“Who Do You Think You Are to Decide What is Real in the Angel World?”

I don’t know much about you or your Probe organization, however I read the information you passed off as truth regarding knowledge of angels and how you interpret the posers [editor’s note: maybe she means “possessors”?] **of angel knowledge as being from some pit of hell. Where did you get such authority to decide who is real and who is not in God’s world? Did he come to you and instruct you personally on these matters or is this simply your opinion? I don’t doubt you are educated in your field, yet the angry tone of your paper left me feeling you are in need of some relaxation and spiritual healing—maybe a retreat would help you to gain some insight into the fact that perhaps you are not the ultimate authority on God and his angels. I do believe in angels and have had many situations in my life where their presence is known to me in a number of ways. If I am open to receive the wisdom and have faith that God is watching over me, his angels surround me every moment of the day. The soul or spirit of a human being was created by the Divine and to think that I have the corner on God’s messengers’ existence and how to tell what is which would really be giving me—a mere mortal—an extremely heavy cross to bear. God loves you, Sue. Try to remember He is constantly revealing more to us on a daily basis. If your beliefs are so rigid, you may be missing the ever changing delight in experiencing this thing called life we are all in together! Judge not, lest ye be judged and may his angels help you to understand that God speaks to all of us differently. A fallen angel is one who thought he knew it all (Satan) and his ego got him banished. If you have to condemn people on your web page, you are becoming dangerously close to closing out the Light. Smile.**

Thanks for writing.

> *Where did you get such authority to decide who is real and who is not in God's world? Did he come to you and instruct you personally on these matters or is this simply your opinion?*

Perhaps someone edited the version you saw, but the one I wrote was filled with scripture references. My authority is not my opinion but the Word of God. Who better to teach me—and anyone else who wants to learn—about God and angels than God Himself, through His Word?

> *I don't doubt you are educated in your field, yet the angry tone of your paper left me feeling you are in need of some relaxation and spiritual healing—maybe a retreat would help you to gain some insight into the fact that perhaps you are not the ultimate authority on God and his angels.*

I appreciate your good wishes for me; however, the angry tone you see in my article must have been on the receiving end since there's no reason to be angry about this subject, nor was I angry when I wrote it. I do not claim to be the ultimate authority of God and His angels, but I do claim that the Bible IS the ultimate authority, and all I did was go to the Bible to find out what God said, and then relate it to our experiences and what people teach today.

I am so glad there is an ultimate authority outside myself. What is your authority? Is it your personal opinion and experience? If that's the case, how do you know it's true? How do you know you're not being deceived?

> *I do believe in angels and have had many situations in my life where their presence is known to me in a number of ways. if I am open to receive the wisdom and have faith that God is watching over me, his angels surround me every moment of the*

> *day.*

Me too. However, the Bible says there are two kinds of wisdom, heavenly wisdom and earthly wisdom. How do you know which kind you are receiving? I can compare the wisdom I receive to God's word and know if it's true, or a lie sent to me by "ugly angels." How do *you* tell the difference between the two kinds of wisdom?

> *The soul or spirit of a human being was created by the Divine and to think that I have the corner on God's messengers' existence and how to tell what is which would really be giving me—a mere mortal—an extremely heavy cross to bear.*

You're right, which is why I rely on the Bible and not my own opinion.

> *God loves you, Sue. Try to remember He is constantly revealing more to us on a daily basis.*

I do experience His leading on a daily basis, but there's a difference between this personal leading and the revelation of new truth, which ended when the Biblical canon was closed. When people say that God is revealing new truth, red flags go up for me because that truth often contradicts what He's already said in His Word. And THAT is the authority for judging this "truth" and "revelation." Failing to compare this "revelation" is what makes us vulnerable to the lies of Satan and the demons.

> *If your beliefs are so rigid, you may be missing the ever changing delight in experiencing this thing called life we are all in together! Judge not, lest ye be judged*

Hmmmm. . . . without knowing me, you have judged my experience of life and called my beliefs rigid because I am confident of

their basis in God’s word. Please remember that words on a screen or on a page are only part of the story, and your perception of what I (or any other writer) say is filtered through your own beliefs and presuppositions.

> *and may his angels help you to understand that God speaks to all of us differently.*

The Bible tells me that it is the Holy Spirit who teaches God’s people, not angels. If you’re listening to angels’ teachings of “understanding,” how can you be sure you are listening to holy angels and not unholy angels? And if “God speaks to all of us differently,” what do you do with contradicting messages? They can’t all be right. Somebody’s lying somewhere in the spirit realm. That’s one of the major points of my article. We are lied to on a regular basis by fallen angels who hate us and want to lead us astray. How do you know which ones they are unless you depend on God’s Word instead of your own experience and opinion?

> *A fallen angel is one who thought he knew it all (Satan) and his ego got him banished. If you have to condemn people on your web page, you are becoming dangerously close to closing out the Light. Smile.*

There’s a difference between condemning people, and condemning false teaching and the demonic powers behind it. I hope you can develop the discernment to tell the difference.

Thank you for sharing your concerns with me. I pray God will open your eyes to the truth and you will hear His call to be careful about communication with angels, lest you be led astray.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

Sue Bohlin

“What Makes the Bible a Reliable Text on Angels?”

You cite the bible as a source of insight into angels. What makes the bible a better source than any other fiction book that has been written by anyone at anytime? Say I wrote a book about angels because I wanted to get people to believe in something they have never seen or felt or touched or smelled or tasted. If I aged it 2 or 3 thousand years and there were people like you around, would they believe it? What if I gave it a prolific name like The Word, or Holy Text, or The Greatest Truest Book Ever Written, does it then become more plausible? What are your thoughts?

Hi _____,

My thoughts are that the Bible gives more than “insight” about angels; it gives actual revelation—information from “outside the box,” so to speak.

You can choose to call the Bible a book of fiction, but that would only be because you haven’t considered the evidence that shows it’s not. For instance, fulfilled prophecy alone is a staggering evidence that it was divinely inspired, for who else could write history in advance other than the God who is outside of time?

