

FIRST PART, QUESTION 113
Of the Guardianship of the Good Angels
(In Eight Articles)

We next consider the guardianship exercised by the good angels; and their warfare against the bad angels. Under the first head eight points of inquiry arise:

- (1) Whether men are guarded by the angels?
- (2) Whether to each man is assigned a single guardian angel?
- (3) Whether the guardianship belongs only to the lowest order of angels?
- (4) Whether it is fitting for each man to have an angel guardian?
- (5) When does an angel's guardianship of a man begin?
- (6) Whether the angel guardians always watch over men?
- (7) Whether the angel grieves over the loss of the one guarded?
- (8) Whether rivalry exists among the angels as regards their guardianship?

Whether men are guarded by the angels?

Ia q. 113 a. 1

Objection 1. It would seem that men are not guarded by the angels. For guardians are deputed to some because they either know not how, or are not able, to guard themselves, as children and the sick. But man is able to guard himself by his free-will; and knows how by his natural knowledge of natural law. Therefore man is not guarded by an angel.

Objection 2. Further, a strong guard makes a weaker one superfluous. But men are guarded by God, according to Ps. 120:4: "He shall neither slumber nor sleep, that keepeth Israel." Therefore man does not need to be guarded by an angel.

Objection 3. Further, the loss of the guarded redounds to the negligence of the guardian; hence it was said to a certain one: "Keep this man; and if he shall slip away, thy life shall be for his life" (3 Kings 20:39). Now many perish daily through falling into sin; whom the angels could help by visible appearance, or by miracles, or in some such-like way. The angels would therefore be negligent if men are given to their guardianship. But that is clearly false. Therefore the angels are not the guardians of men.

On the contrary, It is written (Ps. 90:11): "He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

I answer that, According to the plan of Divine Providence, we find that in all things the movable and variable are moved and regulated by the immovable and invariable; as all corporeal things by immovable spiritual substances, and the inferior bodies by the superior which are invariable in substance. We ourselves also are regulated as regards conclusions, about which we may have various opinions, by the principles which we hold in an invariable manner. It is moreover manifest that as regards things to be done human knowledge and affection can vary and fail from good in many ways; and so it was necessary that

angels should be deputed for the guardianship of men, in order to regulate them and move them to good.

Reply to Objection 1. By free-will man can avoid evil to a certain degree, but not in any sufficient degree; forasmuch as he is weak in affection towards good on account of the manifold passions of the soul. Likewise universal natural knowledge of the law, which by nature belongs to man, to a certain degree directs man to good, but not in a sufficient degree; because in the application of the universal principles of law to particular actions man happens to be deficient in many ways. Hence it is written (Wis. 9:14): "The thoughts of mortal men are fearful, and our counsels uncertain." Thus man needs to be guarded by the angels.

Reply to Objection 2. Two things are required for a good action; first, that the affection be inclined to good, which is effected in us by the habit of mortal virtue. Secondly, that reason should discover the proper methods to make perfect the good of virtue; this the Philosopher (Ethic. vi) attributes to prudence. As regards the first, God guards man immediately by infusing into him grace and virtues; as regards the second, God guards man as his universal instructor, Whose precepts reach man by the medium of the angels, as above stated (q. 111, a. 1).

Reply to Objection 3. As men depart from the natural instinct of good by reason of a sinful passion, so also do they depart from the instigation of the good angels, which takes place invisibly when they enlighten man that he may do what is right. Hence that men perish is not to be imputed to the negligence of the angels but to the malice of men. That they sometimes appear to men visibly outside the ordinary course of nature comes from a special grace of God, as likewise that miracles occur outside the order of nature.

Objection 1. It would seem that each man is not guarded by an angel. For an angel is stronger than a man. But one man suffices to guard many men. Therefore much more can one angel guard many men.

Objection 2. Further, the lower things are brought to God through the medium of the higher, as Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. iv, xiii). But as all the angels are unequal (q. 50, a. 4), there is only one angel between whom and men there is no medium. Therefore there is only one angel who immediately keeps men.

Objection 3. Further, the greater angels are deputed to the greater offices. But it is not a greater office to keep one man more than another; since all men are naturally equal. Since therefore of all the angels one is greater than another, as Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. x), it seems that different men are not guarded by different angels.

On the contrary, On the text, "Their angels in heaven," etc. (Mat. 8:10), Jerome says: "Great is the dignity of souls, for each one to have an angel deputed to guard it from its birth."

