

ANGELS, DEMONS AND THE NEW WORLD

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Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page ix
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	xi
Introduction	I
<i>Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden</i>	
PART I FROM THE OLD WORLD TO THE NEW	
1 The devil in the Old World: anti-superstition literature, medical humanism and preternatural philosophy in early modern Spain	15
<i>Andrew Keitt</i>	
2 <i>Demonios</i> within and without: Hieronymites and the devil in the early modern Hispanic world	40
<i>Kenneth Mills</i>	
3 How to see angels: the legacy of early Mendicant spirituality	69
<i>Fernando Cervantes</i>	
PART II INDIGENOUS RESPONSES	
4 Satan is my nickname: demonic and angelic interventions in colonial Nahuatl theatre	101
<i>Louise M. Burkhart</i>	
5 Where did all the angels go? An interpretation of the Nahua supernatural world	126
<i>Caterina Pizzigoni</i>	

6	Vipers under the altar cloths: satanic and angelic forms in seventeenth-century New Granada <i>Andrew Redden</i>	146
PART III THE WORLD OF THE BAROQUE		
7	Angels and demons in the conquest of Peru <i>Ramón Mujica Pinilla</i>	171
8	Winged and imagined Indians <i>Jaime Cuadriello</i>	211
9	'Psychomachia Indiana': angels, devils and holy images in New Spain <i>David Brading</i>	249
	<i>List of works cited</i>	274
	<i>Index</i>	297

Introduction

Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden

Angels and demons are central to Jewish, Christian and Muslim thought, not least because their existence is attested beyond doubt in the Scriptures and the Qur'an. In all three religious traditions angels and demons are believed to share the same origin. God created only angels, of course, but some of them at some point chose to rebel and in the process became demons. In modern scholarship it is unquestionably the latter that have received the lion's share of attention. This is partly because of the marked interest in the phenomenon of witch prosecutions in the early modern period, but also because, as A. S. Byatt has observed, 'from Marlowe to Thomas Mann and Mikhail Bulgakov, the devil has the best lines, and most of the human wit'.¹ The essential combination of immateriality and benignity that characterises angels, on the other hand, often renders them too elusive and incomprehensible to the modern mind.

It is sharply ironic that it was precisely this fusion of qualities that made angels the subject of vigorous intellectual debate in Patristic and medieval times. It was this very fusion, too, that made them such flourishing components of religious cultures marked by an immense appetite for contact with the supernatural. In particular, the idea that God had assigned to each individual a guardian angel – a notion endorsed by none other than Jesus himself² – sustained a rich variety of rituals, devotions and practices, many of which hovered on the boundary between orthodox piety and the more questionable spheres of 'magic' and 'superstition' where the influence of the demonic often became uncomfortably apparent.

It was not until the early modern period, however, that the potential for heterodoxy in angelic spirituality became a recurring concern. In particular, the impact of the Reformation made the cult of angels an easy target

¹ Preface to David Constantine's translation of Goethe, *Faust* (London, 2005), viii.

² Matthew 18:10.

for anyone, on either side of the confessional divide, who had any reason to distrust what came to be seen as the dubious accretions of medieval religiosity. All the same, the numerous references to angels and demons in the Scriptures made even the most radical reformers eager to acknowledge their existence and to find a place for them in their revised cosmologies. It is not surprising, therefore, that beliefs and practices associated with angels and demons retained considerable vitality in the early modern world. The growing attention paid to demonology and witchcraft – a trend to which our own work has in some way contributed³ – seems therefore in obvious need of a complementary approach that takes angels more carefully into account.

