

Guardian Angels: Do They Ever Let Down Their Guard?

[To a pastor friend], I don't know if you've seen either of the newer Ellen G. White compilations, one called *The Truth About Angels* [or TA] (PPPA, 1996) and *Angels* [Quote Book series] (PPPA, 1995), but your recent comments rekindled an interest of my own in the topic of guardian angels and whether they sometimes might be considered to be on a "coffee break," which *seems* to be the only plausible explanation as to why your little daughter and countless other innocent persons have been and will continue to be victims of accidents, sometimes fatal accidents.

I thought you might not mind a customized and annotated collection of quotes bearing on this topic. I ask only that you withhold judgment until you read through all of them, knowing full well that you're undoubtedly familiar with most already. I share this material in deepest Christian love for you, your wife, and son, in hopes that it may prove a blessing.—Jerry Stevens, January 22, 1998.

1. A guardian angel is appointed to every follower of Christ [also cited from ML 302, in *Angels* 50.]. These heavenly watchers shield the righteous from the power of the wicked one. This Satan himself recognized when he said: "Doth Jacob fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" Job 1:9, 10. The agency by which God protects His people is presented in the words of the psalmist: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them fear Him, and delivereth them." Psalm 34:7. Said the Saviour, speaking of those that believe in Him: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father." Matthew 18:10. The angels appointed to minister to the children of God have at all times access to His presence.—GC 512, 513 [TA 14]. *Mark well the fact that Satan was indeed permitted to cause the death of much innocent life in the account that follows, but God was able to bring ultimate good out of it. It's the central theme of Job's book.*
2. We know not what results a day, an hour, or a moment may determine, and never should we begin the day without committing our ways to our heavenly Father. His angels are appointed to watch over us, and if we put ourselves under their guardianship, then in every time of danger they will be at our right hand. When unconsciously we are in danger of exerting a wrong influence, the angels will be by our side, prompting us to a better course, choosing our words for us, and influencing our actions.—COL 341, 342 [TA 14, 15]. *"Every time of danger" doubtlessly excludes anything like angelic coffee breaks! What, then, accounts for apparent slip-ups? Go back to item 1, above.*
3. Angels of God are all around us. . . . Oh, we want to know these things, and fear and tremble, and to think much more of the power of the angels of God that are watching over and guarding us than we have done hitherto. . . . Angels of God are commissioned from heaven to guard the children of men, and yet they draw away from their restraining influences and go where they can have communication with the evil angels. . . . Oh, that we might all obey the injunction of the apostle (read 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18).—5MR 125 [TA 15]. *This seems to offer a tentative explanation, as if to imply that there are casualties in the ongoing war of good angels versus evil in the invisible great controversy just above our heads.*
4. I was today to write upon Christ walking on the sea and stilling the tempest. Oh, how this scene was impressed upon my mind. . . . The majesty of God and His works occupied my thoughts. He holds the winds in His hands, He controls the waters. Finite beings, mere specks upon the broad, deep waters of the Pacific, were we in the sight of God, yet angels of heaven were sent from His excellent glory to guard that little sailboat that was careening over the waves.—TDG 110 [TA 15]. *The question comes to mind: How can God both arrange for such specific angelic protection for Ellen G. White and company, yet seemingly overlook others? Does He play favorites? You know the answer, from items 1 and 3, above.*
5. Today . . . heavenly messengers are passing through the length and breadth of the land, seeking to comfort the sorrowing, to protect the impenitent, to win the hearts of men to Christ. We cannot see them personally; nevertheless they are with us, guiding, directing, protecting.—ML 303 [*Angels* 8]. *Protecting the impenitent? Of course; how else would they survive long enough to become penitent?*
6. Scarcely any of us realize that angels are about us; and these precious angels, who minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, are saving from us many, many temptations and difficulties.—RH 5 August 1890 [*Angels* 13]. *Note this well: "many, many" does not mean all.*
7. The angels of God are ever near your little ones.—AH 432 [*Angels* 15]. *Oh yeah, you say? Then where were they when the innocent girls and boys throughout history have needed them most? Back to items 1 and 3, please.*

