

ANGELS ON ASSIGNMENT

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Due to the widespread expression of concern about the book *Angels on Assignment*, by the late Pastor Roland Buck, a group of five persons convened at Melodyland School of Theology for serious consideration. Not only was the book available but also several tapes and interviews of Pastor Buck. As a result of the deliberation, the five persons—three professors and two regents of the School of Theology—felt it important to make some public declaration concerning the matter. The paper that follows is a result of this deliberation.

The paper is in two parts: Part One—a series of biblical affirmations, warnings, and tests in relation to visitation of angels. This part, closing with an expression of concern, intends to be a biblical statement against which any visitations might be weighed and evaluated.

This first part is fundamental because we live in an era when, for many, experience is paramount. Therefore, the view that if an experience is real it must be right often predominates. We must, however, acknowledge that Scripture is the final authority and thereby judge all experiences—not the reverse. For while Scripture and experience go hand in hand the former is the means by which we test the latter.

Part Two will deal specifically with Pastor Buck's book. Since it is more readily available than the tapes and interviews, quotations (except in one case) will be taken therefrom. The procedure will be that of setting down the tests, found in Part One, and under each heading listing relevant quotations. Pastor Buck will be quoted in context and the Scriptures allowed to speak. It is hoped that this presentation will assist interested Christians in seeing that there is severe doubt as to who assigned Pastor Buck's angels.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the Revised Standard Version.

PART ONE

I. We affirm the reality of angels:

There is ample biblical testimony to their activity—both Old and New Testament.

We do not number ourselves among the Sadducees, past or present, who "say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit" (Acts 23:8).

II. We affirm that angels may be experienced:

Experiences with angels are recorded a number of times in the Old and New Testaments by many men and women of God—Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Ezekiel, Daniel, and

many others in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, e.g., Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, Jesus Himself, shepherds, women at the tomb, apostles at the Ascension, Peter, Philip, Cornelius, Paul, John.

Biblical assurance is also given of angels' continuing activity and presence.

Examples:

Psalm 34:7 "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them."

Psalm 91:11-12 "For He will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone."

Matthew 18:10 "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven."

Hebrews 1:14 "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?"

12:22 "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering...."

13:2 "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Contemporary experience of angels has ample biblical base—whether such experience is recognized or unrecognized.

Billy Graham: "Angels, whether noticed by men or not, are active in our twentieth-century world. Are we aware of them?" (*Angels: God's Secret Agents*, p. 168).

III. We affirm the following:

A. Angels are largely anonymous. Note the biblical hesitancy about an angel's name: "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?" (Judges 13:18.)

1. "An angel"
2. "An angel of the Lord"
3. "Angels of God," etc.
4. Michael and Gabriel are named (but only in reference to extraordinary tasks in the process of biblical revelation—Daniel 8-10, 12; Luke 1; Jude 9; Revelation 12).

Any other names go beyond the biblical record.

B. Angels are little described.

1. Neither male nor female—Mark 12:25
2. May appear in the form of a man—e.g., Genesis 19:1; Judges 12:6; Mark 16:5
3. May wear "dazzling apparel" (or white)—e.g., Luke 24:4; Acts 1:10
4. Nothing regarding age, size, other dress, etc.

Any other descriptions go beyond the biblical record.

IV. We affirm the specific roles of angels to be the following:

A. Praising and worshipping God.

Psalm 103:20 "Bless the Lord, O you his angels"

Psalm 148:2 "Praise Him, all his angels"

Hebrews 1:6 "Let all God's angels worship Him"

Revelation 5:11-12 "The voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb'"

B. Announcing extraordinary events in biblical history, e.g.,

Birth of Isaac and Destruction of Sodom—Genesis 18

The call to Gideon—Judges 6

The birth of Jesus Christ—Luke 1-2

The resurrection of Jesus—all Gospels

The return in glory—Acts 1

C. Interpreting divine visions in biblical revelation, e.g.,

Daniel's visions—Daniel 8-9

Zechariah's vision—Zechariah 1

John's visions—frequently in the book of Revelation

D. Consoling, strengthening, protecting, delivering, e.g.,

Consolation—Genesis 16:9-11

Strength—1 Kings 19:5; Matthew 4:11, Luke 22:43

Protection—Exodus 14:19; 23:20; Psalm 34:7; 91:11; Matthew 18:10

Deliverance—Numbers 20:16; Daniel 6:22; Acts 5:19; 12:7

E. Giving simple directions to fulfill God's purpose, e.g.,

to Elijah—"Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king" 2 Kings 1:3