I invite you to try and debunk the truth and validity of the Bible. Many others have, and they have become its most convinced defenders. If it truly can be debunked, then it’s not worth believing in. But if it’s true, and I completely

believe it is because of the evidence, then it's worth paying attention to.

I have a suspicion you have an opinion of the Bible that is not based on anything more than a contempt for God and possibly for the people who believe in the Bible. (And allow me to concede, regretfully, that a lot of religious people say and do things that make God wince because they misrepresent Him so egregiously, and it has a negative impact on others who are watching—people like you? I think God grieves over this.)

You might consider shoring up your reasons. Our website is full of resources that provide good evidence that Christianity, and the Bible, are both true. If you don't care to check anything out, then at least I would hope you would be honest enough to admit that your unbelief is based on a refusal to investigate and not because there are good reasons for it.

Respectfully,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Are Angels Male or Female?"

I've read your article "Angels: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," and I have a doubt about the angel story that describes an angel taking care of a child and her mother, but the angel appeared to be a hospital nurse.

I mean, is an angel a he or a she? Or can they be either man or woman?

Angels are not sexual beings; the Lord said they do not marry

(Mark 12:25), and sexuality and gender would seem to be an element of humanity, not angel beings. So angels can take on human appearances of both males and females. It's like taking on a role in a play, complete with costume.

That being said, all biblical references to angels use the masculine pronoun "he." That doesn't mean they can't appear as female, but it's good to know the baseline from scripture.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

Is Being Touched by an Angel Enough?

Don Closson evaluates what's good about TV's "Touched by an Angel" and identifies areas where it lacks substance from a biblical perspective.

Society's Interest in Spirituality

During a recent television ratings week, a relatively new program, "Touched by an Angel" ranked third with a 16.6 Neilsen rating. That means more than 16 million households were tuned in to watch three angels communicate God's love and offer of eternal life to people in various difficult, real life situations. Also, *TV Guide* magazine has featured a special report called "God and Television" which includes an article by Jack Miles, author of *God: A Biography* and quotes popular writers James Redfield, author of *The Celestine Prophecy*, Rabbi Harold Kushner, author of *When Bad Things*

Happen to Good People, Jack Canfield, coauthor of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, and others.(1) One might conclude that TV has suddenly found God, and to a degree, that conclusion is right.

TV producers are finding out that typical TV watchers are hungry for programming that includes spiritual themes. In *TV Guide*'s own survey, they discovered in a national telephone poll that 56% of adults feel that religion does not get enough attention on prime- time TV; only 8% feel that it gets too much. Of those responding 61% desired more references to God, church attendance, and other religious observances; 68% were eager to see more spirituality as long as it was not tied to organized religion, and 82% wanted more emphasis on moral issues. One of the most successful programs at attracting these viewers has been "Touched by an Angel."

Although it had a rough beginning and was almost canceled, the program has made a miraculous recovery subsequent to hiring a professing Christian as executive producer and changing the focus of the program to more mature topics. The stories center around the activities of three angels played by Della Reese, Roma Downey, and John Dye. In the words of the *TV Guide* article, "Never has prime-time network entertainment presented God in such an unabashed and earnest fashion."(2) Recent programs have dealt with death in a sophisticated manner, relating how the angels help humans come to grip with both our mortality and the existence of a loving God. Significant topics such as the nature of God, works, eternal destiny, and faith itself have entered into the dialogue. In the words of executive producer Martha Williamson, "our show is God's truth," which is that, "God exists. God loves us. God wants to be part of our lives," and, Della Reese adds, ". . . he has a plan."(3)

Recently, the three actors and their producer were on the Oprah Winfrey show where they remarked about the popularity of the "Touched by an Angel" program. The actors have received thousands of letters relating how the program has changed

viewers' lives by making a spiritual reality more plausible and by focusing on the love of God. The actors are very proud of how they are portraying God. In the words of John Dye, who plays the angel of death, "If we're doing it poorly, I just don't think God would bless the show and allow it to continue."(4)

Are we experiencing a cease-fire in the culture war? Is the Christian right winning the battle for the media? Some might argue that only the most cynical observer could find something wrong with programs that promote a loving, personal God who wants a relationship with us and is concerned about our salvation. But, now let's consider what is good and not so good about programs like "Touched by an Angel."

Audience Response

This development new TV programs that are using God-talk during prime-time hours and getting good ratings for it is a new phenomenon. "Promised Land," "Seventh Heaven," and especially "Touched by an Angel" are boldly going where no producer would have previously gone in the spiritual realm. With four new shows about angels, spirits, and ministers lined up for the next season, it might be suggested that TV is changing for the better. Maybe the networks are finally listening to the public's demand for programming that is more family oriented and morally uplifting.

In fact, I believe that they are. And although not perfect, the new programs are providing a positive service to the viewing community. Let me explain why. Christians have been decrying for years what Richard John Neuhaus called the "naked public square" in a book by the same name.(5) We have lamented the fact that public institutions such as government, education, and the media, rarely leave room for a spiritual reality. Naturalism, as a worldview, has had a monopoly. Christianity, if referred to, was ridiculed and parodied—what I like to call the "Frank Burns" form of Christianity. Frank

Burns, the character from “M.A.S.H.,” was hypocritical, emotionally weak, and possibly dangerous when given any real authority.

Current programming like “Touched by an Angel” offers a competing worldview to naturalism. It lends plausibility to the notion that there is a loving, personal God. Although the angels seem to struggle somewhat with their own understanding of God’s will, they are performing, in a general sense, the most prominent role of angels in Scripture, that of being a messenger from God.