I answer that, Each man has an angel guardian appointed to him. This rests upon the fact that the guardianship of angels belongs to the execution of Divine providence concerning men. But God's providence acts differently as regards men and as regards other corruptible creatures, for they are related differently to incorruptibility. For men are not only incorruptible in the common species, but also in the proper forms of each individual, which are the rational souls, which cannot be said of other incorruptible things. Now it is manifest that the providence of God is chiefly exercised towards what remains for ever; whereas as regards things which pass away, the providence of God acts so as to order their existence to the things which are perpetual. Thus the providence of God is related to each man as it is to every genus or species of things corruptible. But, according to Gregory (Hom. xxxiv in Evang.), the different orders are deputed to the different "genera" of things, for instance, the "Powers"

to coerce the demons, the "Virtues" to work miracles in things corporeal; while it is probable that the different species are presided over by different angels of the same order. Hence it is also reasonable to suppose that different angels are appointed to the guardianship of different men.

Reply to Objection 1. A guardian may be assigned to a man for two reasons: first, inasmuch as a man is an individual, and thus to one man one guardian is due; and sometimes several are appointed to guard one. Secondly, inasmuch as a man is part of a community, and thus one man is appointed as guardian of a whole community; to whom it belongs to provide what concerns one man in his relation to the whole community, such as external works, which are sources of strength or weakness to others. But angel guardians are given to men also as regards invisible and occult things, concerning the salvation of each one in his own regard. Hence individual angels are appointed to guard individual men.

Reply to Objection 2. As above stated (q. 112, a. 3, ad 4), all the angels of the first hierarchy are, as to some things, enlightened by God directly; but as to other things, only the superior are directly enlightened by God, and these reveal them to the inferior. And the same also applies to the inferior orders: for a lower angel is enlightened in some respects by one of the highest, and in other respects by the one immediately above him. Thus it is possible that some one angel enlightens a man immediately, and yet has other angels beneath him whom he enlightens.

Reply to Objection 3. Although men are equal in nature, still inequality exists among them, according as Divine Providence orders some to the greater, and others to the lesser things, according to Eccus. 33:11,12: "With much knowledge the Lord hath divided them, and diversified their ways: some of them hath He blessed and exalted, and some of them hath He cursed and brought low." Thus it is a greater office to guard one man than another.

Objection 1. It would seem that the guardianship of men does not belong only to the lowest order of the angels. For Chrysostom says that the text (Mat. 18:10), "Their angels in heaven," etc. is to be understood not of any angels but of the highest. Therefore the superior angels guard men.

Objection 2. Further, the Apostle says that angels "are sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation" (Heb. 1:14); and thus it seems that the mission of the angels is directed to the guardianship of men.

But five orders are sent in external ministry (q. 112, a. 4). Therefore all the angels of the five orders are deputed to the guardianship of men.

Objection 3. Further, for the guardianship of men it seems especially necessary to coerce the demons, which belongs most of all to the Powers, according to Gregory (Hom. xxxiv in Evang.); and to work miracles, which belongs to the Virtues. Therefore these orders are also deputed to the work of guardianship, and not only the lowest order.

On the contrary, In the Psalm (90) the guardianship of men is attributed to the angels; who belong to the lowest order, according to Dionysius (Coel. Hier. v, ix).

I answer that, As above stated (a. 2), man is guarded in two ways; in one way by particular guardianship, according as to each man an angel is appointed to guard him; and such guardianship belongs to the lowest order of the angels, whose place it is, according to Gregory, to announce the “lesser things”; for it seems to be the least of the angelic offices to procure what concerns the salvation of only one man. The other kind of guardianship is universal, multiplied according to the different orders. For the more universal an agent is, the higher it is. Thus the guardianship of the human race belongs to the order of “Principalities,” or perhaps to the “Archangels,” whom we call the angel princes. Hence, Michael, whom we call an archangel, is also styled “one of the princes” (Dan. 10:13). Moreover all corporeal creatures are guarded by

the “Virtues”; and likewise the demons by the “Powers,” and the good spirits by the “Principalities,” according to Gregory’s opinion (Hom. xxxiv in Ev.).

Reply to Objection 1. Chrysostom can be taken to mean the highest in the lowest order of angels; for, as Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. x) in each order there are first, middle, and last. It is, however, probable that the greater angels are deputed to keep those chosen by God for the higher degree of glory.

