

JOHN CALVIN'S THOUGHTS ON ANGELS

(EXCERPTS FROM "INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION", BOOK 1, CHAPTER 14)

(CREATION AND FUNCTIONS OF ANGELS)

- **Also we should not indulge in speculations concerning the angels, but search out the witness of Scripture.**

Angels being the ministers appointed to execute the commands of God, must, of course, be admitted to be his creatures (Ps. 103:20-21), but to stir up questions concerning the time or order in which they were created, bespeaks more perverseness than industry. ... Not to dwell on this, let us here remember that on the whole subject of religion one rule of modesty and soberness is to be observed, and it is this, in obscure matters not to speak or think, or even long to know, more than the Word of God has delivered. A second rule is, that in reading the Scriptures we should constantly direct our inquiries and meditations to those things which tend to edification, not indulge in curiosity, or in studying things of no use. And since the Lord has been pleased to instruct us, not in frivolous questions, but in solid piety, in the fear of his name, in true faith, and the duties of holiness, let us rest satisfied with such knowledge. Wherefore, if we would be duly wise, we must renounce those vain babblings of idle men, concerning the nature, ranks, and number of angels, without any authority from the Word of God.

- **The designation ... angels in Scripture.**

In Scripture, then, we uniformly read that angels are heavenly spirits, whose obedience and ministry God employs to execute all the purposes which he has decreed ... They are called hosts (Luke 2:13), because they surround their Prince as his court, - adorn and display his majesty, - like soldiers, have their eyes always turned to their leader's standard, and are so ready and prompt to execute his orders, that the moment he gives the nod, they prepare for, or rather are actually at work.

- **The angels as protectors and helpers of believers.**

But the point on which the Scriptures specially insist is that which tends most to our comfort, and to the confirmation of our faith, namely, that angels are the ministers and dispensers of the divine bounty towards us.

- **Guardian angels?**

Whether or not each believer has a single angel assigned to him for his defense, I dare not positively affirm. ... Again, when Christ says that the angels of children always behold the face of his Father (Matt. 18:10), he insinuates that there are certain angels to whom their safety has been en-

trusted. But I know not if it can be inferred from this, that each believer has his own angel. This, indeed, I hold for certain, that each of us is cared for, not by one angel merely, but that all with one consent watch for our safety.

- **The hierarchy, number, and form of the angels.**

Those who presume to dogmatize on the ranks and numbers of angels, would do well to consider on what foundation they rest. As to their rank, I admit that Michael is described by David as a mighty Prince (Daniel 12:1), and by Jude as an Archangel (Jude v9). Paul also tells us, that an archangel will blow the trumpet which is to summon the world to judgement (I Thess. 4:16; cf. Ezek. 10:5).

- **The divine glory does not belong to the angels.**

It remains to give warning against the superstition which usually begins to creep in, when it is said that all blessings are ministered and dispensed to us by angels.

[<http://www.reformed.org/master/index.html?main-frame=/books/institutes/books/indxbk1.html>]

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