The audience also gets a reasonable picture of what life might be like if a spiritual reality is taken seriously. Contrary to the prevailing naturalistic hopelessness that pervades much of our culture, “Touched by an Angel” does offer hope via a relationship with the Creator of the universe. Characters in the episodes are encouraged to seek God and to have a relationship with Him. And importantly, they are told that they will not earn salvation by following a set of rules. People in the show are generally treated as complex individuals with weaknesses and strengths, and they respond to life’s tragedies in a fairly realistic manner. All of this contributes to a positive influence that the other networks should be encouraged to emulate. As Christians we are quick to condemn, but slow to admit when something positive occurs. This type of programming, which in many ways reminds me of how God would have been expressed or talked about on TV in the late 50s or early 60s, is a bright spot amid new shows like “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” or “Pacific Palisades.”

But while the program does promote belief in God and the legitimate place that faith should play in one’s daily affairs, it falls short in a number of significant ways from being all that Christians would like to see in a bold presentation of biblical truth. Its most glaring omission is the “J” word, as in Jesus Christ. Also, God is seen as loving and caring, but little is said about His other attributes such

as being holy and righteous. “Touched by an Angel” might be a useful springboard from which to present the biblical plan of salvation, but its message is too shallow to be depended upon to evangelize the viewing public on its own.

Let’s turn now to take a closer look at the ways in which “Touched by an Angel” might be a handicap to saving faith for its many fans.

The Nature of God and the Nature of Man

In our look at the return of God to prime-time TV programming, particularly the “Touched by an Angel” show, we have thus far considered the positive aspects of the show; now we will focus on how it might be improved.

Granting that “Touched by an Angel” points to a personal God, encourages a personal relationship with that God, and even teaches that our good works are not enough to establish that relationship, it still falls short of teaching a specifically Christian message because of one glaring omission. It never offers a means for that personal relationship. In theological terms, the program never tells us how we are to be found righteous before a holy God. The Bible teaches a concept known as justification which explains how God, being perfectly holy can declare us righteous enough to enter His presence. The angels on TV assume that God will accept us on our own merit, that simply turning to Him will bridge whatever separation exists. This lack of clarity could be the result of a number of reasons. The writers may feel that there is no need for justification either because God isn’t Holy or humankind isn’t sinful or fallen in the biblical sense. Both of these ideas are popular today. While people may accept the biblical teaching that God is love, they often ignore the equally important truth that God is just and holy. Most portrayals of human nature identify lack of education as the source of our problems, not a sinful nature.

If God is loving, but not righteous, then the Apostle Paul is in great error when he says in Romans 2:5 that ". . . because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed." And concerning human nature he adds that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). This great chasm between man and God is an organic part of the Christian gospel and is missing in much of TV's current focus on spirituality.

On what basis can people have fellowship with a holy God? If you argue that God is merely a projection of human attributes, He is neither holy nor a real spiritual being. If all of us are God, as New Age pantheists often teach, all we need to do is realize our godness via meditation. However, since Jesus walked on the earth, He has been the hope of many in their quest to close the gap between man and God. But again, there have been many different ideas about what Jesus' life accomplished. Some see His life as an example to be copied. Others accept Paul's teaching in Romans 3 that Jesus provides a righteousness from God, apart from living according to the Jewish law, through his death on the cross. But again, there is confusion about who Jesus is. Mormons teach that Jesus was a pre-mortal, as we were at one time, and that everyone can become gods like He is now. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus' death atoned for the sins of Adam, but that Jesus was an angel who lived a sinless life in the form of humanity. They also insist that good works are necessary to please Jehovah.

These different views cannot all be true. For all the good that shows like "Touched by an Angel" might accomplish, they allow for all of the above views to be seen as equally valid. When asked in an interview which God they are representing on the show (Christian, Jewish, Muslim), Della Reese responded by saying that they talk about a Supreme Being, not about religion. But one has to ask, Which Supreme Being? We will

examine this question next.

Sin and Salvation

We turn now to determine which Supreme Being, which God is being referred to by these programs. When “Touched by an Angel” actress Della Reese argues that her program refers to a Supreme Being, not to a religion, just what does she mean? Della Reese, whose TV character Tess was chosen in a TV Guide survey as the person most parents would like for their children’s Sunday school teacher, is the pastor of a metaphysical congregation on the West side of Los Angeles and participates in the “New Thought Movement.” The New Thought movement describes itself as “creedless” and “celebrates individual freedom,” but not freedom from acting ethically. Cult leader Barbara Marx Hubbard and author Marianne Williamson of the Course in Miracles fame recently attended a conference with Ms. Reese, the 81st annual meeting of the International New Thought Alliance.(6) All of this is mentioned not to condemn Ms. Reese or to deny her the right to support the New Thought movement, but merely to observe that she is anything but a neutral portrayer of God’s nature and activities.

To claim that one can speak the truth about God, and do so from a creedless perspective is a bit disingenuous. Anyone who claims knowledge about God must also tell us how they came by this knowledge. If they reject revelation, or the Christian creed that results from the Bible, where do they receive their information from and why should we accept it? Has God spoken to them personally? Are they accepting revelation from another source? How do they know what they proclaim to know about God? They must also tell us why their approach to having a relationship with God is the right one. Even if they hold to the view that all paths lead to God, or all religious perspectives are valid ones, we must ask why they believe this is true and why it is an appropriate way to think about God

and salvation.

All that having been said, Christians can use “Touched by an Angel” as a beginning point in talking about God and salvation from a Christian perspective. But the Christian will begin with the message that humanity is fallen and in need of atonement and justification. At the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry John the Baptist said of Him “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). This brief sentence is filled with profound implications. First is the notion of sacrifice. Jesus is both the victim and priest, both the sacrificial lamb and the high priest who offers the sacrifice. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament taught the necessity of blood sacrifice as payment for sin. Christ’s sacrifice was the once-for-all payment for sin against a Holy God. Paul says that we are now justified by Jesus’ blood and that He has reconciled to Himself all things, making peace by the blood of His cross (Rom. 3:25; Eph. 2:13). Jesus’ death was an act of propitiation; in other words, it removed God’s wrath against sinful humans; it appeased His anger. It was also a substitutionary death; He died on our behalf and in doing so bore our sins on Himself.