to the Apostles—"Go and stand in the temple and speak" Acts 5:19

to Philip—"Rise, go to the south" Acts 8:26

to Cornelius—"Send men to Joppa" Acts 10:5

to Paul—"do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar" Acts 27:23

F. Executing judgment, e.g.,

upon Israel—2 Samuel 24:16; 1 Chronicles 21:14

upon Israel's foes—2 Kings 19:35; Isaiah 37:36

upon King Herod—Acts 12:23

upon evil at large—Matthew 13:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Revelation 8:7-12 (and elsewhere)

Any other roles of angels are not in accordance with the Scriptures

V. We set forth the following biblical warnings regarding angelic visitations:

A. An angel is to be accursed if he proclaims an "other" gospel—

Galatians 1:8 "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary [or "other than," "more than"]...let him be accursed."

B. An "angel of light" may be Satan in disguise—

2 Corinthians 11:14 "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." Thus Satan is like false apostles who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ (11:13).

C. An angel (by nature a "spirit") is not to be believed simply because he is a spirit—

1 John 4:1 "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God...."

D. An angel may, therefore, be a "deceitful spirit"—

1 Timothy 4:1 "Now the spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from [fall away from] the faith by giving heed to deceitful [or "seducing" KJV or "misleading"] spirits"

VI. We set forth a number of tests for visitations (in accordance with 1 John 4:1 "Test the spirits" and 1 Thessalonians 5:21 "Test everything"):

- Test 1. Are the angels identified by non-biblical names?
- Test 2. Are the angels given extra-biblical descriptions?
- Test 3. Are they performing roles beyond the biblical picture?
- Test 4. Are they sources of additional information beyond biblical affirmation?
- Test 5. Are they in any way proclaiming an "other" gospel?

If the answer is yes to any of these five, they fail the test of being angels of God.

V. We are greatly concerned about the following:

A. Failure of discernment—though the supernaturally good is being multiplied in our time, the evil is likewise rapidly accelerating.

B. The possibility of the development of a "religion of the angels." Note the warning in Colossians 2:18—"Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship [or "religion"—*threskeia*—cf. Acts 26:5; James 1:27] of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. *He has lost connection with the Head*" (NIV).

C. The danger of presumed additional revelation being given through angelic visitation. The Christian faith was "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

PART TWO

Test 1 (related to III. A. above)

Are the angels identified by non-biblical names?

Answer: Whereas two of the late Pastor Buck's visitors identify themselves as Michael and Gabriel, two others, not named in the Bible, are identified as Chrioni and Cyprion.

1) "He [Gabriel] introduced me to the second angel whose name was Chrioni! That's a peculiar name. I never heard that" (40).

2) "Gabriel, Chrioni, and a ministering angel named Cyprion...said, 'We want you to join in worship with us'" (195).

Test 2 (related to III. B. above)

Are the angels given extra-biblical description?

Answer: Whereas some of Pastor Buck's descriptions tally with the Bible, he clearly goes beyond it.

1) "No two of them look alike! They are different sizes, have different hairstyles, and completely different appearances. Chrioni has a hairdo much like many men have today, and he looks about 25 years old. I do not know what he would weigh in earthly pounds, but my guess would be close to 400 pounds. He is huge, seven or more feet in height, and often wears a brown pullover shirt and is casually but neatly dressed in loose-fitting brown trousers. His shirt laces at the top with what looks like a shoelace. Gabriel often appears in a shimmering white tunic with a radiant gold belt about five inches wide, white trousers and highly polished, bronze-colored shoes. His hair is the color of gold!" (45).

2) "I noticed Michael was dressed somewhat like Gabriel. His white tunic had a type of elegant gold embroidery on it, and he wore a wide, gold belt. He wore a type of sandal, and his feet were the color of someone with a deep tan.... His hair is light, almost flaxen. He appears to be about 25 years old.... The other warring angels wore a type of brown tunic, or shirt, tied at the neck with what appeared to be a shoelace. This was worn over very loose trousers" (169).

Test 3 (related to IV. A. through F. above)

Are the angels performing roles beyond the biblical picture?

