

Does Everyone Have a Guardian Angel?

By William Gouge
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Concerning the ministry of angels, the question is asked – Does every heir of salvation have a particular angel in personal attendance? Some of the ancient fathers, schoolmen, and papists, hold the affirmative, for which they produce these arguments.

Argument 1. Jacob said of his angel: ‘The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads,’ *Genesis 48.16*.

Answer 1. How could this angel be Jacob’s personal angel, when Jacob prays that he would bless his grandchildren? By this he should be their angel as well as his.

Answer 2. The angel to whom Jacob refers in this case was Christ. Christ is the common protector of us all. Besides, it is Christ that redeems from all evil, which no angel can do.

Answer 3. Finally, Jacob referred to *Genesis 31.11, 13*, where the angel that appeared to him styled himself ‘the God of Bethel’, which was Christ Jesus, and also to the angel that wrestled with him, of whom he said, ‘I have seen God face to face,’ *Genesis 32.24, 30*. This likewise was Christ.

Argument 2. Christ styled the angels of little ones ‘their angels’, *Matthew 18.10*. Therefore every one has a particular angel for his care.

Answer 1. This does not follow, for Christ uses the plural number, their angels, which may just as well imply many angels for every one.

Answer 2. They are called their angels only because they are appointed to take care of these little ones; not only of one by one, but also of one by many, as a host cared for Jacob in *Genesis 32.1*. Also many people may be cared for by one, as in *Acts 5.19*.

Argument 3. Christians said in reference to Peter, ‘It is his angel,’ *Acts 12.15*.

Answer 1. This might well have been merely the impromptu speech of men astonished, and is no sufficient ground for a sound argument.

Answer 2. Furthermore, the people may have been misled by a common error of the times, as Christ’s disciples were in *Matthew 17.10* and *Acts 1.6*.

Answer 3. Equally, the people may have used that term unthinkingly, to put off the maid’s insistence that Peter was there, just as unconverted people might react to a ‘sighting’ of a dead person by saying it must be his ghost.

Answer 4. Alternatively, they might have thought it was an angel sent from God to comfort and encourage Peter, and to carry them word of him, and yet not one that continually waited on him as his personal protector.

Answer 5. The word angel means a messenger and it may not, in this case, refer to a heavenly angel at all, but to an earthly messenger sent by Peter.

The idea that every Christian has a personal angel is not to be harboured in our heart, because . . .

1. It has no clear ground or warrant in God’s Word. One might say – To which of the angels said God at any time – Wait on this individual and never leave him, night nor day?

2. One and the same angel has attended upon divers persons, and brought several messages to the one as well as the other, as *Genesis 18.16*, *Luke 1.19, 26*.

3. One and the same angel has delivered sundry persons at once, *Acts 5.18, 19*.

4. Many angels have jointly together protected the same person, *2 Kings 6.17*, *Psalms 91.11*.

5. To believe in the personal angel idea lessens the comfort which Christians may receive

from thinking of the guard of an host of angels, as in *Genesis 32.1*, or from the legion of angels, as in *Matthew 26.53*, or from the innumerable company of angels, as in *Hebrews 12.22*. It impairs that comfort by appropriating a single angel to a single person.

6. The idea comes too near to the heathen notion of a good and evil genius attending each particular person, for there is as great probability for a single demon as a personal tempter, continually assaulting every one, as for one good angel to protect him.

7. Differences of opinion among advocates of a personal angel also undermine their case. They differ on the time when angels supposedly first undertake this function. Some hold it to be when one is born. Others at the time of one's baptism. Others at the time of one's conversion. (Curiously, none think of an angel to guard an infant in the womb, when subject to many dangers, and needing such a guardian as much as later.)

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It is enough to know and believe what the Word of God has revealed, that the holy angels of God have a charge over us, and take special care of each of us, not one only but many.

The ministry of angels is especially for 'heirs of salvation'. In this respect angels are collectively called 'their angels', *Matthew 18.10*. They are said to encamp about them that fear the Lord, *Psalm 34.7*. This is further evident by the many services which angels do to them and for them.

In this life angels minister to the good of both the bodies and the souls of saints, either by procuring positive good things, or preventing and redressing evils.

Particular functions of angels which concern the good of saints' bodies in this life are these that follow:

1. Angels are as stewards, to provide for men in time of need. Hereof we have a memorable history in *1 Kings 19.5-7*.

2. They are as physicians, to cure their maladies, *John 5.4*.

3. They are as nurses, to bear them, as it were, in their arms, and to keep them from hurt, *Psalm 91.11, 12*.

4. They are as guides, to direct them in the right course, and to keep them from wandering, *Genesis 24.7 and 32.1*.

5. They are as soldiers, to guard them, and to keep them safe from danger, *Psalm 34.7*. We have a great instance of this in *2 Kings 6.17*. They are also as soldiers, to destroy the enemies of the church, *2 Kings 19.35*.

6. They are as rescuers, saviours, and deliverers, to pull saints out of danger, and to set them free, *Acts 5.19 and 12.7, 8*, etc. To these may be referred their restraining of things hurtful by nature, from doing harm, *Daniel 6.22*.

In regard to men's souls in this life, angels are:

1. As prophets or teachers, to instruct them, *Daniel 8.16, 17 and 9.22; Luke 1.14, 15, 34, 35; Acts 1.11*.

2. As consolators, to comfort them in their fears and perplexities, *Genesis 21.17; Isaiah 6.6, 7*.

3. As helpers, to stand with them against Satan, *Jude 9; Zechariah 3.1*.

4. As correctors, to punish them for their offences, that so they might be roused out of their sins, and brought to repentance, *2 Samuel 24.16*.