It is these truths of Scripture that the new TV programs leave out by not mentioning the “J” word. Without Jesus in the picture, being “Touched by an Angel” leaves us as sinners before an angry God.

The Gospel and the Great Commission

Finally we will consider whether or not programs like “Touched by an Angel” can be used to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul reveals in a concise way what the Christian gospel is and its significance to believers. He writes, “Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold

firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain." Paul is serious about what is and is not the gospel. Paul continues by teaching that the gospel is "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day." Paul then notes that Christ appeared to Peter, the Twelve disciples, five hundred believers, James, then to all the apostles, and finally to Paul himself. To Paul, belief in the atoning death of Christ and His resurrection is necessary for salvation.

What Paul claims to be the gospel of Christianity is entirely missing from today's spiritually enlightened programming. As good as programs like "Touched by an Angel" are compared to the rest of TV's weekly fare, they fall far short of giving viewers what they need to know to experience a relationship with God. The God of these programs is enigmatic, we know that He exists, but how we can experience His love and forgiveness is a bit obscure.

But we should be neither surprised nor angry about this situation. Instead, these programs offer great stepping stones to serious discussions about spirituality and the Christian gospel. Evangelism depends upon the common ground that we humans all share, including questions about God, fear of death and suffering, alienation, and other topics that are highlighted by these programs. In order to take advantage of these stepping stones, believers must get beyond the temptation to see Christianity as just another personal enrichment program or self-esteem therapy.

Fallen human beings are unable to satisfy God's judgment and wrath against sin. In this sense we are totally depraved. We are not as bad as we could be that would be absolute depravity but we are completely unable to please God via our good works. As Isaiah wrote, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (64:6). Paul, writing to the Church at Ephesus, states, "For

it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). If it were not for God's imputing, or attributing, Christ's righteousness to us when we placed our faith in His sacrificial death on the cross, we would have no hope for eternal fellowship with God regardless of how many angels we have been touched by.

Network TV should be applauded for recognizing and responding to the public's desire for programs that deal with important moral and spiritual themes. However, Christians cannot become complacent or believe that TV will now bring about the Great Commission. As always, that job is to be accomplished by spirit-filled ambassadors for Christ who teach the gospel as revealed by Jesus Christ and His apostles.

Notes

1. *TV Guide*, March 29-April 4, 1997, pp. 24-45.

2. "Angels & Insight," *TV Guide*, March 29-April 4, 1997, p. 43.

3. Ibid., p. 44.

4. Ibid., p. 55

5. Richard J. Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1984).

6. Larry Poland, *The Mediator* (Redlands, Calif.: Mastermedia International), vol. 12, no. 1, 1997.

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Angels: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly – The Range of Angelic Activity

Sue Bohlin presents accounts of angelic activity in our world today consistent with the biblical account of angels and their actions. From a biblical worldview perspective, she considers both the involvement of good angels and bad angels in the circumstances of life. A good understanding of angelic activity will aid us in understanding the full world around us, both the seen and the unseen.

This article is also available in Spanish. 

I was about thirteen years old when I had my first encounter with an angel. I was going upstairs to my room, pulling my entire weight on the handrail, when it suddenly came off in my hand. I fell backwards, head first. Halfway into a terrible fall, I felt a strong hand on my back push me upright. There was nobody there—well, nobody *visible*!

Angel stories are always fascinating, and in this essay I address angels: the good, the bad, and the ugly. The good angels are the holy ones, the bad angels are the evil ones, which the Bible calls demons, and the ugly angels are demons disguising themselves as good angels. These ugly angels have deceived many people in a culture that has embraced "angel mania."

The Good Angels

The book of Hebrews calls angels "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). Angels minister in many ways to us, and I'd like to look at some of their ministries with examples from the scriptures as well as

some modern anecdotes.

Provision

The Lord uses His angels to physically provide for His own. It was an angel who brought Elijah bread and water while fleeing from Jezebel after his victory on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 19:5-6).

In 1944, the penniless wife of a pastor and evangelist in Switzerland, Susie Ware prayed, “God, I need five pounds of potatoes, two pounds of pastry flour, apples, pears, a cauliflower, carrots, veal cutlets for Saturday, and beef for Sunday.” A few hours later, someone knocked on the door, and there was a young man carrying a basket, who said, “Mrs. Ware, I am bringing what you asked for.” It was precisely what she’d prayed for—down to the exact brand of pastry flour she wanted. The young man slipped away, and even though Rev. and Mrs. Ware watched at the window to their building, the man never exited. He just disappeared.{1}

Guidance

Sometimes, angels give guidance so God’s people will know what He wants us to do. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and instructed him to take Mary as his wife and to name her baby Jesus. (Matthew 1:20-21)

And it was an angel who told Philip where to go in his travels so that he could meet the Ethiopian eunuch and lead him to Christ. (Acts 8:26)

My friend Lee experienced the comfort of guidance from an angel when the other men in his army unit were pressuring him to visit a red-light district. As he prayed for strength, an invisible messenger came to him and said, quite audibly from about ten feet away, “Have no fear of them. Do not succumb. I will sustain you and deliver you.”

Encouragement

Angelic ministry to us can include powerful encouragement. When Paul and his shipmates were caught in a horrible storm and faced shipwreck, an angel appeared to him, assured him that not a life would be lost, and that he would live to stand trial before Caesar. (Acts 27:23)

One mother of a young girl told me that the night after her daughter's cancer surgery, a very tall nurse with long braids, a real Amazon, ministered to her all night long. She was caring for the girl with a strong but gentle tenderness, and talking with the mom about how good God is. After they went home, the mother decided to write a thank-you note to the nurse, and called the hospital to ask for her name. Everyone—even the head of nursing—insisted that there was no nurse with that description working at the hospital. She believes God sent an angel to encourage her through that dark night.

Protection

This world is a dangerous place, and angels can provide supernatural protection. Daniel 6 tells the story of how an angel shut the mouths of the lions when he was thrown into their den.