Answer: Whereas some of Pastor Buck's descriptions tally with biblical roles, his reporting goes far beyond the Bible.

1) The angels carry on lengthy conversations with Pastor Buck—"some fifty hours of angelic conversations" with "sixteen separate visitations" (13, 15) in two years. Within a few more months the number of visitations had come to twenty-three (statement at Full

Gospel meeting, Boise, Idaho, September 17, 1979). In the Bible, angel visits are quite rare and the words are few.

2) The angels bring messages from God for the world. "Each time the angels have come they have brought a message from God for the world" (15). Pastor Buck's book contains many of these "inspiring messages" (37), for example, a whole chapter of messages in sermonic form called "God's Priorities" (chapter 6). In the Scriptures, however, the angels only announce extraordinary events (see IV. B.) and interpret divine visions (IV. C.). They do not give lengthy messages.

3) The angels "have orders to bring people to a point of either accepting or rejecting Jesus" (33). The Bible nowhere suggests such a role for angels.

4) Gabriel on one occasion "drew a rough sketch of a picture frame," a photograph of which Pastor Buck claimed is in the book (43), to show that God's promises are complete (43); on another occasion Gabriel showed Pastor Buck how to draw a "diagram which explains the importance and function of the atonement" (110-111; diagram on 110). Again, there is no suggestion in the Scriptures of angels, much less Gabriel, performing such roles.

5) The angels receive messages from the Holy Spirit and are monitored by Him. They "were constantly picking up messages from the Holy Spirit. Often when they would pick up reports, they would laugh and became extremely happy" (44). Again, "Michael and the three captains [warring angels] who were with him were receiving messages from the Holy Spirit, as He monitored all their activities" (167). There is nothing in the Bible to suggest any such relation between the Holy Spirit and angels—surely not that of receiving messages from and being monitored by Him.

6) The angels are described as having pushed down the walls of Jericho. "Chrioni told me the angels took their positions on top of those walls, waiting for the shout.... When they [the angels] heard the shout, every angel who was there pushed with all his might and strength, and the great big thick walls went DOWN into the ground.... This was an act of the angels" (179). Obviously Pastor Buck is adding to the biblical record, but claiming it as true because Chrioni told him so. (Also earlier Pastor Buck reported, in connection with the deliverance of Israel from Pharaoh and his charioteers: "We [Chrioni speaking] threw lightning bolts at them! We pulled the wheels off their carts!" [47]).

7) The angels are described as "unlimited in power" (183). According to Scripture only God is omnipotent.

8) Gabriel gives detailed information to Pastor Buck about a trip to the Philippines: "The week before I was to leave for the Philippines, the angel Gabriel met me, spoke with me about the work.... He gave me the names of people to whom he had been ministering, that he said I would meet" (147). "Gabriel...met me in my office to give me the instructions.... He said my message would be from the 96th chapter of Psalms" (150). All such detailed instruction is contrary to the biblical picture of Gabriel who is mentioned only as

interpreting Daniel's visions (Daniel 8 and 9) and announcing events related to the Incarnation (Luke 1).

Test 4

Are the angels sources of additional information beyond biblical affirmation?

Answer: Although Pastor Buck claimed that the angels only gave scriptural information (e.g., "biblical facts...by angelic messengers" [133]), as a matter of fact they frequently gave more than the Bible contains.

"Part of the special work God is doing is a broader revelation of Himself through the messages brought by angelic visitation" (9 in Preface: "A word from the Wife of Roland Buck"). "Revelations [note the plural] are being brought forth...fresh truths from God's Word" (13-14). "After these glorious revelations, difficult truths become simple" (38).

Examples of additional information ("broader revelation," "fresh truths," etc.) have already been indirectly noted under the headings of (Test 1) non-biblical names, (Test 2) extra-biblical description, and (Test 3) beyond biblical activities. A few additional examples may now be noted.

1) "One of the most impressive things the angels told me was that God always has a back-up plan. God says his work will be done even if he has to call in someone else to do it" (23). Where in the Scriptures is there any suggestion of this? What happens to God's sovereignty, God's foreknowledge, if He acts in such fashion? Omniscience needs no "back-up plan."