The persistence of belief in angels and demons in the post Reformation world can in some respects be explained as a consequence of lay resistance to elite and clerical acculturation, a symptom of the survival and resilience of traditional devotional patterns in the face of aggressive attempts to transform and remodel them. At the same time, it is clear that many self-confessed orthodox zealots often preferred to condone and even actively to accommodate and harness traditional assumptions and observances.⁴ Such processes became particularly interesting in the way in which European notions about angels and demons were exported to the New World, where they underwent quite remarkable adaptations and permutations in the face of indigenous responses. Indeed, angels and demons came to form an integral part of the Spanish American cosmology remarkably soon after the first encounters, leading to the emergence of colonial urban and rural landscapes that were set within a strikingly theological framework. Belief in celestial spirits soon came to regulate and affect the daily lives of peninsular Spanish, Mestizo and Indigenous peoples, while various evangelising networks interacted with these localised and geographically dispersed practices to create a widespread and generally accepted system of belief that flourished with particular gusto in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Baroque culture and spirituality. At the same time, Renaissance Neoplatonism was stimulating fresh interest

³ See Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (New Haven and London, 1994) and Andrew Redden, *Diabolism in Colonial Peru, 1560–1750* (London, 2008).

⁴ The literature on this topic is vast but some especially illustrative examples are Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven and London, 1992); Raymond Gillespie, *Devoted People: Belief and Religion in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester, 1997); Robert Scribner and Trevor Johnson, eds., *Popular Religion in Germany and Central Europe, 1400–1800* (Basingstoke, 1996); Philip Soergel, *Wondrous in his Saints: Counter Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993).

in the occult sciences and fostering renewed efforts to communicate with and tap the power of all kinds of spiritual beings.⁵ Such activities often find fascinating parallels in the magical techniques employed by popular astrologers and village cunning men and women. Strong influences from the Jewish Cabbala and apocryphal texts can also be detected throughout the Hispanic world, in places as far afield as the Yucatan peninsula, the Colombian Highlands and the Andean Altiplano. These apocryphal texts were woven together with indigenous traditions and orthodox Scriptures in the creation of a vibrant supernatural cosmology which was as multifarious and variegated as it was coherent and trans-cultural.⁶

Despite the flourishing state of the historical field of witchcraft and demonology, there have been few studies of angels. Although they have received some scholarly attention from medievalists⁷ and have more recently begun to attract the attention of early modernists,⁸ their general neglect is undeniable and it is all the more surprising in the context of the growth of interest in a variety of other aspects of the supernatural, including miracles and prodigies.⁹ In an attempt to redress this imbalance, this collection of essays seeks to use angels and demons as a fulcrum for exploring key themes about religious and cultural change, interaction and

⁵ Some important studies include Charles Webster, *From Paracelsus to Newton: Magic and the Making of Modern Science* (Cambridge, 1982); Brian Vickers, ed., *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1984); Michael Hunter, *Science and the Shape of Orthodoxy: Intellectual Change in Late Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Woodbridge, 1995); and M. J. Osler, ed., *Rethinking the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁶ For the Yucatan Peninsula, see Victoria Bricker and Helga-María Miram, trans. and eds., *The Chilam Balam of Kaua* (New Orleans, 2002), 283–95 and the ‘Rite of the Angels’ in chapter 4 of the *Chilam Balam of Chumayel*. For an accessible Spanish edition see Miguel Rivera Dorado, ed., *Chilam Balam de Chumayel* (Madrid, s.d.), 96–101. For an English edition see Munro Edmonson, trans. and ed., *Heaven Born Merida and its Destiny: The Chilam Balam of Chumayel* (Austin, TX, 1986). For apocryphal angels in Colombia see Pablo Gamboa Hinestrosa, *La pintura apócrifa en el arte colonial: Los doce arcángeles de Sopó* (Bogotá, 1996). For the Andes see Ramón Mujica Pinilla, *Ángeles apócrifos en la América virreinal* (Mexico City, 1992; 2nd edn, Lima, 1996); see also Teresa Gisbert, *El paraíso de los pájaros parlantes: La imagen del otro en la cultura andina* (La Paz, 1999), 151–81 and Unión Latina’s publication on the angels of Calamarca, *El retorno de los ángeles: Barroco de las cumbres en Bolivia* (La Paz and Montevideo, 2000).

⁷ See, for example, Henry Mayr-Harting, *Perceptions of Angels in History: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered in the University of Oxford on 14 November 1997* (Oxford, 1998) and David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, (Oxford, 1998).