A young lady named Myra worked in the inner-city ministry of Teen Challenge in Philadelphia. One neighborhood gang liked to terrorize anyone who tried to enter the Teen Challenge building, and they harassed Myra as well. One night, when she was alone in the building with the gang banging on the door, she felt she should continue to try to reach out to them with the gospel of Jesus. As she opened the door, she breathed a prayer for protection. The boys suddenly stopped their shouting, looked at each other, turned and left quietly. Myra had no idea why.

Later on, as the staff people were able to build relationships with the gang members, the ministry director asked them why they dropped their threats against Myra and left her alone that night. One young man spoke up, saying, “We wouldn’t dare touch her after her boyfriend showed up. That dude had to be seven feet tall.” The director said, “I didn’t know Myra had a boyfriend. But at any rate, she was here alone that night.” Another gang member insisted, “No, we saw him. He was right behind her, big as life in his classy white suit.”{2}

Another young woman walking home from work in Brooklyn had to go past a young man loitering against a building. She was fearful; there had been muggings in the area recently, and she prayed for protection. She had to go right by him, and although she could feel him watching her, he didn’t move. A short time after she reached home, she heard sirens and saw police lights. The next day her neighbor told her someone had been raped, in the same place and just after she had passed by the young man.

She wondered if the man she’d passed was the rapist, because if it were, she could identify him. She called the police and discovered they had a suspect in custody. She identified him in a lineup and asked the policeman, “Why didn’t he attack *me*? I was just as vulnerable as the next woman who came along.” The policeman was curious too, so he described the woman and asked the suspect about her. He said, “I remember her. But why would I have bothered her? She was walking down the street with two big guys, one on either side of her.”{3}

Rescue

Sometimes, angels rescue people in danger. It was an angel—if not the Angel of the Lord, who is the pre-incarnate Christ—who joined Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego in the fiery furnace, rescuing them from the flames (Daniel 3).

My friend John told me that he and a friend were walking

through a rough neighborhood one night when 12 or 15 gang members jumped them. John took two punches and sank to the ground. He expected to be robbed and severely beaten, but he wasn't. Instead, he heard a voice from about six feet up: "It's okay, they're gone." He looked up and saw his friend who mysteriously was now about 25 feet away, leaning against a wall with his fists still clenched as if he were ready to fight. But there was no gang. They just disappeared. And there was nobody next to John.

Warrior Angels

The ministry of warrior angels catches the imagination in a special way. The prophet Elisha prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of his servant so he could see the mighty angelic army of God protecting them.

In Nazi Germany, one mother took her little boy, who was unchurched, to a shelter run by nuns that had become known as a safe place because nothing bad ever seemed to happen there. His first night, while everyone else was praying that God would protect them, this little boy kept his eyes open. After the "amen," he told his mother, "It came up to here on them!" and pointed to his breastbone. When asked what he meant, he said, "The gutter came up to here on them!" A nurse asked, "What are you talking about?" and he told her that he saw men filled with light guarding each corner of the shelter, so tall that they towered above the roof. The shelter was protected by huge warrior angels that only a little boy could see.{4}

Guardian Angels

Do we have guardian angels? The Bible doesn't give a definitive answer on that, although the Lord Jesus did say, "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:10) And Psalm 91:11 promises, "For He will command His angels concerning you to

guard you in all your ways."

One day, when my son was a baby, I tripped while I was holding him, and he went flying headlong toward a brick wall. There was nothing I could do to protect him, but I watched as he inexplicably stopped an inch from the wall and fell gently to the carpet. I knew immediately that an angel's hand had been his bumper pad.

These are only a few of the stories of thousands about angels who protected and rescued people, both Christians and non-Christians. But a nagging question continues to arise: where are the angels when girls are raped, and drunk drivers crash headlong into a car of teenagers, and evil people blow up buildings with hundreds of innocent people in them?

The angels are still there, continuing to minister in pain and death. We usually don't realize the role of angels in the midst of horrible circumstances because their work is unseen and often unfelt.

Behind the question of, "Where are the angels?" is the very difficult problem of why a good God would allow pain and suffering. The book of Job gives us two important insights into the problem of pain: first, when disasters and suffering assail us in the physical realm, there may be something bigger and more important going on in the unseen spiritual realm.{5} Second, God never gives Job an answer to his demand to know the "why": He just says, "I am the sovereign Lord, acting in ways you cannot understand. You just need to trust Me, that I know what I'm doing." The fact that God is in control, that He allows all pain and suffering for a reason, is the great comfort that we need to remember when it seems like the angels have forsaken us. They haven't, because God hasn't.

The Bad Angels

There are good angels, and there are bad angels. All of them

were created as holy angels, but about a third of them rebelled against God and fell from their sinless position. Satan, the leader of these demons or unholy angels, is a liar, a murderer, and a thief. (John 10:10) He hates God and he passionately hates God's people. The Bible tells us that he prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). We need to remember that Satan and all the demons are supernaturally brilliant, and Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

It's this masquerade as a holy angel that is behind the current angel craze in our culture. While there are a number of wonderful Christian books available that relate stories of holy angels helping people, there are many books, publications, and seminars that are filled with demonic deception of the ugliest kind. Because when you start talking to angels, you end up dealing with demons.

The Ugly Angels

The enemy of our souls is using a new twist on an old lie, exploiting the current interest in angels to attract the untaught and the undiscerning. Much of the current angel mania is simply New Age philosophy, which is actually old-fashioned pantheism. Pantheism is the belief that everything—an impersonal God as well as every part of the creation—is one big unity. All is one, God is one, we are God—and New Age philosophy throws reincarnation into the mix as well.

You know you're around "ugly angels," or demons masquerading as angels of light and holiness, when you see or hear these terms:

1. Contacting or communing with angels.

There are now books available with titles like *Ask Your Angels*{6} and *100 Ways to Attract Angels*{7}. But the Bible gives neither permission nor precedent for contacting angels.

When people start calling on angels, it's not the holy angels who answer. They're demons, disguising themselves as good angels to people who don't know how to tell the difference.

