
GANZ NOTES TO SHARE, TNS 14, 2 - THE ANGELS AND THEIR MISSION

PRAYER TO GUARDIAN ANGEL

Angel of God,
my guardian dear,
To whom God's love
commits me here,
Ever this day,
be at my side,
To light and guard,
Rule and guide.

Amen.

ANGELS - WHAT THEY DO

Angels are defined by their *function*, not by their *substance* - they are *sent* by God, as essential principles/powers of the created universe, on a mission.

But as we explored in Part I of TNS 14, they could but likely only on rare occasions receive from the Divine Majesty a specific mission. But I say "on rare occasions" because God should not be conceived as a micro-managing CEO. What the Angels know is the overall Plan of God for the created universe, of which our world is a tiny piece. Angels likely rarely need **to be told what to do** to serve that Plan - in this world we call it the Kingdom of God - **because they already know God's purpose**. In this world of ours, the Angels attend to that Plan, making, and creatively, regular "tweaks", so that God's purposes come to fruition.

But what of their "name" - ANGEL - as a *function*, and only in rarest cases a personal name (Gabriel, Raphael, etc.). We might make this analogy: the last names of many people - the family name - is often a function. Consider these last names:

Carpenter
Cooper
Plumber
Baker
Smith
Ferrier
Farmer
Fisher
Sawyer
etc.

FR. JIM BURKE, SJ

Driving north from Spokane in the Winter, heading to teach Theology weekend in Canada as part of the Gonzaga University outreach into Canada.

ANGELS TAKING HUMAN FORM

If Angels are incorporeal, as they are, then for what reason them taking human form, putting on a disguise if you will?

I think that this is ultimately about the courtesy of Heaven. If human beings have lost all touch with a familiarity with Angels, then how can human beings benefit from the spiritual formation, guidance, instruction that the Angels have as their mission among us? In courtesy, and after the example of the second Divine Person assuming our human nature, **the Angels take on human “disguises” in order to be able to communicate with us.**

But to some this may appear unsettling, that Angels would choose to “deceive” us by appearing as they are not. **Yet, consider this analogy: We human beings “put on” false selves all the time! We regularly appear as we are not, for reason we think good but also for reason nefarious.**

ANGELS AS PURE RELATIONSHIP

[This is a repetition of what I taught in Part I of this Series.]

I used the analogy of the “third thing”: How a relationship is something distinct, a pure spiritual and personal presence, of that which two people bring into existence. We recognize when two friends become close enough to each other that we speak of *them*, meaning our perception of their *relationship*.

I suggested that if **we are capable of perceiving an incorporeal existent** when we perceive the presence of a relationship, then that proves that we must be capable of perceiving other incorporeal existences.

HORIZON

Karl Rahner, SJ – “At the same time data of importance for the theology of salvation were to some extent neglected. **The natural unity of the earthly and angelic world was not made really clear and explicit**, although it is presupposed by the unity of redemptive history.”

Reading this, I started to think about Lonergan’s idea of **horizon** – all that one is able to perceive and understand from a particular viewpoint – and how for most people Angels are not included in their horizon. On principle, people simply don’t believe that such created, non-corporeal fellow creatures exist ... except in fanciful stories.

What occurs to me, then, is how people are more and more “open” to the possibility that we are not alone in the universe (the SETI project; the UFO sightings, etc.). **We are more willing to accept the possibilities of “aliens” than we are to accept the reality of Angels.**

ANGELS AS BUILT-IN PERSONAL PRINCIPLES

I think that what Rahner is trying to get at is that we do not approach appropriately the Angels as anthropomorphized beings, a kind of super-human - and thus all of the mythology that such a view spawns. Rather, Angels can be *thought*, can be *understood* as principles and powers built into the structure of things – “the reality is already in-built”.

I am beginning to think clearer about this. Up to this point I have always thought of Angels as created beings **who cross back and forth** between God’s world – Heaven – and our world. I have thought that when they appear to human beings it is because

they have been sent from Heaven to accomplish some specific purpose (like “actual” or “helping” grace).

It has not occurred to me until now how God *built them into* the very structure of the created world, **a scheme of recurrence** (their consistency around their mission to uphold, heal, and sustain God’s creative purposes in our world – they can be counted on).