8. By sincere, earnest prayer parents should make a hedge about their children. They should pray with full faith that God will abide with them, and that holy angels will guard them and their children from Satan's cruel power.—ML 31 [Angels 43]. *This is no denial that evil does not also sometimes befall the innocent, and certainly no denial of the parents' faith and faithfulness in prayer. Here again we are confronted with the age-old question of why bad things happen to good people (and to children of good people). Items 1 and 3 once again address the matter.*
9. These heavenly watchers shield the righteous from the power of the wicked one.—ML 302 [Angels 44]. *It is not our part to beat ourselves up by assuming that evil befalls us or our children because of some unrighteousness in us. Jesus powerfully handled that question in John 9, of which I recommend a most careful rereading. It corroborates Job's experience.*
10. Thus God's people, exposed to the deceptive power and unsleeping malice of the prince of darkness, and in conflict with all the forces of evil, are assured of the unceasing guardianship of heavenly angels.—GC 513 [Angels 62]. *"Unceasing," huh? But can we allow the possibility that occasionally the enemy is sly enough to cause extensive casualties in the ranks of the righteous (nearly one half, according to ISP 22, in SR 18; cf. one third in Revelation 12:4). You bet your life, he can, and does! He successfully enticed a third of the righteous angels of Heaven, thereby increasing to himself a formidable army of evil compatriots. To allow him no possibility of success in the great controversy is to unwisely minimize his ultimate mission, with potentially tragic consequences—physically or spiritually—to ourselves.*
11. Do you humbly, heartily make known your wants to your heavenly Father? If so, angels mark your prayers, and if these prayers have not gone forth out of feigned lips, when you are in danger of unconsciously doing wrong and exerting an influence which will lead others to do wrong, your guardian angel will be by your side, prompting you to a better course, choosing your words for you, and influencing your actions.—3T 363, 364 [Angels 68]. *It is worth noting anew that the phrase "your guardian angel" implies what should be obvious: that we have such a one.*
12. A silent witness guards every soul that lives, seeking to win and draw him to Christ.—ST, June 6, 1895; cf. ". . . seeking to draw that soul to Christ" (6T 366 [Angels 79]). *It is significant that the emphasis here is not so much on physical protection as on spiritual safeguarding and ultimate preservation. It is becoming clearer and clearer that the issues under examination here are not cut-and-dry, but complex, elusive, even mind-stretching.*
13. Every redeemed one will understand the ministry of angels in his own life. The angel who was his guardian from his earliest moment; the angel who watched his steps and covered his head in the day of peril; the angel who was with him in the valley of the shadow of death, who marked his resting place, who was the first to greet him in the resurrection morning—what will it be to hold converse with him, and to learn the history of divine interposition in the individual life, of heavenly cooperation in every work for humanity!—Ed 305 [Angels 100, 101]. *Painful as these words may be to those who have experienced the inexplicable loss of innocent loved ones, a careful, objective reading of the words themselves allows for the possibility that "divine interposition" may at times include divine allowance of tragic events, even fatal ones. No one in his right mind would ever lightly dismiss such painful loss with a flippant "all things work together for good" recitation, yet he knows in his heart that in the cosmic economy of things God will demonstrate the outworking of infinite love, and that soul will be satisfied and comforted. I find it impossible to paint the picture of a long awaited and bitter confrontation between the bereaved and "that so-called guardian angel whose (assumed) momentary lapse resulted in tragedy of unrelenting pain and anguish. No, the truth will out, and when it does, to the amazement of the bereaved will be seen God's wonderful Providence once again at work. What had long been dreaded as a confrontation will result in a season of gratitude on the part of the bereaved and the resurrected, and everlasting friendship between all parties, guardian angels most certainly not excepted. Rightly understood, the ministry of angels will inspire the redeemed with holy awe for God's all-wise and merciful plan. We cannot hope to understand His ways, for they are far above and infinitely superior to ours. (See Isaiah 55:8, 9.)*
14. Angels are commissioned to watch in every family. Each one has the watchcare of a holy angel. These angels are invisible, but sometimes they let their light shine so distinctly that it is recognized.—3MR 305, 306 [Angels 108]. *In God's provision, not one is forgotten. Are, then, some forsaken? Reread items 1 and 3, please.*
15. Train the children to offer their simple words of prayer. Tell them that God delights to have them call upon Him. Will the Lord of heaven pass by such homes and leave no blessing there? Nay, verily. Ministering angels will guard the children who are thus dedicated to God.—CT 110 [Angels 134]. *Though this*

quotation may be especially poignant for the bereaved, anything like bitterness should vanish in the light of the interpretation of items 13 and 14, above.

16. Those who labor for the good of others are working in union with the heavenly angels. They have their constant companionship, their unceasing ministry. Angels of light and power are ever near to protect, to comfort, to heal, to instruct, to inspire.—CM 110, 111 [Angels 135]. *“Unceasing ministry” needs to be understood to mean more than protection from harm and danger, merely. The more global application of the phrase includes, notably, comforting and healing, which ironically may well follow hard upon the heels of unexpected, untimely bereavement.*
17. Angels of God will walk on either side of them, even in this world, and they will stand at last among the angels that surround the throne of God.—PK 587 [Angels 137]. *Instead of focusing on the presence of guardian angels, which has been covered at length above, let the unbiased mind refocus on the fact of the grand ultimacy of this promise, the redeemed of the ages being granted the exceedingly great honor of their presence in close proximity to the very throne of God. May His name forever be praised!*

I conclude with a familiar passage, and one I dearly love. I think it offers Bible-based hope to answer any and all of life’s toughest questions. “And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. . . . From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”—GC 678. Please study the word “unshadowed” with great care.