2. Loving our angels, praying to our angels.

Some self-styled "angel experts" instruct their followers to love their angels and call upon them for health, healing, prosperity, and guidance. But angels are God's servants, and all this attention and emphasis and glory should go to God, not His servants. God says, "I will not share my glory with another" (Isaiah 42:8). Scripture makes no mention of loving angels—only God, His word, and people. And it never tells us to pray to angels, only to the Lord Himself.

3. Instruction, knowledge, or insight from angels, particularly ones with names.

Some angel teachers are proclaiming that angels are trying very hard to contact us, so they can give us deeper knowledge of the spiritual{8}. Invariably, this "angel knowledge" is a mixture of truth and lies, and never stands up to the absolute truth of Scripture.

There are four angel names that keep popping up in the angel literature: Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael. Michael and Gabriel are the only angels mentioned by name in the Bible. The other two show up in the apocryphal *First Book of Enoch*, which includes a fanciful account of the actions of these four beings. [Note: it has been brought to my attention that there are actually two other named angels in the Bible: Apollyon, the angel of the abyss in Revelation 9:11, and Satan, who is an evil, fallen angel.] Those who report modern day angel teachings are actually channeling information from demons.

4. Special knowledge or teachings from angels.

Naomi Albright distributes teachings about the deep meanings of colors, and numbers and letters of the alphabet which she

claims is “knowledge given from above and brought forth in more detail by the High Angelic Master Sheate, Lady Master Cassandra, and Angel Carpelpous, and the Master Angel, One on High.”{9} These same beings told Mrs. Albright to stress two main teachings: first, that God accepts all religions, and second, Reincarnation.{10} These two teachings keep showing up in much of the New Age angel literature, which shouldn’t be surprising since they are heretical lies that come from the pit of hell, which is where the demons feeding these lies to the teachers are from.

Other angel teachings are that all is a part of God (pantheism); the learner is set apart from others by the “deep” knowledge that the angels give (this is a basic draw to the occult); and that eventually, the one who pursues contact with these angels will be visited by an Ascended Master or a Shining Angel (which is a personal encounter with a demon).

We need to remember that God’s angels are not teachers. God’s word says they are messengers—that’s what “angel” means—and they minister to us. God has revealed to us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), so any hidden knowledge that spirit beings try to impart is by nature occultic and demonic.

5. Human divinity

The message of the ugly angels is that we need to recognize that we are one with the divine, we are divine . . . we are God. In Karen Goldman’s *The Angel Book: A Handbook for Aspiring Angels*, she says things like, “Angels don’t fall out of the sky; they emerge from within.”{11} And, “The whole purpose in life is to know your Angel Self, accept it and be it. In this way we finally experience true oneness.”{12}

The following bit of heretical garbage was channeled from a demon posing as an angel named Daephrenocles: “The wondrous light of the Angels, from the elohim to the Archangels to the

Devas and Nature Spirits, are all bringing to you the realization that you are magnificent—you are divine now and divine first."{13}

Much of the angel literature refers to "the angel within." But angels are a separate part of the creation. They were created before man as a different kind. They are not within us. The movie "It's a Wonderful Life" notwithstanding, when we hear a bell ring it does not mean that an angel is getting his wings. Nor do good people, especially children, become angels when they die. We remain human beings—not angels, and certainly not God.

What our culture needs in response to the angel craze is strong discernment built on the foundation of God's word. We need to remember, and share with others, three truths about angels:

1. The ministry of holy angels will never contradict the Bible.

2. The actions of holy angels will always be consistent with the character of Christ.

3. A genuine encounter with a holy angel will glorify God, not the angel. Holy angels never draw attention to themselves. They typically do their work and disappear.

It's very true that many have "entertained angels unaware" (Hebrews 13:2). But we need to make sure we're entertaining the right kind of angels!

Notes

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2. Malz, Betty. *Angels Watching Over Me* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1986), p. 40-41.
3. Anderson, p. 93-95.

4. Ibid, p. 162-163. 5. Webber, Marilynn Carlson and William D. Webber, *A Rustle of Angels* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), p. 66.
6. Daniel, Alma, Timothy Wyllie, and Andrew Ramer, *Ask Your Angels* (New York: Ballantine, 1992).
7. Sharp, Sally, *100 Ways to Attract Angels* (Minnesota: Trust Publications, 1994).
8. Karyn Martin-Kuri, in an interview with *Body Mind and Spirit* journal, May/June 1993. Also, Albright, Naomi, *Angel Walk* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Portals Press, 1990).
9. *Paths of Light* newsletter, Angel Walk F.O.L. (Followers of Light), No. 24, July 1994, p. 6-10.
10. Albright, *Angel Walk*, p. 77-78.
11. Goldman, Karen, *The Angel Book—A Handbook for Aspiring Angels* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1988), p. 20.
12. Ibid, p. 95.
13. *These Celestial Times* newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 1. (Gaithersburg, Maryland), p. 4.

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The Angel Quiz

Origin and Background of the Angels and Demons

The subject of this essay is angels. The material is presented in a quiz format because we have learned that many people enjoy testing their biblical knowledge in this way. Before going to the quiz, however, a few introductory observations about angels are in order.

Angels are referred to in 34 of the 66 books of the Bible.

They are mentioned 108 times in the Old Testament and 165 times in the New Testament.{1}

The presence of good angels, and evil ones (demons), are recognized in most of the world's religions. Angels are important figures in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, many Christian cults, and in the occult. "The history of various religions from the earliest times shows belief in Satan and demons to be universal….The great ethnic faiths of India, China, and Japan major in demonism, as well as the animistic religions of Africa, South America, and some islands….To an amazing degree, the history of religion is an account of demon-controlled religion, particularly in its clash with the Hebrew faith and later with Christianity."{2}

Currently interest in angels is very high in the United States, and many books and seminars are being offered on the subject in an attempt to meet this heightened curiosity about angels.