2) Concerning the shipwreck of Paul (Acts 27) and the saving of the whole crew, "the angel visitor [to Pastor Buck] said that he had led a host of angels in at that time to make sure each person got to shore. Each one of the 276 who were saved had a big angel watching over them!" (27). The Bible gives no such information. Pastor Buck adds, gratuitously, that his own angelic visitor "was the angel who was with Zacharias, with Paul at the shipwreck, with Moses to scatter the enemies, and with Joshua" (29). The Bible says none of this: in fact, the angel with Zacharias was said to be Gabriel (Luke 1:19), but not named in relation to Paul, Moses, and Joshua. Are we now to accept pastor Buck's "revelation" that goes beyond, perhaps even contradicts, Scripture?

3) "One day Gabriel said that these heavenly beings (angels) were on every hill, every tree, and even in the holes of the ground, searching out men and women who were trying to hide from God" (79). Where do the Scriptures give such a picture of angelic presence and pursuit of those running from God?

4) "The angel said it was more important to be like Jesus in meeting the area of a person's need than to be witnessing to people about salvation" (137). How does this correspond with the biblical priority as set forth, for example, in Matthew 28:19, Acts 1:8, 2 Timothy 4:1-5? Does the angel have an insight beyond Scripture?

5) "Michael said....'If you want to read about what is coming, it is found in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, verses seven through ten.'" Many Bible students see in these verses (about Michael and his angels defeating Satan and his angels and casting them down) a reference to the prior fall of Satan through Christ's death and resurrection, thus not a future event. But if this is Michael's unmistakable word to Pastor Buck—this additional information—then the issue must be considered resolved. No longer will Bible scholars have to debate: Michael has spoken!

Test 5

Are the angels in any way proclaiming an "other" Gospel?

Answer: Pastor Buck's angels frequently went beyond the Gospel in the sense of proclaiming as "truths" things more than or other than the Scriptural teaching. This doubtless has become apparent in many of the matters discussed under Tests 1-4. This will be noted along with additional examples.

1) The angel (unnamed) told Pastor Buck that "God's plan is a family plan. All of the beautiful ties of home and family are eternal" (22). The Bible nowhere even hints at such eternal family ties. In regard to "rebellious children," "I want them to know when they obey me, there is not one thing from the past against them on their record up in heaven" (25). Also note the words: "Our circle up there is going to be unbroken because God is working to bring whole families to Himself" (143). God undoubtedly is so working, but there is no Scriptural assurance that all will be there.

2) The angel said: "You have accepted the teaching that Jesus is the door...but God wants you to know that you are also a door...a door to Christ, and He is the door to God" (32). (In the original manuscript of the book, this sentence read: "You are also *the* door, *the* door to Christ, and He is *the* door to God." This original statement was still more disturbing, but even with the modification it remains un-scriptural and misleading.) Pastor Buck's angel by his own statement goes beyond Scripture and then makes an un-scriptural proclamation! According to the New Testament, Christ *alone* is the door (John 10:1-9); all must enter by Him. In the angel's statement there is a dangerous shift of focus from Christ to the individual and his authority. Note what follows: "We are the human doors and...He wants us to take the same kind of authority that these angels are taking and not listen to anyone's objections when they come to us" (32). If we are "a door" why not then the Catholic teaching that Mary is the gate of heaven and the canonized saints doors also?

3) We earlier noted Pastor Buck's statement: "They have orders to bring people to a point of either accepting or rejecting Jesus." Then he immediately adds: "If they refuse, the angels start the cycle over again, and again, and again as directed by the Spirit" (35). This statement is thrice unbiblical. First, as noted, there is no biblical teaching that angels are the agents in bringing people to salvation. Second, the Scriptures do not hold out that for all who refuse "the cycle" is started over again, for it might not be so started (Hebrews 12:25—"See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when

they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject Him who warns from heaven"). Third, it is contrary to Scripture to say that the angels are directed by the Holy Spirit.

4) "One thing God told me was...opposite to my theology. I have preached that once you quit breathing, if you are not saved, and do not know God, you have missed heaven. God said that was not necessarily so. He said that there is a spot where the spirit of mankind may linger for a little time before going on to their permanent abode. Some of them have approached the gates of hell, have even looked in, or have been able to look into heaven, and yet have come back" (59). Where in the Bible is this taught? To be sure, Pastor Buck has this information presumably from an even higher authority than Gabriel or Michael, mainly, God Himself, but where is such a teaching found in God's Word? It dangerously points in the direction of a second chance after death (whereas according to Scripture: "It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). God also showed Pastor Buck that this spot is "something like a corridor or a tunnel between life and death, a waiting room from which individuals enter into the final place," and "God told me that a person who dies and comes back has returned from this corridor"(59). All this about "a waiting room," returning from a "corridor" is totally foreign to Scripture and reminiscent of occult phenomena.