⁸ See *Angels in the Early Modern World*, ed. Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge, 2006) and Laura Sangha, *Angels and Belief in England, 1480–1700* (London, 2012).

⁹ See, for example, Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth, 1971); D. B. Wilson, *Signs and Portents: Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (London, 1993); R. B. Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford, 1988); Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. L. G. Cochrane (Princeton, 1990); Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999).

negotiation in the early modern Hispanic World. It aims to show that the treatment of angels and demons in conjunction can open an illuminating window onto intellectual and cultural developments in the centuries that followed the European encounter with America. All the essays seek to contribute to a number of lively historical debates about the impact and long-term repercussions of the Reformations and the Renaissance and about the relationship, interaction and evolution of 'elite' and 'popular' mentalities. Despite the wide geographical area covered, the guiding unifying principle at work is the conception of the early modern Hispanic World as a cultural unity where the enormous regional variations were seldom mutually exclusive or incompatible. They all played to the same rich tune of an international religious culture of rich symbolic stability. Indeed, without this neglected aspect, the remarkable survival of a world-wide empire for a period spanning more than three centuries and in the absence of a centralised bureaucracy or a standing army or police force would be impossible to understand.

The three essays in Part I, 'From the Old World to the New', examine the intellectual European background of angelology and demonology before moving to the challenges posed to it by the sudden irruption of the New World and its effect on established assumptions. They all highlight the generally neglected creativity in many of the solutions and accommodations that were proposed and the surprising levels of accommodation and interaction that resulted from them. Andrew Keitt analyses three early modern Spanish discourses: the critique of superstition, medical humanism and preternatural philosophy. He points out that, on those important occasions in which these discourses overlapped, angels and demons played a central role. He then traces the rise of a renewed preoccupation with the need to educate the laity to discern superstition and the use made of the printing press in the process, focusing in particular on the influential treatises by Martín de Castañega, Pedro Ciruelo, Domingo Valtanás and Martín de Azpilcueta. In response to the devil's efforts to feign supernatural miracles, these authors opted to invoke the category of the preternatural; and in response to the popular enthusiasm for portents and prodigies, they proposed explanations along more natural lines. Thus Spanish medical humanists relied as much on Aristotelian and Galenic thought as they did on Neoplatonism and its interest in celestial influences and occult properties. Keitt suggestively argues that the naturalising effects of these hypotheses should not be put in the context of a rationalising trend that pursued a scientific programme. Rather, by tracing the thread of angelological and

demonological thought through various discourses, Keitt highlights some of the finer textures of early modern Spanish intellectual life, especially as it was given new impetus by the exploration of the Americas.

This prepares the ground for Kenneth Mills's exploration of the ways in which the devil and his demonic forces were viewed and deployed. Seeking to redress an imbalance in studies of diabolism, which have concentrated largely on one region or another, Mills aims to bring together both sides of the Atlantic and both the intellectual and the more vernacular demonic forms and explanations. He takes as a principal point of entry the manifestations of the devil and the demonic in and around the transatlantic journey of a pair of Hieronymite alms-collectors. Situating the notions and discoveries of both these figures in their late sixteenth-century context, Mills juxtaposes the peninsular diabolic experiences of Fray Martín de Posada with the Spanish American experiences of his longer-suffering companion, Fray Diego de Ocaña. What emerges is a fascinating transoceanic perspective which challenges the attempts that dominate current scholarship to find more readily understandable explanations along the lines of continuity or rupture, or even coherence. In the process, the essay highlights the resilience of the multicultural religious culture that laboriously emerged out of the fusion of Christianity and indigenous religions, and the central role that supernatural entities played within it.