ANGELS AS CREATIVELY FAITHFUL

[This is a repetition of what I taught in Part I of this Series.]

Angels “dwell” throughout the entire created universe, an essential part of its Pattern, who serve that Pattern in unique, creative ways. Angels are not “sitting around” waiting for God to send them to make right a broken part of the Pattern or to further a Divine, creative action; **they already know** how God made and sustains the created universe and they do not need to be told when something has gone awry. **They act.** And because they know the HOW of God’s creation, they act in a way harmonious with God’s way.

It is important to get clear that if a being, an Angel in this case, **lives a life in perfect alignment with God’s purposes**, that does not mean that the Angel lacks free will. A *typical American might riposte that if an Angel has no ideas of its own, but only does what God commands, then the Angel is like a programmed robot, no free will!*

Angels are *creatively faithful*, which means that what they choose to do, always in accord with God is doing in the created world, is a genuine development in salvation history. Karl Rahner (see below) in this regard speaks of the *supernatural vocation* given each Angel. This kind of “singularity” of a particular Angel is what is captured in the Tradition in names that are given to some of the Angels.

Allow me the following analogy to Jesuit life. Jesuits like to imagine themselves (and some actually are what they imagine) as *sent*, as defined by their mission. **Take a mission away from a good Jesuit, and you badly damage him**, taking from him the very context he needs to be able to be discerning about his particular purpose.

In this regard, the Angels act *obediently*. I learned how to become obedient through my Vow of Obedience in the Jesuit Order. Only a highly immature Jesuit (there were a lot of them) would consider his Vow as *doing what he is told to do* by his Superior, when his Superior tells him to do something. No! A maturely obedient Jesuit grows yearly in his ability to understand what the We of the Jesuit Order endeavors to do and pays close

attention to how his Superior serves those purposes (discerning also how often those Superiors ignore the We). The mature Jesuit acts in the concreteness of his life and circumstances to make sure that what the We is trying to do is done, but *he acts uniquely and creatively*. **A Jesuit Superior commanding obedience to do a particular thing should rarely, if ever, tell the Jesuit *how* to act.** That is up to the freedom and creativity of the individual Jesuit. **In other words, a mature Jesuit should rarely, if ever, be surprised by what is commanded him to do according to the We, because *he already knows* what We are doing and has activated himself to serve that purpose before ever being told to act.**

FR. DANIELLOU'S BOOK

Jean Daniélou, SJ, *The Angels and Their Mission: According to the Fathers of the Church* (1952 in French; 1957 in English)

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ON FR. JEAN DANIELOU, SJ

The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. – **Daniélou, Jean (1905–74)**
Theologian. Born at Neuilly-sur-Seine, he became a Jesuit (see Society of Jesus) in 1929. He studied in Jersey, at Lyon (where he came under the influence of de *Lubac), and at Mongré, and received a doctorate from the *Sorbonne (1944) for a thesis on the spiritual theology of *Gregory of Nyssa. From 1943 he was a professor at the Institut Catholique in Paris. A *peritus* at the Second *Vatican Council, he was made a cardinal in 1969. His importance as a theologian rests mainly on his patristic scholarship.

CHAPTER ONE – THE ANGELS AND THE LAW

This, then, is a doctrine which is solidly established in tradition and in reason. With all due deference to the rationalism of certain of our contemporaries, **the intelligent and forceful government to which the order of the universe bears witness might very easily have heavenly spirits as its ministers.** This bond between the angels and the visible universe, furthermore, could very well give us the key to certain mysteries. But there is nothing to be gained in beginning this study with a thought so bold that it would startle even the best disposed readers and perhaps keep them from taking seriously the more important things that will be mentioned later. **Besides, our subject is limited to the study of the mission of angels among men. It is in the measure that they assist man in the pursuit of his final end that they are the ministers of the gifts of God in the natural order as well as in the supernatural.**

CHAPTER TWO - THE ANGELS AND THE WORLD RELIGION

The communication of covenants and of the Law represents an outstanding gift of God to the people of Israel made through the intermediary of the angels. **But this does not mean that the other peoples living before the coming of Christ were completely deprived of divine assistance and excluded from the whole process of preparation.** Prior to the covenant with Abraham the Old Testament knew **an earlier alliance, that of Noe, contracted with the whole of humanity. Its object was the fidelity of God in regard to the world and its symbol was the rainbow.** This is the covenant which is spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles (14:16). "In the generations that are past he let all the nations follow their own ways, and yet He did not leave Himself without testimony, bestowing blessings, giving rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with good and gladness." **Thus, the very regularity of the laws of nature is a sort of revelation through which man can recognize the existence of a provident God.** That is the teaching of the Epistle to the Romans (1:20): "Since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood through the things that are made."

