

Seminar: Angels in Part One of the *Summa Theologiae*

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Introduction. The First Part of the *Summa Theologiae* (aka *ST 1*) contains 24 questions on angels. The purpose of this eight-hour seminar is modest: to provide you with the opportunity to read these questions carefully ([in my translation](#)) and thus to gain a firm first acquaintance with them. Given our time limitation, we won't be able to do a line-by-line reading, but I should be able to make the main points clear.

That said, context and order are always important with St. Thomas, but especially in the *Summa Theologiae*. After the introductory question to the First Part, St. Thomas spends the next 42 questions discussing God in Himself, i.e., the divine nature shared by the three persons and then the Trinity of persons. After this, St. Thomas turns to the creatures whom God has created. He spends six questions explaining the nature of creation *ex nihilo* and some of its ramifications. Then he turns to the three main classes of creatures that God has created.

The first 15 questions of this section (*ST 1*, qq. 50-64) deal with the nature of the angels along with questions about their relation to matter and space, their cognitive and affective powers, their initial and (for the good angels) beatified states, and the fall of the bad angels.

After dealing with inanimate corporeal beings and human beings in the next 38 questions, St. Thomas ends the First Part with 17 questions on God's governance of the created world. Nine of these questions (*ST 1*, qq. 106-114) deal with angels and their role — for better or worse, depending on whether they are good angels or bad angels (aka demons) — in God's governance of the created world in general and of human affairs in particular.

So we have 24 questions to read and eight sessions to talk about them. I have to group them a bit unevenly in order to keep closely related questions together.

Syllabus.

Monday, March 14: *Angels in themselves and in their relation to matter, place, and local motion.* *ST 1*, [q. 50](#), [q. 51](#), [q. 52](#), and [q. 53](#).

Wednesday, March 16: *The cognitive powers and activities of angels.* *ST 1*, [q. 54](#), [q. 55](#), [q. 56](#), [q. 57](#), and [q. 58](#).

Monday, March 21: *Angelic willing and loving.* *ST 1*, [q. 59](#) and [q. 60](#).

Wednesday, March 23: *The natural and perfected existence of angels.* *ST 1*, [q. 61](#) and [q. 62](#).

Monday, March 28: *Angels gone bad.* *ST 1*, [q. 63](#) and [q. 64](#).

Wednesday, March 30: *Angelic communication and the hierarchical arrangement of angels.*
ST 1, [q. 106](#), [q. 107](#), [q. 108](#), [q. 109](#).

Monday, April 4: *The action of angels on corporeal creatures and on human beings in general.*
ST 1, [q. 110](#) and [q. 111](#).

Monday, April 11: *The mission of the angels in general, along with the guardian angels and the attacker demons.* ST 1, [q. 112](#), [q. 113](#), and [q. 114](#).

Further readings that you might find interesting.

Alfred J. Freddoso, [Angels and Demons](#) (a short introductory paper that you might find it useful to read before tackling the text itself).

Jean Danielou, SJ. [The Angels and Their Mission](#) (a classic treatment by a fine Patristics scholar, centering on the questions about the angelic mission to human beings as treated by the Fathers of the Church).

Rev. Fr. Pascale Parente, [The Angels in Catholic Teaching and Tradition](#) (I confess that I do not know this book, but it is from TAN Books and has a lot of good reviews from seemingly serious Catholics on Amazon. I have bought a copy.)

C.S. Lewis, [The Screwtape Letters](#) (a classic and entertaining treatment of demonic psychology in the service of corrupting human beings).

Mike Aquilina, [Angels of God: The Bible, the Church and the Heavenly Hosts](#) (A good solid book by a good solid friend of mine, the main aim of which is to help the reader, with the help of the Fathers of the Church, to develop a practical relationship with the angels who minister to human beings and institutions and especially with his or own guardian angel.)

Catechism of the Catholic Church, ##328-336.