Fernando Cervantes takes up this multicultural thread in his analysis of Mendicant angelic spirituality by highlighting the importance of the liturgy in the evangelising process and the central place that angels occupied in it. The essay explores the often neglected reciprocal processes of the interaction between Europeans and indigenous peoples and points to the danger of taking the official condemnations of indigenous practices too much at face value. In practice, the ministrations of the Mendicants were in many respects comparable to those of indigenous healers. In this 'middle ground' of ritual and liturgical enactment, Cervantes locates a fulcrum point where angels thrived, despite their tendency to elude the official sources, and where the vital transfusion of Christianity with local indigenous religions was most successfully achieved. Much more than the secular clergy and the increasingly distant hierarchical church, the liturgical culture encouraged by the early Mendicants made possible various points of contact where liturgical practices functioned as facilitators of new allegiances and patterns of observance, embracing and gradually reducing to order a large number of conflicting systems of explanation. Cervantes argues that the Mendicant tradition succeeded in instilling

upon the indigenous minds an image of Christianity as a new power filled with supernatural forces that seemed stronger than the nature spirits of the local religious systems, but not for this reason dramatically different from their world view. Although, as is well known, many aspects in these processes came increasingly under the attack of the secular clergy and the hierarchical church, at the level of corporate practice the early Mendicants set an unofficial trend that continued unabashed throughout the colonial period and beyond.

The three essays in Part II, 'Indigenous Responses', look more closely at the emergence of indigenous Christian cultures with a view to providing an assessment of the role that angels and demons played in them. The first two essays focus on the Nahua world and rely on the unusually rich source of extant documents written in Nahuatl – the indigenous lingua franca of central Mexico – while the third essay uses Jesuit and inquisitorial sources to piece together a panorama of the multi-ethnic religiosity of the Viceroyalty of New Granada (modern Colombia and Venezuela). Louise Burkhart demonstrates that the early Mendicants found in the theatre an effective means to instruct their indigenous neophytes. She analyses twenty-six dramas dating from the late-sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries to show how the presence of angelic and demonic characters, given voice and body by native actors, led angels and demons to become real and convincing in the minds of the neophytes. The roles angels played were either 'heraldic', which in Burkhart's terminology means making announcements, carrying messages, or paying comforting visits to other characters, or persuasive, a role most commonly associated with guardian angels who sought to persuade their charges to reform their sinful ways. The actions of demons were also of two main types, but the same characters performed both within the same plays. These demons first incite people to sin, and then play the role of moral enforcers, dragging their victims to judgment and then to hell. The morality plays that feature these demon characters in fact make up a substantial portion of the dramatic corpus (ten of the twenty-six plays), suggesting that these scenes of judgment and damnation were familiar to Nahua audiences and presenting an interesting imbalance between the respective angelic and demonic forces. Angels, it would appear, were largely ineffective at persuading their charges to take responsibility for their own actions. More often than not, it was the demons that emerged victorious. The point, of course, was to persuade the Nahua audience of the importance of repentance and confession; yet sinners were typically represented by such awful people that their symbolic removal from the community may have had a

cathartic effect. Burkhart suggests that the concerns of the friars may well have been unintentionally frustrated by the Nahuas' own concern with community order, ultimately lending some comforting support to the Nahuas' world view and the belief that various superhuman figures were intimately involved in human affairs.

Caterina Pizzigoni analyses the presence of angels in the indigenous testamentary genre through the use of Nahuatl documents and lawsuits in Spanish from the Toluca Valley in central Mexico. She builds on Burkhart's analysis to show how angels were included in the category of saints and how Christian categories with a special focus on angels, demons, heaven and hell, were reinterpreted by the indigenous mind. On a first reading, many of these reinterpretations can appear as mere Christian impositions that the Nahuas adapted to suit their particular local needs. Yet, while a number of inner transformations that recur clearly owe much to the persistence of indigenous traditions, they also point to the existence of a *sui generis* supernatural world built on elements common to both Christian and indigenous world views. The essay therefore aims to test Cervantes's hypothesis through an analysis of Nahuatl documents from the late colonial period and an in-depth and in-context analysis of their indigenous terminology and its relation to broader Spanish categories. This exercise sheds further light on the various understandings of the angelic and demonic supernatural in one particular and highly representative indigenous setting.