In this divine assistance to the nations the angels also have a role to play. **It is, in fact, a common doctrine in the whole of ancient tradition that God has entrusted the nations to His angels.** This doctrine, which goes back to Judaism, is echoed in the Greek translation of Deuteronomy 32:8. "When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he appointed the bounds of people according to the number of the angels of God." The Book of Daniel speaks of the angels of Greece and Persia (Dan. 10:13-21). The Jewish apocalypses were familiar with this doctrine, as was Philo of Alexandria. The New Testament seems to presuppose it in Acts 17:26.3 "And from one man he has created the whole human race and made them live all over the face of the earth, determining their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands."

It is found again in the Fathers. Irenaeus makes mention of it, and Clement of Alexandria writes: "The presiding powers of the angels have been distributed according to the nations and the cities." And elsewhere, "The angels have been apportioned among the nations according to an ancient and divine decree." Hippolytus says the same thing.

CHAPTER THREE - THE ANGELS OF THE NATIVITY

The coming of Christ would seem, according to St. Paul, to have necessarily put an end to the ministry of the angels. It is Jesus who is the sole minister of the New Covenant. **But actually this is not so. Christ is indeed the center of the history of salvation, but the whole world of angels is round about to serve Him. On the one hand, the angels who were entrusted with the care of earthly affairs receive Him with joy and place themselves at His service; and on the other hand, the angels of heaven come down with Him to be the ministers and witnesses of His work.** The hierarchical point of view is visible here within the range of the historical. **This manifestation of the angels fills especially two moments in the life of Christ: its beginning and its end, the infancy and the glory, the Nativity and the Ascension. It is in connection with these two mysteries that the angels are particularly signaled out in the Gospel.**

The Fathers of the Church present the ages which preceded Christ as marking *an increase in the power of the demons*. The vestiges of a monotheistic revelation, communicated to all men through the ministry of the angels, grow faint with the flourishing of idolatry and devil worship. **Even in the one part of the world which God reserved for Himself, the people of Israel, the rising tide of sin continues to mount. The angels to whom the nations were entrusted are powerless to stem the flood of evil.** "Before the birth of Christ these angels could be of little use to those entrusted to them and their attempts were not followed by success. ... Whenever the Angel of the Egyptians helped the Egyptians, there was hardly a single proselyte who believed in God."

That is why the angels in charge of the nations welcomed the coming of the Saviour with great happiness. "The Saviour places under His powerful protection no longer only Israel, just and God-minded, nor His own portion, but all the nations of earth who were first apportioned to the many angels and became involved in all manner of ungodliness; to all of them He announces the knowledge and friendship that is to be found in His Father, God ... **When He was seen by His own angels, who were first set up over the nations, they immediately recognized their Lord coming to their aid and went to Him joyously, to minister to Him.** Just as Sacred Scripture says in the Gospel, 'The angels drew near and ministered to Him.' And elsewhere: 'There was a multitude

of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will to men.' ”

CHAPTER FOUR – THE ANGELS OF THE ASCENSION

If the mystery of the Nativity inaugurates the work of Christ, that of the Ascension completes it. **Just as the angels were entrusted with the secrets of the first, they are the open admirers of the second, after having assisted Christ throughout the interval which separated these two events, from the temptation to the Resurrection.**

THE GREAT REVERSAL OF HIERARCHY - But there is more. The relation of the angels of the Ascension has a much deeper meaning. It is bound up with substance of the mystery. **The Ascension is not only the elevation of Christ in His Body into the midst of the angels; to be more theologically precise, it is the exaltation of human nature, which the Word of God has united to Himself, above all the angelic orders which are superior to it. This is a complete reversal of the regular order, and it affords the angels an “unheard-of” spectacle.**

