Angels and the Sanctity of Life

by Pastor Michael Salemink



You can't tell the Christmas story without angels. And their part in it clearly proclaims the sanctity of human life.

First of all, departure from this life does not "promote" a person to angelic status. (Apologies to Clarence Oddbody and all the Looney Tunes.) Though angels in the Bible frequently resemble human beings, they represent a separate species of creature for the Scriptures. (The Lord Jesus does compare mortals and angels in Matthew 22:30, but this similarity concerns the message of marriage and not any metamorphosis, as Luke 20:36 makes plain.)

Almighty God did not make any angels in His image. He didn't involve them in His lifegiving activity via procreation, nor did He invite them to subdue earth and rule other entities, including the angels themselves (1 Corinthians 6:3). He never incarnated Himself as one of their race, nor did He adopt them as His own beloved daughters and sons. And Hebrews 1:4-14 explains that these honors give humankind worth and purpose superior even to that of the angels.

Moreover, angels draw attention to God's fondness for the offspring of Adam and Eve.

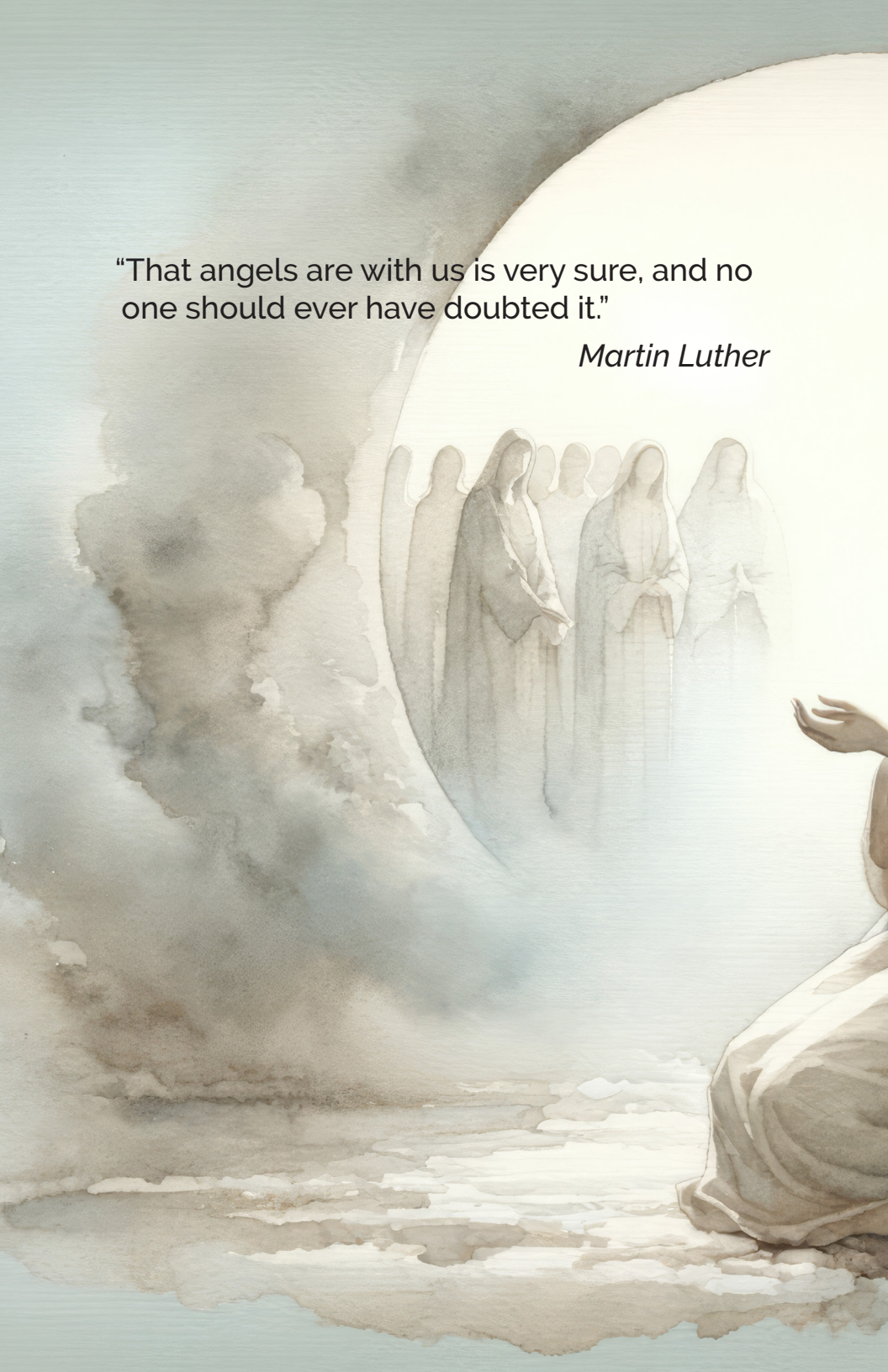
- The Most High stations an angel at His Son's conception to mark His entering our existence (Luke 1:35).
- Angelic intervention laments the slaughter of the Holy Innocents (Matthew 2:13), just as an angel appeared to interrupt Abraham from sacrificing his son Isaac (Genesis 22:11-12).
- Little ones each get assigned guardian angels who do not hesitate to show the Father their faces (Matthew 18:10).
- Angels attend to displaced persons (Genesis 16:7 and 21:14-18; 1 Kings 19:1-5), those experiencing