Andrew Redden focuses on the comparatively unexplored region of New Granada. This was a land of great contrasts and extremes – at once violent and beautiful, where temperate and fertile valleys gave way to huge mountain ranges, immense plains or thick jungle; where fast-flowing mountain streams became vast, languid rivers; where tremendous poverty existed alongside great wealth. Such contrasts were often as evident in people's spiritual lives as in their everyday material needs, so it is no surprise to find angels and demons comfortably populating the sources explored by Redden. These supernatural entities are set within a broad Hispanic spiritual landscape where the framework for material life was structured around the Augustinian allegory of the City of God. What was angelic, civilised, Christian, was very much an urban phenomenon under siege from satanic and barbarous forces, whose heartlands were in the threatening rural world. The arrival of the Jesuits in Santa Fe de Bogotá gave rise to an immediate polemic surrounding the translation of the catechism with the purpose of enabling indigenous peoples to participate with the angels in the worship of God. The controversy appeared to be

accompanied by a growing pessimism surrounding the efficacy of missionary attempts in the face of almost omnipresent and diabolically persistent indigenous rites among the Muisca population. The awareness among certain sectors of the Spanish clergy of this demonic presence, surrounding and even penetrating the urban centres, saw the initiation of the first campaigns to extirpate idolatry. Redden explores the religious and psychological trauma experienced by indigenous peoples and the resultant merging of demonic forms with indigenous deities. In urban areas, by contrast, the line between angelic and demonic forms seemed harder to draw. In the streets of Santa Fe de Bogotá, for example, Redden evokes the way in which angels and citizens processed together to adore the Blessed Sacrament. From their college, meanwhile, Jesuit missionaries spread out in ever-increasing radii, beginning in the city and moving out into the countryside, spreading God's word just as the angels were seen to disseminate light and grace.

The three essays in Part III, 'The World of the Baroque', examine the role that angels and demons played in Spanish American spirituality and the stupendous artistic efflorescence that it encouraged throughout the Hispanic World in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Ramón Mujica Pinilla begins by pointing to the persistence of Dionysian geocentric angelology in early modern thought and its widespread representation in Andean art until at least the late seventeenth century. He sees a link between this apparent oddity and the use made by a range of theologians, visionaries, mystics, heterodox prophets and missionaries, of various apocryphal sources of early Christianity, medieval Hebrew Cabalistic writings and early modern Neoplatonic works, to shore up an expansionist imperial political theology. The peculiar late seventeenth-century iconography of angels with Hebrew names and in military garb, complete with harquebuses, explicitly links the cult of angels to the messianic and prophetic mission of the Spanish monarchy. Complete sets of angelic armies were painted to decorate churches and monasteries throughout the Andean world, thus harking back to the providentialist readings of the illustrious Mestizo writer, the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, who had seen the Spanish conquerors as divine messengers charged with the evangelisation of the Inca empire before the second coming of Christ. Such a reading in turn presupposed an autochthonous interpretation of the Apocalypse, for it assumed that Indians, Spanish Americans and the offspring of their unions were to be the new protagonists of the biblical drama of salvation in the last days. While Mujica Pinilla sees angelology as a rhetorical device at the service of the Spanish Monarchy, demonology is

seen by him as a discourse of acculturation. This explains why the first European representations of Inca deities have all the traits of Christian devils; that is how they were represented, for example, in the chronicles of Pedro Cieza de León and Agustín de Zárate. As late as 1684, the enormous scene of hell painted by José López de los Ríos for the church of Carabuco in La Paz depicts the devil in indigenous garb being entertained by two women who offer him chicha served in ceremonial Inca glasses. In these images and chronicles angelology and demonology constitute a political theology that would in turn form the basis of a prophetic and providentialist interpretation of the conquest of Peru.

