

## **Your Guardian Angels**

*by the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons, Bryn Athyn, November 3, 2019*

We are at week four of our Journey series about angels. Last week we considered why it is that angels so often appear to be absent. This apparent absence challenges the very idea of guardian angels. This week our topic is the fact that guardian angels are real, and how their reality makes sense.

The idea of protection by angels and spirits is one that is almost universally taught in religions worldwide. It is found in many places in the Word, such as in our text. The Children of Israel were continually protected by the Lord by means of the angels who surrounded them.

The misfortunes that befell them were accounted for by the fact that this protection was only there when the Israelites were obedient to the Lord.

One way to account for tragedy, then, is to believe that the angels protect us when we are good and not when we are bad. But it is obvious to most people that bad things do happen to good people. The idea that people deserve the bad things that happen to them is surely mistaken.

All of this can make the idea of guardian angels too mysterious and contradictory for many people to take seriously. Yet polls show that the large majority of Americans do believe in guardian angels.

The Heavenly Doctrine not only affirms a belief in guardian angels, it provides satisfying explanations of these issues. Fundamentally, it tells us that the goals of providence are about our spiritual well-being and freedom, and only about our physical well-being insofar as this accords with those goals. Therefore our guardian angels are with us for the purpose of protecting our spiritual lives, safeguarding our spiritual freedom, and only secondarily for reasons having to do with our physical well-being.

One question that comes up is the nature of angels' awareness of us. Do the angels gather around and watch us, like figures in a crystal ball, discussing our thoughts and actions and intervening when needed?

The remarkable answer given to us in the Writings is that angels are not aware of us in the way that we usually think of it. They are not aware of us as if we were subjects that they observe and manipulate. Rather, they are acting in harmony with us, based on shared similarity of affections. And the Lord causes their affections to be linked with our thoughts by correspondence. They are conscious on a different level than we are here. In a sense they "*think they are us*" and therefore deal with those states as their own, according to their loves, and these loves flow down into our affections. Angels are deeply aware of exactly how this works. They understand the nature of their connection with us and they perceive it moment to moment. The profound nature of their consciousness is beyond our ability to grasp, as is the power of their influence.

This is how the Lord guides us and protects us by means of angels. The influence on our lives and on people worldwide is greater than we can believe, and it lasts not only during our lives in this world but forever.

*Lessons: Psalm 91; Arcana Coelestia 5992, Apocalypse Revealed 943*