5) Gabriel shows Pastor Buck a panorama of Christ's return from earth to heaven: "Then I saw Jesus bowed down, with His priestly garments torn and splattered with mud, filthy with the rot and stench of the world. He came with His shoulders bowed, into the presence of God...I saw Him coming from the darkness of the pit of hell, bearing the sins of the whole world" (96). This is contrary to the Scriptures which show Christ, having borne the sin and filth of mankind at the cross, rising triumphantly from the grave and thereafter ascending gloriously to the Father.

6) Gabriel says of Christ: "He has turned sin into cinders. He has blotted out the records" (107). Christ, to be sure, overcame sin, and we are purged by His blood, but sin does remain in our lives. Compare Gabriel's optimistic words with those of Scripture: "In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood" (Hebrews 12:14). Gabriel adds: "You will never find the message of pardon in the New Testament. There is no need for pardon: IT HAS BEEN DONE!" (108). Truly "it has been done" in the sense that Christ has made atonement, therefore the message of pardon is now possible and thus is abundantly found in the New Testament, e.g., "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness [remission, pardon] of your sins" (Acts 2:3); "Every one who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (Act 10:43). See also Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14, and elsewhere. This "Gabriel" somehow is misinformed about the New Testament teaching.

7) "God explained to me that rebellion and idolatry are the two things that will take man out from under the covering [the Atonement]" (120). This message "You Are Covered"—"a part of every angelic visitation" (111)—even though God is said to be the direct speaker, is contradicted by the further statement: "Our sins are not only covered, but they are removed as far as the east is from the west" (115). How can rebellion and idolatry—sins against God—remove the believer from the covering when the covering has already

removed our sins? Actually, Pastor Buck is proclaiming (presumably under the authority of God and Gabriel) an unbiblical doctrine. This becomes an "other" gospel than the Good News of total covering (cf. also the dangerous statement: "there is also an edge beyond which the covering does not reach" [119]).

8) "Christ...didn't taste physical death for us, because we still have to die" (77). Even though this is said to be one of Gabriel's messages, it is totally unscriptural. "But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one" (Hebrews 2:9). Christ experienced death both physical and spiritual. To be sure, we still have to die, but the sting of death and the grave have been removed (1 Corinthians 15:54-55—"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy victory, O death where is thy sting?").

9) "The angel actually made the statement that 'God is not interested in the chaff.' He has no use for it; He is removing it from your life so only that which is perfect, that which is like Jesus, will remain" (140). The angel, if Scripture be our guide, doubly errs: (1) If chaff refers to sin in our life, it simply is not true that a complete removal is occurring so that only the perfect remains. To be sure, through the Holy Spirit we are being perfected; however, sin continues during our life on earth ("If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" 1 John 1:9). (2) Chaff does not refer in the Bible, however, to the sin in our life but to *people* who ultimately will be lost. See Luke 3:17—"His winnowing fork is in His hand...to gather the wheat into His granary, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." The angel has confused sin with chaff!

10) "During the tribulation, the days will be horrible because all of the fallen angels will be on the earth" (168). These words, in the context of some of Michael's messages to Pastor Buck, have no scriptural validity. According to 1 Peter 2:4, "If God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness reserved for judgment" and Jude 6: "Angels who did not keep their own dominion but abandoned their proper abode He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day" (New American Standard Bible). Pastor Buck's words, presumably with angelic sanction, afford a picture of "the Tribulation" that—however bad it may be—does *not* include all of the fallen angels on earth.

WARNINGS

In light of the five tests, the four biblical warnings (Part 1, V: A.-D.) seem all the more significant:

A. **An angel is to be accursed if he proclaims an "other" gospel.** Many examples have been noted in Pastor Buck's book of angelic messages either going beyond or contrary to the Gospel and the biblical record. (Refer back to Test V, all ten paragraphs.) To be sure, the angelic messages often contained elements of truth, but over and over again foreign

matters were declared. What shall we say, then, according to Paul, about such an angel (or angels)?