Ephesians 1 (NAB): The Church as Christ’s Body.* ¹⁵Therefore, I, too, hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of your love* for all the holy ones,ⁿ ¹⁶do not cease giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,^o ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him.^p ¹⁸May the eyes of [your] hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones,^q ¹⁹and what is the

* See note on Rom 1:8 for the thanksgiving form in a letter. Much of the content parallels thoughts in Col 1:3–20. The prayer moves from God and Christ (Eph 1:17, 20–21) to the Ephesians (Eph 1:17–19) and the church (Eph 1:22–23). Paul asks that the blessing imparted by God the Father (Eph 1:3) to the Ephesians will be strengthened in them through the message of the gospel (Eph 1:13, 17–19). Those blessings are seen in the context of God’s *might* in establishing the sovereignty of Christ over all other creatures (Eph 1:19–21) and in appointing him *head* of the church (Eph 1:22–23). **For the allusion to angelic spirits in Eph 1:21, see Rom 8:38 and Col 1:16. Here, as in 1 Cor 15:24–25 and Col 2:15, every such *principality* and *power* is made subject to Christ.**

* *Your faith ... your love*: some manuscripts omit the latter phrase, but cf. Col 1:4.

ⁿ Col 1:3–4; Phlm 4–5.

^o Col 1:3, 9.

^p 3:14, 16; Col 1:9–10; 1 Jn 5:20.

^q 4:4; Col 1:12, 27.

surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might,^{r 20} **which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens,^{s 21} far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come.^{t 22} And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,^{u 23} which is his body,* the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.^{v 1}**

It is at the Name of Jesus; that is, Christ made Man that every knee is to bend in heaven. The overwhelming revelation made to the angels in the mystery of the Ascension is not that they are to adore the eternal Word that is already the object of their liturgy; **but rather that they are to adore the Word Incarnate and that overturns all of heaven, just as the Incarnation revolutionized all of earth.**

Hebrews 1 (NAB): ¹ In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; ² in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe,^a

³ who is the refulgence of his glory,
the very imprint of his being,
and who sustains all things by his mighty word.
When he had accomplished purification from sins,

^r 2 Cor 13:4; Col 1:11; 2:12.

^s Ps 110:1; Heb 1:3.

^t Phil 2:9; Col 1:16; 1 Pt 3:22.

^u 4:15; Ps 8:7; Mt 28:18; Col 1:18.

* *His body*: the church (Eph 1:22); cf. note on Col 1:18. Only in Ephesians and Colossians is Christ the *head* of the *body*, in contrast to the view in 1 Cor 12 and Rom 12:4–8 where Christ is equated with the entire body or community. *Fullness*: see note on Col 1:19. Some take *the one who fills* as God, others as Christ (cf. Eph 4:10). If in Christ “dwells the fullness of the deity bodily” (Col 2:9), then, as God “fills” Christ, Christ in turn fills the church and the believer (Eph 3:19; 5:18). But the difficult phrases here may also allow the church to be viewed as the “complement” of Christ who is “being filled” as God’s plan for the universe is carried out through the church (cf. Eph 3:9–10).

^v 4:10, 12; Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:27; Col 1:19.

¹ [New American Bible](#), Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Eph 1:15–23.

^a Is 2:2; Jer 23:20; Ez 38:16; Dn 10:14 / Jn 3:17; Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4 / Prv 8:30; Wis 7:22; Jn 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16.

he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high,^b
⁴as far superior to the angels
as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.^{c 2}

JESUS UNRECOGNIZABLE BY THE HIGHER-ORDER ANGELS OF HEAVEN - If the mystery of the Nativity is also that of the revelation made by the angels of heaven to those of earth, then the mystery of the Ascension is the mystery of the revelation made by the angels of earth to the angels of heaven. **Just as, at the Nativity, we see the Word descend, surrounded by the angels of heaven, and meet the guardian angels of earth, so now we see Him rise, accompanied by the angels of earth, and meet the angels who guard the gates of heaven. *But these do not recognize Him, because He appears united to the human nature which He assumed and bearing the marks of His passion.* Thus they question the angels who are accompanying Him to find out who He is.** This is a traditional theme, resting principally upon two Biblical texts, Psalm 23:7-10, which has already been seen, and Isaias 63:1, “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra?” ... **But Justin is the first to develop the dialogue between the angels of heaven who do not recognize the Word made Flesh and the angels of earth who reveal His identity.**

^b Wis 7:26; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15 / Heb 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; Mk 16:19; Acts 2:33; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; 1 Pt 3:22.