infertility (Judges 13:3; Luke 1:13), those suffering imprisonment (Acts 5:19, 12:7) or enduring execution (Daniel 3:28, 6:22), and neighbors with disabilities (John 5:2-4 KJV).

- The heavenly messengers bear extraordinary witness against discriminating on the basis of origin or appearance (Acts 10:9-22; Revelation 14:6).
- Nothing sets the angels to celebrating like forgiveness finding sinners who repent (Luke 15:10; Isaiah 6:6-7)—even after perpetrating abortion.
- And angels usher human souls into the arms of eternity at the hour the Lord God appoints (Luke 16:22; Matthew 24:31).

On occasion, the angels contribute to carrying out the divine decision of concluding life (2 Kings 19:35; Revelation 9:15). The devil idolatrously desires to take this authority for his own, and such lust brought about his downfall from among the angelic number (Isaiah 14:12-15; Revelation 12:9). Still he masquerades as an impostor angel (Job 1:6; 2 Corinthians 11:14) to tempt humankind toward emulating his evil and to assume power over life and death. But his attractively packaged promises of "autonomy" amount to a counterfeit gospel (Galatians 1:8) that we must turn ourselves and one another away from with the fervor befitting an angelic epiphany (Luke 2:9; Matthew 28:2-4).

We have a privilege even the angels don't enjoy (1 Peter 1:12). We get to receive every neighbor as if each one comes as an angel from God (Galatians 4:14; Hebrews 13:2)—and better yet, as sisters and brothers of Christ Himself (Matthew 25:4). And after all, the ceaseless celestial song of the angels rejoices in the sanctity God's grace has invested in our kind!



"That angels are with us is very sure, and no one should ever have doubted it."

Martin Luther



A Bible Study: Angels and the Sanctity of Life

Our Heavenly Father has given us an enchanted universe. More entities and activities than meet the eye are operating around and among us. All sorts of unseen forces—and even invisible beings—occupy the spaces we inhabit. The Lord our God's presence and power accompany us far more abundantly than our minds can behold!

The holy angels number among these gifts. The Almighty Maker has designed and dispatched these creatures specifically to deliver His love, comfort, assistance, and security to our kind. The very existence of an entire species of living things devoted to our benefit demonstrates the high regard He has for human lives.

"Angel" simply means "messenger." It comes from the Greek word *angelos*—which itself constitutes the primary part of the word for "Gospel": *euangelos* or "good news." Angels carry (and carry out) God's directives to His people. The Scriptures describe angels as typically hidden from sight, but when they do appear, they often have human-like features (faces, voices, hands, feet). This probably indicates that our dear Father doesn't want to frighten us any more than necessary and that He likes to deal with us on our level. (After all, He became human Himself to get nearer to us!) Perhaps most interestingly, though, angels in the Bible have a close connection to the sanctity of life.

1. If you could give your guardian angel a name, what would you choose?

2. Which angelic quality best suits you: (a) invisibility, (b) immortality, (c) flight, (d) brightness, or (e) combat?

3. What are some honors or privileges the Lord God gives humankind that He does not extend to angels (Genesis 1:26-28; Hebrews 1:4-14; 1 Corinthians 6:3; 1 Peter 1:12)?

4. What activities do angels engage in (Exodus 23:20; Numbers 22:22; Luke 1:19; Revelation 7:11; Revelation 12:7)? What has God appointed as their primary purpose (Hebrews 1:14)?

5. Why do you think the sight of angels makes Scripture's characters so frequently frightened (Luke 2:9; Matthew 28:2-4)?

6. How do angels enact the sanctity of life for little children from the moment of fertilization (Luke 1:35; Matthew 2:13; Genesis 22:11-12; Matthew 18:10)?

7. What other kinds of endangered human lives does our Lord commission angels to safeguard and support (1 Kings 19:1-5; Genesis 16:7; Judges 13:3; Acts 5:19; Daniel 3:28; John 5:2-4 KJV)?

8. When do angels perhaps approach closest to humankind (Luke 16:22; Matthew 24:31)? Why do you think this is? How does this affirm the Father's authority over life and death (2 Kings 19:35; Revelation 9:15; Psalm 103:20)?

9. How has the devil aspired to acquire this authority for himself (Isaiah 14:12-14; Revelation 12:7)? What effect has it had on the angelic host (Revelation 12:9)? How does Satan entice humankind to imitate him (Job 1:6; 2 Corinthians 11:14)? What is he really after (Matthew 4:9)?