B. An "angel of light" may be Satan in disguise. Pastor Buck's angelic visitors often appeared in brilliant manner. "There was such a radiation of divine power which comes from them dwelling in the brightness of God's presence, that I could not stand up" (39). Again, "There suddenly appeared a bluish shaft of pure light about eighteen inches in diameter from the ceiling to the floor. The instant the light appeared both angels fell prostrate on the floor" (42). Again, "Their entire clothing was radiant, with an iridescent glow" (45). Still again, "It is virtually impossible to describe the radiation and the glow that came from their presence" (166). All such descriptions doubtless *could* apply to angels of God (such as appeared in "dazzling apparel" at the Resurrection), but there is *no* assurance that such an appearance may not come from another source. The "bluish shaft of pure light" before which the angels fell prostrate: what guarantee is there that this is the Lord? We must constantly bear in mind the words of Paul: "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." Pastor Buck claims that Gabriel said on one occasion: "Satan is aware of the fact that God is doing something in Boise, and he has sent princes of darkness to this area in an endeavor to hurt and rob people" (165). Is it possible that some of the visitors to Pastor Buck were "princes of darkness" in disguise, and that many of the messages, while outwardly seeming so beautiful and benign, really do hurt and rob people in Boise and elsewhere? Surely we have noted many examples of pleasing (though unscriptural) messages such as: home and family ties are eternal; we are "doors" and have the same kind of authority as angels; there is a second chance for some after death; sin has been burned to cinders; and so on. These kinds of messages—and many others—while pleasant and soothing, are contrary to God's Word. If God is genuinely "doing something in Boise" there is all the more reason that "princes of darkness," masquerading as "angels of light" would appear on the scene. In any event, both in their outward appearance and many of their words spoken, Pastor Buck's visitors could have been Satan's disguises.

C. An angel (by nature a "spirit") is not to be believed simply because he is a spirit. We are told by John to "test the spirits." Pastor Buck, however, expresses no desire or intention to make such a check. For example, "I didn't ask the angel to identify himself, or give any credentials" (29). Again, "When God has sent someone on assignment to represent Him, you don't question them" (153). Again, "Well, if what the angels told me is true (and who would doubt angels?)...." (154). No attempt to identify, no questions, no doubting—all this is contrary to God's Word (for example, the words of Joshua to an angel—"commander of the army of the Lord"—standing before him: "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" [Joshua 5:13-14]), and can open a wide field for satanic operations. Pastor Buck's attitude represents a far too prevalent mood in our time where many are being carried away, and been destroyed, by naively assuming that if it is supernatural it is of God. But this is not necessarily the case. According to Scripture we are to "test everything; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The good is *always* in accord with God's Word.

D. An angel may, therefore, be a "deceitful spirit." Is it possible that Pastor Buck has been "giving heed to deceitful [or "misleading"] spirits" and thus "departing ["falling away"] from the faith"? "Deceitful spirits" are not to be thought of as obvious spirits of

evil such as tempt to disobedience or immorality; "deceitful spirits" are those who outwardly are of God, even presume to declare His truth and His will, but so subtly distort the message that the hearer scarcely knows what is happening until he has fallen away.

The matter of deceit, in a different context, could be involved in another experience reported by Pastor Buck. He claimed to have brought a paper back from "God's Throne Room," on which God Himself had written down 120 events soon to happen (52). Pastor Buck laid it on his study desk but by morning the paper had turned to ashes so that no one could read it. Pastor Buck said that several pastors who came to see this phenomenon picked up some of the ashes only to have them "evaporate right off their hands as they held them. In two-and-a-half weeks there was not even one speck of dust left!" (60). Such a story (incidentally, not unlike that of Joseph Smith and the "Golden Plates" in Mormonism) hardly rings with credibility. Could this not be another example of "deceitful spirits" at work?

FINAL CONCERNS

Three concerns were noted at the close of Part one. Further elaboration may now be given.