^c Eph 1:21; Phil 2:9-11.

² [New American Bible](#), Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Heb 1:1-4.



Ganz - A Letter Responding to a Question at The Night School 14, Part II - The Angels and their Mission

I have just seen your text inquiry from last night's Night School.

Wed, Feb 28, 2024 at 8:47 AM

The understanding is that from the earliest existence of our world (see Genesis 2-3) there was a malign presence stalking, especially, human beings. This personal malevolence was from earliest days perceived as the presence of Satan/Lucifer, a fallen angel. This fallen Angel is like all Angels is a created existent, just like human beings and goldfish (etc.). He/She/It is not divine but like us a created being.

The jealousy of this Angel, when he/she/it perceived the purpose of God in creating human beings - in God's image and likeness (Angels are not created this way) - was the reasons this Angel rebelled, finding this inappropriate of God, a disgusting honor given to human beings us - who are so full of frailty, so unlike the Angels, and of far lesser power.

Satan's/Lucifer's resounding "No" to this aspect of God's plan for the created universe is what his/her/its "fall" was.

Satan/Lucifer is not God's equal, God's ultimate enemy. How could that Angel be this when simply another created being? Satan/Lucifer, rather, is the enemy of human beings. That Angel strikes at human beings as the way of striking at God - going after God's special creation, His children.

One tradition has it that for every human guardian Angel there exists a malevolent Angel. Could be; no way to know this. St. Ignatius of Loyola, in his Rules for Discernment, appears to understand matters in this way: the good spirit; the bad spirit - both at play in human spiritual experience.

But I understand it this way. Satan/Lucifer works by recruiting human beings, winning us to the works of darkness, darkening those who freely choose to fall for these temptations, filling such people with despair and hatefulness, so that they become his/her/its lieutenants. (C.S. Lewis' famous *Screwtape Letters* open to this line of thought and with extraordinary insight.)

It pleases Satan/Lucifer best of all when God's special creation - human beings made in His image and likeness - make themselves, by their free cooperation with malign temptation, turn on each other, seek by vicious means to "cancel" each other, to begin to enjoy being evil for the social and cultural "advantages" it

appears to give to them. St. Ignatius of Loyola has as one of his names for the dark spirit working in our world: "the Enemy of our Human Nature". What better revenge for Satan/Lucifer than for human beings, so "fearfully, wonderfully made", to make themselves ugly, to turn against each other, to feed on each other?

Now to your question, Shirley. The "celestial" Angels (i.e., those of this world, sent to guard, protect, guide, and to inspire human beings) eventually came to understand that the maliciousness of human beings, our open cooperation with evil, made their work (i.e., of the Angels) growingly ineffective. They did not have the power to overcome the evil Satan/Lucifer had developed among human beings. Recall Jesus' particularly pointed words in his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3):

Any man who believes in him is not judged at all. It is the one who will not believe who stands already condemned, because he will not believe in the character of God's only Son. This is the judgment—that light has entered the world and men have preferred darkness to light because their deeds are evil. Anybody who does wrong hates the light and keeps away from it, for fear his deeds may be exposed. But anybody who is living by the truth will come to the light to make it plain that all he has done has been done through God."

The point is that the Trinity, for God's own reasons - love - not because evil caused God to act, but because the Angels sent to guard, to protect, to inspire - those who love and serve God's purposes always - asked God to do what only God could do. But as we know, God did vastly more - far deeper, more beautiful, surpassingly surprising - when the second Divine Person freely chose to become in the image and likeness of us (!), learning to know us from the inside (but without ever losing His identity as the second Divine Person, the One freely choosing "not to deem equality with God something to be grasped at").

May these thoughts give you what you need to continue your own thinking about these matters.

With warm regards in Christ,
Rick