Reply to Objection 2. Not all the angels who are sent have guardianship of individual men; but some orders have a universal guardianship, greater or less, as above explained.

Reply to Objection 3. Even inferior angels exercise the office of the superior, as they share in their gifts, and they are executors of the superiors’ power; and in this way all the angels of the lowest order can coerce the demons, and work miracles.

Whether angels are appointed to the guardianship of all men?

Ia q. 113 a. 4

Objection 1. It would seem that angels are not appointed to the guardianship of all men. For it is written of Christ (Phil. 2:7) that “He was made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man.” If therefore angels are appointed to the guardianship of all men, Christ also would have had an angel guardian. But this is unseemly, for Christ is greater than all the angels. Therefore angels are not appointed to the guardianship of all men.

Objection 2. Further, Adam was the first of all men. But it was not fitting that he should have an angel guardian, at least in the state of innocence: for then he was not beset by any dangers. Therefore angels are not appointed to the guardianship of all men.

Objection 3. Further, angels are appointed to the guardianship of men, that they may take them by the hand and guide them to eternal life, encourage them to good works, and protect them against the assaults of the demons. But men who are foreknown to damnation, never attain to eternal life. Infidels, also, though at times they perform good works, do not perform them well, for they have not a right intention: for “faith directs the intention” as Augustine says (Enarr. ii in Ps. 31). Moreover, the coming of Antichrist will be “according to the working of Satan,” as it is written (2 Thess. 2:9). Therefore angels are not deputed to the guardianship of all men.

On the contrary, is the authority of Jerome quoted above (a. 2), for he says that “each soul has an angel appointed to guard it.”

I answer that, Man while in this state of life, is, as it were, on a road by which he should journey towards heaven. On this road man is threatened by many dangers both from within and from without, according to Ps.

159:4: “In this way wherein I walked, they have hidden a snare for me.” And therefore as guardians are appointed for men who have to pass by an unsafe road, so an angel guardian is assigned to each man as long as he is a wayfarer. When, however, he arrives at the end of life he no longer has a guardian angel; but in the kingdom he will have an angel to reign with him, in hell a demon to punish him.

Reply to Objection 1. Christ as man was guided immediately by the Word of God: wherefore He needed not be guarded by an angel. Again as regards His soul, He was a comprehensor, although in regard to His passible body, He was a wayfarer. In this latter respect it was right that He should have not a guardian angel as superior to Him, but a ministering angel as inferior to Him. Whence it is written (Mat. 4:11) that “angels came and ministered to Him.”

Reply to Objection 2. In the state of innocence man was not threatened by any peril from within: because within him all was well ordered, as we have said above (q. 95, Aa. 1,3). But peril threatened from without on account of the snares of the demons; as was proved by the event. For this reason he needed a guardian angel.

Reply to Objection 3. Just as the foreknown, the infidels, and even Anti-christ, are not deprived of the interior help of natural reason; so neither are they deprived of that exterior help granted by God to the whole human race—namely the guardianship of the angels. And although the help which they receive therefrom does not result in their deserving eternal life by good works, it does nevertheless conduce to their being protected from certain evils which would hurt both themselves and others. For even

the demons are held off by the good angels, lest they hurt as much as they would. In like manner Antichrist will not

do as much harm as he would wish.

Whether an angel is appointed to guard a man from his birth?

Ia q. 113 a. 5

Objection 1. It would seem that an angel is not appointed to guard a man from his birth. For angels are “sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation,” as the Apostle says (Heb. 1:14). But men begin to receive the inheritance of salvation, when they are baptized. Therefore an angel is appointed to guard a man from the time of his baptism, not of his birth.

Objection 2. Further, men are guarded by angels in as far as angels enlighten and instruct them. But children are not capable of instruction as soon as they are born, for they have not the use of reason. Therefore angels are not appointed to guard children as soon as they are born.

Objection 3. Further, a child has a rational soul for some time before birth, just as well as after. But it does not appear that an angel is appointed to guard a child before its birth, for they are not then admitted to the sacraments of the Church. Therefore angels are not appointed to guard men from the moment of their birth.

On the contrary, Jerome says (vide A, 4) that “each soul has an angel appointed to guard it from its birth.”