Unfortunately most of these books and seminars are naive, at best, and more often than not, occultic in orientation. Now let's turn to the quiz.

1. What does the word angel mean?

The basic meaning of the word angel is "messenger." This is significant because a messenger is given a message by a higher person. Much of the contemporary romance with angels sees them as somewhat independent, if not totally autonomous, but a messenger is on a mission from someone higher, in this case from God…or Satan.

2. What are some of the other names used of angels?

Other terms used to describe angels are: ministers, hosts (the armies of God), chariots, watchers, sons of the mighty, sons of God, elohim (or sons of Elohim), holy ones, and stars.{3}

3. Are angels created or have they always been with God?

They were created by Christ (Col. 1:15-17; John 1:3).

4. When were they created?

They were created some time prior to the creation of the earth because Job 38:4-7 says that the sons of God (angels) sang with joy when the earth was created.

5. What about their appearance? How do angels look?

When angels appear on earth, they usually have the appearance of adult human males and are often described in the same passage both as men and as angels (Genesis 18:1-2). In Mark 16:5 an angel is described as a young man.

6. What do angels wear?

They are often reported to wear white (Acts 1:10), white robes (Mark 16:15), garments white as snow (Matt. 28:3), dazzling apparel (Luke 24:4), and shining garments (Acts 10:30).

7. Is it possible to encounter angels and not recognize them as angels?

Yes, in Hebrews 13:2 we are warned to show hospitality to strangers because "some have entertained angels without knowing it."

8. Do angels really have wings?

Some angels don't have wings, or, at least, they don't manifest wings. Some clearly do. Cherubim are pictured as having four wings in Ezek. 1:5-12; 10:15; 11:22) and seraphim, as having six wings in Isaiah 6:2.

9. How do people react upon encountering angels?

The reaction varies. Sometimes the people are calm, but usually they experience fear, anxiety, emotional upheaval,

terror, or the desire to worship the angels. Mary was greatly troubled at first (Luke 1:28-29); armed soldiers at the tomb shook with fear and became like dead men (Matt. 28:4); John, the author of Revelation, fell at the feet of the angel to worship (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9).

Angels in the Old Testament

10. What caused the fall of the angels?

Satan, the leader of the fallen angels, was before his fall the highest of all created beings, but he was consumed with pride and rebelled against God (Ezek. 28:12-19; Isa. 14:12-14). He seduced a third of the angels to follow him in his rebellion (Rev. 12:4). These treacheries brought about his condemnation by God (1 Tim. 3:6) and the condemnation of the other rebelling angels.

11. When did they fall?

They fell some time after their own creation and before the temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3).

12. Does Satan make his first appearance in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3?

No, a close reading of the account of man’s fall in Genesis 3 reveals that Satan doesn’t appear in the Garden of Eden though his influence is felt. Though his name isn’t mentioned in the passage, he clearly inspired the actions of the serpent. Later, when God curses the serpent in verse 15, the last part of the curse is directed at Satan.

13. What do the opening verses of Genesis 6 have to do with angels?

There the sons of God took wives from among the daughters of men. One interpretation of the passage takes the sons of God to mean “angels” as the term is normally used. If this is so,

then these angels are the evil angels who, in a very unique occurrence, cohabited with human females and produced unusual offspring. For this heinous sin these angels are kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day (Jude 6). See also 2 Peter 2:4-12.

14. How would evil angels profit by these actions?

Aside from sensual pleasure, the purpose seems to be that they intended to pollute and pervert the human line. Since Christ needed to be born into the human family and be fully human as well as fully God, a degenerate hybrid-humanity would have prevented Him from being our authentic representative on the cross. This is the reason, some hold, for God's sending the world-wide flood: to wipe out the polluted line and start over with Noah's family.

15. Do angels marry?

No, this is clearly stated in Mark 12:25. It is commonly believed that angels do not procreate and are not a race.{4} (See also Matt. 22:30.) Generally they are portrayed as sexless apart from the difficulties mentioned in question 13.

They are probably sexless in their basic nature but possibly able to assume a variety of forms, just as they are normally invisible but able to manifest themselves when they desire. (See also 2 Cor. 11:14-15.)

Angels are referred to in the Scriptures by masculine word forms though neuter forms were available. They appear on earth as human males, but there is the possibility of a female angel in Zechariah 5:9.

16. What news did the Lord and two angels give Abraham?

The Lord and two angels (also described as three men and the Lord and two men) announced that Sarah would have a son and that Sodom would be destroyed.

17. What happened when the two angels left and went to Sodom?

The men of that city, not knowing that they were angels, asked Lot to send them outside so they could have sexual relations with them. The angels blinded the men and warned Lot and his family to leave the city because Sodom was about to be destroyed (Gen. 19:1-29).

18. What famous incident involved Jacob and many angels?

In Genesis 28 Jacob had a dream of a ladder stretching from earth into heaven, and he saw angels ascending and descending on the ladder. In the dream God gave the land around Jacob to him and to his descendants and proclaimed "in you and in your descendants shall all the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28:10-22).

19. What is the meaning of this dream and promise?

It was a reconfirmation of the Abrahamic covenant and indicated that the covenant would go through Jacob's line (not Esau's), that his descendants would be innumerable, and that wherever Jacob went God would be with him. It also looked forward to the coming of Christ through Jacob (Matt. 1:2).

20. What famous event involved Jacob and one angel? What happened?

Jacob, while fleeing from his brother Esau, wrestled all one night with an angel and persisted until the angel blessed him. The angel blessed him by changing his name from Jacob, meaning "trickster," to Israel, which means "he who persists with God." The angel also crippled one of Jacob's legs as evidence that the struggle had really occurred and was not merely a dream. The wrestling figure is described as a man and as God in Genesis 32:24-30 and as an angel in Hosea 12:4. So, the angel was probably the preincarnate Christ.

21. What Old Testament character was greeted by the angel of the Lord by this statement, "The Lord is with you, O valiant

warrior”?

Gideon (Judges 6:11-12).

