all the secrets of our heart lie open to our guardian angel? I respond in the negative, unless we ourselves wish all the secrets of our heart to be made known to him. The first point is evident, for it is required by the perfect right that every intellectual creature possesses over the secrets of its own heart, that they not be made known to anyone without the free consent of its will. The second point is proven because it pertains no less to perfect dominion to be able to manifest our secrets to others when we want, and to conceal them when it pleases us" (col. 266a). The question of the angel's knowledge of human thoughts and decisions is sometimes shifted by the Scholastic authors to distinct disputations.

98 See Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 19, no. 12 (cols. 764b–65a), following Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 113, a. 7, corp.; Amico, *Cursus theologici*, disp. 19, sec. 7, no. 120 (col. 266b); Arriaga, *Disputationes in primam partem*, disp. 22, sec. 8, subsec. 4, no. 60 (col. 244b).

99 See Molina, *Commentaria in primam*, q. 111, a. 1 (col. 647aE–F).

100 See Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 113, a. 8, corp.

101 See Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 19, no. 13 (col. 765a–b).

Concluding Remarks

In their doctrinal reflections on guardian angels, not only Suárez[102] but the entire Jesuit school of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries largely adhere to the theological path laid by Thomas Aquinas. When Aquinas left certain questions unexplored, early modern discussions mainly delve into details and related issues. Despite its practical relevance, the doctrine of guardian angels does not receive special attention in dogmatic theology, as it lacks engaging speculative problems. Some authors briefly touch upon it or omit it entirely in their treatises on angels. In systematic works, there is little evidence of a "disciplinary function" of the doctrine of guardian angels, as has sometimes been attributed to its application in post-Tridentine pastoral work.[103] Moral exhortations to lead an "angelic life" present in spiritual treatises take a back seat to the speculative discussions. In an era veering toward modernity, marked by increasing uncertainty and disenchantment, theologians emphasize the universal providence of God in every concrete situation. The doctrine of guardian angels already appears in the same context in the Roman Catechism (1566), where the relevant chapters are included in the explanation of the designation of God as Father in the interpretation of the Lord's Prayer.[104] In the age of the Copernican revolution, God's special care for humans with a supernatural calling through his angels reinforced an anthropocentric view of the cosmos[105] from a theological perspective, with ontologically

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[102] This is stated by Vacant, "Angélologie de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 1247.

[103] See Anne Manevy, "Le droit chemin: L'ange gardien, instrument de la disciplinarisation après la Contre-Réforme," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 2 (2006): 195–227. In addition to the "angelic virtues," Manevy mentions the topics of pious death and frequent examination of conscience, which are particularly associated with the guardian angels, with examples dating back to the nineteenth century.

[104] *Catechismus Romanus*, pt. 4, chap. 9, q. 4–5: "Dei providentia illud negotium Angelis datum est, ut custodiant humanum genus" ("By God's providence, that task has been entrusted to the angels: to guard the human race" (ed. Adolphus Buse, vol. 2 [Bielefeld, 1859], 123–24). Cf. Carlo Ossola, "Introduzione," in Ossala and Leskov, *Gli Angeli Custodi*, ix–xlv, esp. xx–xxi.

[105] This concept is prominently articulated in Suárez, *De angelis*, bk. 6, chap. 17, no. 5, affirming that the creation of the universe is fundamentally oriented toward humanity, and the angels' role in inanimate nature ultimately serves the purpose of human protection: "Totum autem ministerium angelicum circa res corporeas, sive inanimatas, sive irrationales, est propter hominum custodiam; ergo totum illud ministerium sub custodia hominum comprehenditur, tantumque, et tale est, quantum ad hominum salutem fuerit opportunum"—"The entire angelic ministry concerning corporeal things, whether inanimate or irrational, is for the sake of the guardianship of men; therefore,

nobler creatures serving vulnerable humans. Guardian angels—God's patient educators for his children, faithful friends, inner interlocutors, reliable guides and heavenly helpers—are placed on the side of all people without distinction. They guarantee constant contact with the supernatural world,[106] God's universal will of salvation, and the offer of God's grace, which speaks to every person in the depths of their souls without overwhelming them.[107] Guardian angels embody the Catholic definition of the relationship between grace and freedom, with the Jesuits emphasizing the value of freedom. They exemplify the mediated immediacy of God in believers' lives and creatures' participation in divine salvation, making them recipients of prayer and veneration.[108] The assistance of guardian angels proved vital in the Church's missionary endeavors in the New World, in which the Jesuits played a central role. Individually, believers relied on their guardian angels in spiritual struggles and in the discernment of spirits, crucial in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.[109] In all these respects, guardian angels epitomized Catholic piety in the early modern period. In contrast, Protestant faith, while affirming guardian angels based on Holy Scriptures and early Church tradition, relegated them to a less prominent role under the tenets of *sola gratia* and *solus Christus*. N·V

that entire ministry is encompassed under the guardianship of men, and is as extensive and of such a kind as is fitting for the salvation of human beings" (col. 747b).

106 See Antoine Mazurek, "L'ange gardien entre théologie, dévotion et spiritualité (XVI–XVII^{e} siècles)," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 233 (2016): 21–47, at 46.

107 See Lehner, *Inner Life*, 140–41. Building on a thesis outlined in Henneberg, "Saint Francesca Romana," 471–73, which posits a link between the Jesuit doctrine of guardian angels and Molinism, Johnson states: "Jesuit guardian-angel devotion was therefore an aspect of the order's call to moral and spiritual activism as well as a demonstration of its theology of the non-compelling but assisting operation of divine grace (*auxilium speciale*). In Ignatian terms, the guardian angels act as the instruments of God in presenting their clients with opportunities for 'election,' a choice between good and evil pathways. Occasionally 'rough' in their touch, the angels are never coercive" ("Guardian Angels," 212). Further evidence is provided by Mazurek, "L'ange gardien," 30–35. While fundamentally accurate, this view should not be overstretched (see note 91 above).

108 The dogmatic treatises scarcely delve into the miracles and apparitions linked with guardian angels, phenomena that, in denominational discussions, were deemed external validations of the legitimacy of the true religion; see Dompnier, "Des anges et des signes," 218–19.

109 See Mazurek, "L'ange gardien," 36–40 (with reference to the work of the Jesuit Juan Martínez de Ripalda), and 40–45.