I answer that, as Origen observes (Tract. v, super Matt.) there are two opinions on this matter. For some have held that the angel guardian is appointed at the time of baptism, others, that he is appointed at the time of birth. The latter opinion Jerome approves (vide A, 4), and with reason. For those benefits which are conferred by God on man as a Christian, begin with his baptism; such as receiving the Eucharist, and the like. But those which

are conferred by God on man as a rational being, are bestowed on him at his birth, for then it is that he receives that nature. Among the latter benefits we must count the guardianship of angels, as we have said above (Aa. 1,4). Wherefore from the very moment of his birth man has an angel guardian appointed to him.

Reply to Objection 1. Angels are sent to minister, and that efficaciously indeed, for those who shall receive the inheritance of salvation, if we consider the ultimate effect of their guardianship, which is the realizing of that inheritance. But for all that, the angelic ministrations are not withdrawn for others although they are not so efficacious as to bring them to salvation: efficacious, nevertheless, they are, inasmuch as they ward off many evils.

Reply to Objection 2. Guardianship is ordained to enlightenment by instruction, as to its ultimate and principal effect. Nevertheless it has many other effects consistent with childhood; for instance to ward off the demons, and to prevent both bodily and spiritual harm.

Reply to Objection 3. As long as the child is in the mother’s womb it is not entirely separate, but by reason of a certain intimate tie, is still part of her: just as the fruit while hanging on the tree is part of the tree. And therefore it can be said with some degree of probability, that the angel who guards the mother guards the child while in the womb. But at its birth, when it becomes separate from the mother, an angel guardian is appointed to it; as Jerome, above quoted, says.

Whether the angel guardian ever forsakes a man?

Ia q. 113 a. 6

Objection 1. It would seem that the angel guardian sometimes forsakes the man whom he is appointed to guard. For it is said (Jer. 51:9) in the person of the angels: “We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed: let us forsake her.” And (Is. 5:5) it is written: “I will take away the hedge”—that is, “the guardianship of the angels” [gloss]—“and it shall be wasted.”

Objection 2. Further, God’s guardianship excels that of the angels. But God forsakes man at times, according to Ps. 21:2: “O God, my God, look upon me: why hast Thou forsaken me?” Much rather therefore does an angel guardian forsake man.

Objection 3. Further, according to Damascene (De Fide Orth. ii, 3), “When the angels are here with us, they are not in heaven.” But sometimes they are in heaven. Therefore sometimes they forsake us.

On the contrary, The demons are ever assailing us, according to 1 Pet. 5:8: “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.” Much more therefore do the good angels ever guard us.

I answer that, As appears above (a. 2), the guardianship of the angels is an effect of Divine providence in regard to man. Now it is evident that neither man, nor anything at all, is entirely withdrawn from the providence of God: for in as far as a thing participates being, so far is it subject to the providence that extends over all being. God indeed is said to forsake man, according to the ordering of His providence, but only in so far as He allows man to suffer some defect of punishment or of fault. In like manner it must be said that the angel guardian never forsakes a man entirely, but sometimes he leaves him in some particular, for instance by not preventing him from being

subject to some trouble, or even from falling into sin, according to the ordering of Divine judgments. In this sense Babylon and the House of Israel are said to have been forsaken by the angels, because their angel guardians did not prevent them from being subject to tribulation.

From this the answers are clear to the first and second objections.

Reply to Objection 3. Although an angel may forsake a man sometimes locally, he does not for that reason forsake him as to the effect of his guardianship: for even when he is in heaven he knows what is happening to man; nor does he need time for his local motion, for he can be with man in an instant.

Whether angels grieve for the ills of those whom they guard?

Ia q. 113 a. 7

Objection 1. It would seem that angels grieve for the ills of those whom they guard. For it is written (Is. 33:7): “The angels of peace shall weep bitterly.” But weeping is a sign of grief and sorrow. Therefore angels grieve for the ills of those whom they guard.

Objection 2. Further, according to Augustine (De Civ. Dei xiv, 15), “sorrow is for those things that happen against our will.” But the loss of the man whom he has guarded is against the guardian angel’s will. Therefore angels grieve for the loss of men.

Objection 3. Further, as sorrow is contrary to joy, so penance is contrary to sin. But angels rejoice about one sinner doing penance, as we are told, Lk. 15:7. Therefore they grieve for the just man who falls into sin.

Objection 4. Further, on Numbers 18:12: “Whatever first-fruits they offer,” etc. the gloss of Origen says: “The angels are brought to judgment as to whether men have fallen through their negligence or through their own fault.” But it is reasonable for anyone to grieve for the ills which have brought him to judgment. Therefore angels grieve for men’s sins.

