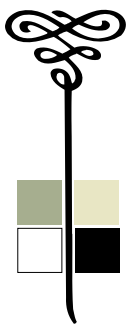


There are other waters that are above this firmament, and I believe that they are immortal and removed from earthly corruption. Let them praise thy name—this super-celestial society, thy angels, who have no need to look up at this firmament or to gain a knowledge of thy Word by reading it—let them praise thee. For they always behold thy face and read therein, without any syllables in time, what thy eternal will intends. They read, they choose, they love. ■ They are always reading, and what they read never passes away. For by choosing and by loving they read the very immutability of thy counsel. Their book is never closed, nor is the scroll folded up, because thou thyself art this to them, and art this to them eternally; because thou didst range them above this firmament which thou madest firm over the infirmities of the people below the heavens, where they might look up and learn thy mercy, which proclaims in time thee who madest all times.

Augustine, *Confessions*



One of the saddest things to see is how angels have become associated with the likes of New Age spirituality, harmonic convergence, aroma therapy and healing crystals. Today they have been wrapped into the whole feel good, warm fuzzies, Transcendental Meditation, peace and love, flower child nonsense—a resurgence of something that should have died a quick death in the late '60s.

Ignorance never dies, it just keeps changing its shape.

These people wouldn't recognize a *real* angel if his wings slapped them in the face.

## Mythology

Most modern illustrations of angels show them as female, but the Bible never mentions an angel by name, sex, or pronoun that is not male. Most pictures show them as stunningly beautiful beings, but in almost every instance in Scripture where a human being is confronted by an angel, the human's first reaction is one of great fear. Mention "angel," and the image most of us conjure is of a slight, vaporous being with a bland, insipid expression on its face. But "good" angels are not only God's emissaries (the Greek word *aggelos* means a "messenger"),

they are fierce warriors doing constant battle with “bad” angels—that is, those angels that followed after the high angel Satan when he fell, and made himself God’s enemy. Whenever we are in the thick of a bad situation, we would be surprised to learn how surrounded we are by God’s invisible warriors, working on our behalf.

Now when the attendant of the man of God [Elisha] had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then Elisha prayed and said, “O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” And the Lord opened the servant’s eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

2 Kings 6:15-17

Actually, the old story of having a devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other, each tugging us in opposite directions, is not that far from the truth. We would be stunned to see the invisible, opposing forces doing battle over, for example, government affairs in Washington, Berlin, London, Beijing. Imagine, if we were given the awful privilege to see it, the intense battle going on in the unseen ether over Baghdad, the Gaza Strip, Darfur. What a horrific blood-letting it must be.

## Immortal Invisible

Angels also have more personal duties. It is improbable that every believer on earth has a private, exclusive “guardian angel” hovering nearby, at the ready at any moment. But Scripture is replete with instances in which angels were sent by God to personally minister to someone in need, or to deliver a personal message from God.

Angels are created beings—

“You alone are the Lord.  
You have made the heavens,  
The heaven of heavens with all their  
host,  
The earth and all that is on it,  
The seas and all that is in them.

You give life to all of them  
And the heavenly host bows down  
before You.”

Nehemiah 9:6

—not people who have died (an infant who dies around December 25 does not become a “Christmas Angel”). Angels themselves do not die,

Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.”

Luke 20:34-36

and are neither deity, nor part of God’s family. In fact, although they, like believers in heaven, spend much of their time worshipping Father God and the Son, they never can know the remarkable, visceral joy it is to be an actual brother or sister of Christ. They *attend* to children of God, but they can never become one.

Are they not all ministering spirits,  
sent out to render service for the  
sake of those who will inherit salvation?

Hebrews 1:14

“The angels,” he said, “have no senses; their experience is purely intellectual and spiritual. That is why we know something about God which they don’t. There are particular aspects of His love and joy which can be communicated to a created being only by sensuous experience. Something of God which the Seraphim can never quite understand flows into us from the blue of the sky, the taste of honey, the delicious embrace of water whether cold or hot, and even from sleep itself.”

C.S. Lewis

While it is true that angels cannot join the ranks of those redeemed by Christ’s blood, they nonetheless rejoice over every soul that does.

“In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Luke 15:10

## The Unseen

Because faith is so important to God’s economy for man, so is the unseen. Much of how heaven interacts with those who claim it as home takes place on an invisible plane—by faith. The Holy Spirit, our Comforter and guarantor of redemption, can be experienced, but not seen. The companionship of Christ, our Brother and Lord, can be felt on earth—even embraced—but until the day we meet Him in the air, He remains invisible. The Father, as well, cannot be seen until we are gathered around His throne—and even then we may be limited to seeing only the manifestation of His glory.

There are times when the spiritual person can be so attuned to the things of God that the invisible may seem almost tangible. It is also possible, as Scripture says, that we can entertain “angels without knowing it,” and thus should “not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.” (Hebrews 13:2)

But for the most part the ethereal plane traversed by angels both good and evil remains beyond our senses. And happily so. It is a place of frightening beauty and catastrophic warfare. It is a realm energized by far too much power and cataclysm for our fragile sensibilities.

At the same time the fact of its existence can be a source of profound reassurance for the believer, for it expresses God’s commitment to us. On this invisible plane operate the fierce warriors that do battle for our well-being, our comfort, our strength—our very soul.

DSL