10. How do angels reinforce divine grace and forgiveness that affirm the worth of those who have aborted their own children (Isaiah 6:6-7; Luke 15:10)?

11. How might we carry out receiving neighbors as angels (Galatians 4:14; Hebrews 13:2)? How might this bring us delight?

Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth:
Ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth.

Come and worship, come and worship;
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Shepherds in the field abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
Yonder shines His Infant Light.

Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations,
Ye have seen His natal star.

Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In His temple shall appear.

All creation, join in praising
God the Father, Spirit, Son.
Evermore your voices raising
To the eternal Three in One.

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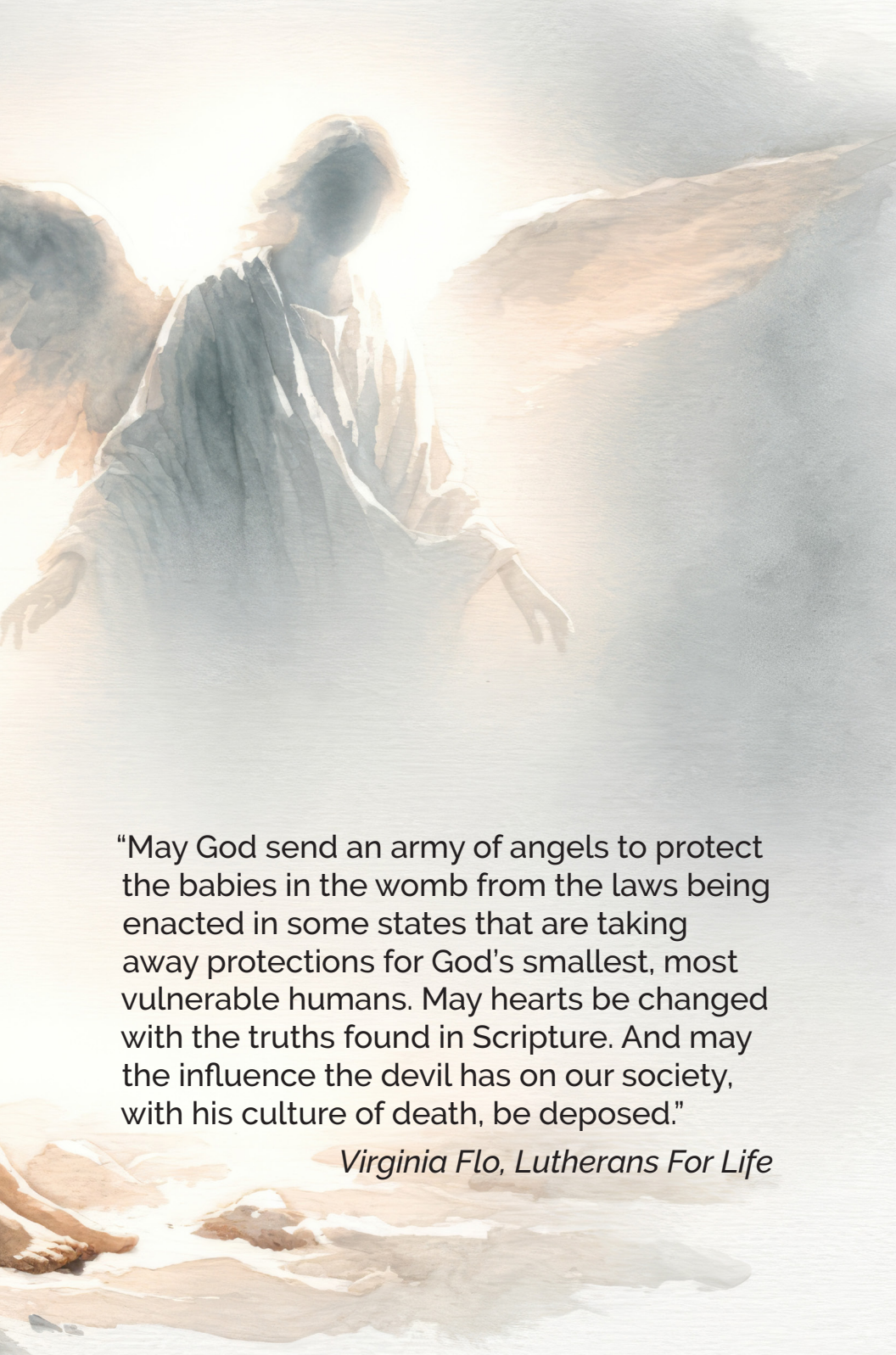

"May God send an army of angels to protect the babies in the womb from the laws being enacted in some states that are taking away protections for God's smallest, most vulnerable humans. May hearts be changed with the truths found in Scripture. And may the influence the devil has on our society, with his culture of death, be deposed."

Virginia Flo, Lutherans For Life



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