On the contrary, Where there is grief and sorrow, there is not perfect happiness: wherefore it is written (Apoc. 21:4): “Death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow.” But the angels are perfectly happy. Therefore they have no cause for grief.

I answer that, Angels do not grieve, either for sins or for the pains inflicted on men. For grief and sorrow, according to Augustine (De Civ. Dei xiv, 15) are for those things which occur against our will. But nothing happens in the world contrary to the will of the angels and the other blessed, because they will cleave entirely to the ordering of Divine justice; while nothing happens in the world save what is effected or permitted by Divine justice. Therefore

simply speaking, nothing occurs in the world against the will of the blessed. For as the Philosopher says (Ethic. iii, 1) that is called simply voluntary, which a man wills in a particular case, and at a particular time, having considered all the circumstances; although universally speaking, such a thing would not be voluntary: thus the sailor does not will the casting of his cargo into the sea, considered universally and absolutely, but on account of the threatened danger of his life, he wills it. Wherefore this is voluntary rather than involuntary, as stated in the same passage. Therefore universally and absolutely speaking the angels do not will sin and the pains inflicted on its account: but they do will the fulfilment of the ordering of Divine justice in this matter, in respect of which some are subjected to pains and are allowed to fall into sin.

Reply to Objection 1. These words of Isaias may be understood of the angels, i.e. the messengers, of Ezechias, who wept on account of the words of Rabsaces, as related Is. 37:2 seqq.: this would be the literal sense. According to the allegorical sense the “angels of peace” are the apostles and preachers who weep for men’s sins. If according to the anagogical sense this passage be expounded of the blessed angels, then the expression is metaphorical, and signifies that universally speaking the angels will the salvation of mankind: for in this sense we attribute passions to God and the angels.

The reply to the second objection appears from what has been said.

Reply to Objection 3. Both in man’s repentance and in man’s sin there is one reason for the angel’s joy, namely the fulfilment of the ordering of the Divine Providence.

Reply to Objection 4. The angels are brought into judgment for the sins of men, not as guilty, but as witnesses to convict man of weakness.

Whether there can be strife or discord among the angels?

Ia q. 113 a. 8

Objection 1. It would seem that there can be strife or discord among the angels. For it is written (Job 25:2): “Who maketh peace in His high places.” But strife is opposed to peace. Therefore among the high angels there is no strife.

Objection 2. Further, where there is perfect charity and just authority there can be no strife. But all this exists among the angels. Therefore there is no strife among the angels.

Objection 3. Further, if we say that angels strive for

those whom they guard, one angel must needs take one side, and another angel the opposite side. But if one side is in the right the other side is in the wrong. It will follow therefore, that a good angel is a compounder of wrong; which is unseemly. Therefore there is no strife among good angels.

On the contrary, It is written (Dan. 10:13): “The prince of the kingdom of the Persians resisted me one and twenty days.” But this prince of the Persians was the angel deputed to the guardianship of the kingdom of the Persians. Therefore one good angel resists the others; and thus there is strife among them.

I answer that, The raising of this question is occasioned by this passage of Daniel. Jerome explains it by saying that the prince of the kingdom of the Persians is the angel who opposed the setting free of the people of Israel, for whom Daniel was praying, his prayers being offered to God by Gabriel. And this resistance of his may have been caused by some prince of the demons having led the Jewish captives in Persia into sin; which sin was an impediment to the efficacy of the prayer which Daniel

put up for that same people.

But according to Gregory (Moral. xvii), the prince of the kingdom of Persia was a good angel appointed to the guardianship of that kingdom. To see therefore how one angel can be said to resist another, we must note that the Divine judgments in regard to various kingdoms and various men are executed by the angels. Now in their actions, the angels are ruled by the Divine decree. But it happens at times in various kingdoms or various men there are contrary merits or demerits, so that one of them is subject to or placed over another. As to what is the ordering of Divine wisdom on such matters, the angels cannot know it unless God reveal it to them: and so they need to consult Divine wisdom thereupon. Wherefore forasmuch as they consult the Divine will concerning various contrary and opposing merits, they are said to resist one another: not that their wills are in opposition, since they are all of one mind as to the fulfilment of the Divine decree; but that the things about which they seek knowledge are in opposition.

From this the answers to the objections are clear.