Jaime Cuadriello offers an examination of the first Marian narratives in New Spain which begin to develop from the middle of the seventeenth century. Angels play their traditional role as messengers, often accompanying indigenous peoples in the visualisation of a numinous world. At the same time, they seem to have become active presences, at times even becoming themselves the object of worship. This 'protagonistic' function, where angels become facilitators of prodigies, carrying out tasks that highlight the Virgin Mary's wish to make herself manifest in sacred spots that had been chosen with a specific, palpable purpose, leads Cuadriello to explore a myriad of Marian shrines where angels played a key role alongside indigenous visionaries in the fulfilment of their particular missions. Thus they persuade and remind Indians about their commitment to particular causes; they build temples; they produce, transport or hide images; and they enrich the cult with celestial music and song. In all this, Cuadriello points to a number of revealing registers, in both the narratives and in the iconography, where Indians become metamorphosed into actual angels or share a deliberately ambiguous presence. They often appear and disappear, for example, with the purpose of leaving a tangible trace of 'the sacred'. This change of identity seems to shed light upon an aspect of the debate about the spiritual condition of indigenous peoples – seen either as innocent and pure souls, or as their exact antitheses – which can be traced back to the first half of the sixteenth century, particularly to the writings of the Dominicans Fray Bartolomé de las Casas and Fray Julián de Garcés. This in turn suggests that the 'protagonistic' function that indigenous peoples developed within the rhetoric of the portentous might well be linked to the way they had traditionally been exalted as winged and ubiquitous beings in several popular traditions that harked back to the preaching of the early Mendicants. Through a reinterpretation of these debates, Cuadriello again highlights the striking continuities that can

be traced between the sixteenth-century Mendicant evangelisation and the remarkable artistic efflorescence of the Baroque period.

This sets the scene for David Brading's overview of the spiritual geography of New Spain in the mid seventeenth century, specifically during the controversial tenure of the bishopric of Puebla by the Aragonese Juan de Palafox, a contemporary and protégé of the Count-Duke of Olivares, whose devotion to the angels, and to St Michael in particular, had a strong regional impact. The scene is set in the context of a renewed unease with the 'idolatrous' survivals in native cultures and the remedies proposed in treatises such as Diego Jaymes Ricardo Villavicencio's *Luz y método de confesar idólatras* (1692). Brading then moves on to an examination of the origin and development of the Franciscan devotion to Mary and the angels as seen in the works of the Blessed Amadeus of Portugal and Joannes Menesius de Silva, particularly their prophesies of the angelic pope, their insistence on the existence of seven archangels and their somewhat heterodox doctrine about the presence of Mary in her miraculous images in a way that was analogous to the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Although these writings were condemned by Rome, they were highly influential in the New World as can be seen in the work of Miguel Sánchez, who first popularised the story of the apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe to the indigenous neophyte Juan Diego in 1531, enriching a vital oral tradition with an ornate, Baroque angelic symbolism. This Mendicant-inspired tradition dovetails well with the Jesuit devotion to Our Lady of Loreto, examined by Brading through the work of the Jesuit Francisco de Florencia and his suggestion that the archangel Gabriel was the painter and upholder of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. After Florencia was given a manuscript relating the apparition of the archangel St Michael to an Indian near Puebla in the 1630s, the interest in angels gained renewed momentum, culminating in the publication of the Jesuit Andrés Serrano's *Felix Memoria de los siete príncipes de los ángeles asistentes al trono de Dios* in 1699, a quintessentially Baroque spiritual treatise which was heavily influenced by Amadeus and Dionysian geocentric angelology, even guardedly accepting the existence and functions of the apocryphal angels. At a more popular level, the importance accorded to supernatural angelic intelligences is analysed by Brading through the extraordinary life of Caterina de San Juan, a Filipino ex-slave who developed a reputation for mystical ecstasies, whose life is filled with a host of supernatural interventions of angelic and demonic forces, all set in the rich and variegated context of seventeenth-century Baroque spirituality as it had

developed and flourished in Spanish America, and which brings the various threads of the collection to an apt and colourful denouement.

All the essays were planned and written specifically for a symposium on Angels and Demons in Spanish America, held at Bristol University as part of a major research project.¹⁰ It is a particular pleasure to be able finally to express our deep gratitude to the Leverhulme Trust for its generous support and encouragement.

¹⁰ Chapters 7 and 8 were translated from the Spanish by Fernando Cervantes.