A. **Failure of discernment.** We need more than ever in these critical days, when both good and evil are being multiplied, to have spiritual discernment. We affirm again the reality of angels, also the possibility of their visitation, and believe that such may occur to any of God's people. But because all this has to do with the supernatural realm of spirits (whether "ministering" or "deceiving"), we must be all the more careful to "test the spirits." This is not to be done in a spirit of disbelief or doubt but through spiritual discernment that is grounded in God's revealed truth in the Scriptures. The danger is that Christian people will allow a spiritual experiences, especially a spectacular kind, to so dominate them that, while paying lip service to Scripture, the experience itself becomes the arbiter of truth. An experience of angels—whether good, evil, or illusory (for that matter)—is by its very nature so extraordinary as easily to overwhelm ordinary judgments and subtly to replace the authority of the Scriptures. If Pastor Buck, who undoubtedly had extraordinary experiences, had begun early to test the spirits, he would not have so readily been misled, and, even worse, become involved in misleading countless others.

B. **The danger of presumed additional revelation being given through angelic visitation.** It has been noted in some detail that Pastor Buck's angelic visitors are given extra-biblical description, some have names not mentioned in the Bible, they often perform roles beyond the Scriptural picture, they frequently give information not found in the Bible, and in many cases proclaim an "other" gospel. All this means, in varying degree, that revealed truth in the Bible is by no means definitive or normative. Pastor Buck's early claim, "I have not added to or taken away from the Word of God" (13) simply cannot be sustained. The angels seem little concerned about the Scriptures, many times going beyond the Word of God. Pastor Buck at one point says: "It might be of interest to you to know that during the two to four hours they have stayed each time they have come, there has not been one verse of Scripture quoted" (15). This statement only reinforces our questioning of the angels' messages (despite Pastor Buck's further word that "not once did they leave without giving me Bible references where the message could be found" [157]).

For by Pastor Buck's own admission, "broader revelation" and "fresh truths" are being given by the angels in our day.

All of this is a very serious matter. Since the angelic visitors are presumed to speak infallibly ("who would doubt angels?"), then through them we have infallible truth *in addition to* Scripture. Pastor Buck's messages from angels have at least equal importance with the Scriptures—perhaps more importance since they are allegedly direct from heaven and quite contemporary. From now on therefore we need to read both the Bible and *Angels on Assignment* to have the full truth! All this smacks too much of Joseph Smith and his revelations (Is it pure coincidence that the name of Smith's angel *Moroni* and Buck's angel *Chrioni* even *sound* alike?) which form a separate and even more authoritative volume than the Bible. It makes us want to sound forth a loud alarm of warning: stop before it is too late!

C. The possibility of a "religion of the angels" being developed. One of the greatest dangers in Pastor Buck's book, and the recounting of his experiences, is in the growth of a religion, or cult, focusing on angels. There is far more mention in his book of angels than of Christ and the Holy Spirit: angels are the active agents in all that transpires. It has been noted that the angels are said to be directly involved in bringing people to salvation; the Holy Spirit (who, according to the Scriptures, is Himself the immediate agent) is only in the background "monitoring" their activities. Christ scarcely figures as a living person. Gabriel does say: "Do not seek angels. Seek Jesus!" (16), and reference is made to Christ's atonement, but the sense of His being active, alive, and present is almost totally missing. Angels dominate everything. It becomes far more interesting to discover new things about them, new truths from them, even to delight in their visits, than to keep one's focus on Christ. Paul warns, as we have earlier noted, about the person who, in relation to angels, "goes into great detail about what he has seen and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head." It is to be feared that Pastor Buck has come close to fitting this picture. If so, we would earnestly call his promoters and followers back before it is too late. Otherwise, we may well be in the first stages of the development of a new cult, the cult, or religion, of angels.

In the wake of Pastor Buck's sudden death (November 6, 1979) we may anticipate even more "revelations" based upon his lectures and tapes in an attempt to validate *Angels on Assignment*. The Christian public should be wary of any such extra-biblical utterances and test them by the Word of God.

A CLOSING WORD

Pastor Buck's book dramatically shows the need for firmer doctrinal understanding. At one point, in the midst of a conversation with Michael, and under Michael's influence, Pastor Buck says, "When God brings truth, we have to forget our little boxes of doctrine, for God can DO what He wants, and KNOWS what He wants to do" (167). The critical danger here is that by forgetting our doctrine—even "our little boxes"—we may fall prey to all kinds of false doctrine: who knows, even "the doctrine of demons" (see again 1

Timothy 4:1). Pastor Buck's "angels" who neither emphasize Scripture nor are much concerned about doctrine once again prove to be misleading spirits. It is fervently to be hoped that sound doctrine may again become a far more serious matter.