Angels in the Earthly Life of Christ

22. Angels were involved in Jesus birth in several ways. Can you identify all these events?

The angel Gabriel (Luke 1:19) announced the coming birth of John the Baptist who would prepare the way for Jesus (Luke 1: 5-25). Gabriel also announced to Mary, who was a virgin, the miraculous coming birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38). An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him not to put Mary away but to marry her because the child she was carrying was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was also told to name the child Jesus. When he woke up he did as the angel commanded him (Matt. 1:18-25). On the night of Jesus’ birth, an angel announced the good news to shepherds keeping watch over their flocks. Then “suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God” (Luke 1:8-15).

23. Name the ways angels were involved in Jesus’ life and teachings?

After the coming of the magi, an angel warned Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt to avoid Herod’s search for the child. After Herod’s death an angel again appeared to Joseph. He told Joseph to return to Israel (Matt. 2:19-20). When Christ was in the wilderness for 40 days, Satan was tempting Him and the angels were ministering to Him (Luke 4:1-2; Mark 1:13). Jesus taught about angels (Luke 16:22) and about Satan and his demons (Luke 10:17-20). He cast out demons, and He gave the disciples power over demons (Luke 9:1, 37-42). Christ was strengthened by an angel in Gethsemane the night He was taken prisoner (Luke 22:43).

24. Immediately after He stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Christ was met at the shore by a man who claimed to

be demon possessed. What evidence was there that the man was demon- possessed?

He had been bound, but had superhuman strength and had broken away from all human restraints, even chains; he was naked and lived among the tombs, constantly gashing himself with stones while screaming and crying (Mark 5).

25. How many demons did he have? What happened to the demons?

He said he had a legion, meaning literally several thousand. This was probably a figure of speech, but he doubtless had many demons. The demons begged not to be sent out of the country; Christ then sent them into some pigs grazing on a nearby mountainside, and the pigs ran over the cliff into the sea. This is one more evidence of Christ's total control over the demonic world (Mark 5).

26. How were angels involved after Christ's death?

On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to visit the grave. Before they got there, "a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord had descended from heaven and rolled away the stone and sat upon it" (Matt. 28:2). Angels at the tomb announced that Christ was risen (Luke 24:4). Immediately after He ascended, two angels appeared and told the disciples that Jesus would return in the same manner that He had departed (Acts 1:10).

Angels in the Rest of the New Testament

27. What person was described as having the face of an angel?

Stephen, a young man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, was taken before the Sanhedrin and charged with blasphemy. He began to preach. Then "fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15). His sermon, however, so angered the Council that they stoned him (Acts 7:1-60).

28. Who was taken by an angel on a missionary journey? What happened?

Philip was preaching in the villages of Samaria on his way to Jerusalem when an angel spoke to him and told him to go south on a road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. When he arrived the angel told him to approach an Ethiopian eunuch sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah. Philip explained the passage to the eunuch and baptized him upon hearing his statement of faith in Christ. After they come out of the water, the angel snatched Philip away and set him down in another city where he continued preaching the gospel (Acts 8:25-40).

29. What is the attitude of the heavenly angels toward God's plan of salvation?

There is great joy in heaven among the angels of God when a sinner repents and accepts Christ as Savior (Luke 15:10). They are clearly intrigued by what God is doing and long to know more (1 Pet. 1:10- 12). They observe with great interest the behavior of the church. In fact in a passage about orderliness in the worship (Christ submitting to God, men submitting to Christ, and wives submitting to their husbands), Paul concludes by writing that women in church should have a symbol of authority on their heads because of the angels (1 Cor. 11:1-10). There are different theories about what all this means, but it seems clear that our behavior is to be respectful to the angels present and perhaps even instructive to them. Remember that the sin of the fallen angels began with Satan's pride, his unwillingness to submit and his desire for prominence.

30. What individual was freed from prison by an angel?

Simon Peter (Acts 12:3-10).

31. What did the angel do to free Peter?

He appeared in the cell, struck Peter's side to wake him, caused his chains to fall off his hands, then told him to get up and get dressed, and to follow him. They passed several guards without being seen, then they came to the gate of the city, and it opened by itself. Then the angel vanished.

32. Is it possible for an angel to say or teach things contrary to the Scriptures or to God's will?

Yes, in Galatians 1:8 Paul writes "Even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed."

33. Can angels be deceptive in other ways as well?

Yes, 1 Timothy 4:1 states: "in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons (fallen angels)."

34. What Gentile man was told by an angel to send for Simon Peter?

Cornelius, a righteous, god-fearing Centurion who gave alms to the Jews (Acts 10).

35. Why did the angel direct Cornelius to send for Simon Peter come to Cornelius?

So Peter could tell Cornelius and his relatives and friends about salvation through Christ. And, so Simon Peter could see further evidence of how God was beginning a great wave of conversions among the Gentiles (Acts 9:32-11:30).

36. What happened?

The Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and all those listening to Simon Peter's sermon. They began speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter had them all baptized.

Future State of the Angels and Demons

37. What future roles will the good angels have?

They are sometimes involved in punishing unbelievers (Acts 12:23). They will act as reapers toward the end of the age (Matt. 13:39), be involved in the judgments of the Tribulation (Rev. 8, 9, 16), and live forever with the believers of all ages in the New Jerusalem.{5}

38. Will the good angels judge the actions of their former comrades, the fallen angels?

No, believers in their glorified state will judge the fallen angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3). Christ will rule and the believers will rule under Him. Hebrews 2:5 states, "For He did not subject to angels the world to come."

39. What happens to the evil angels and Satan?

The evil angels and Satan will finally be judged by God who will cast them into the lake of fire that burns forever (Luke 20:36; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

Notes

1. C. Fred Dickason, *Angels: Elect and Evil* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), p. 13.
2. Merrill F. Unger, *Demons in the World Today* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1971), p. 10.
3. Dickason, pp. 58-61.
4. Ibid., p. 34.
5. Ibid., p. 108.

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