

*Well, uh, one of the, um, mums of one of our students was visiting the school that day. And she was walking between the buildings when the gunmen first came onto the property and were sauntering across the basketball court and they caught sight of her and started to shoot at her.*

*And she could hear the bullets whizzing around her, but she also felt that guards were surrounding her. And she heard the bullets ricocheting off. like armour. Um, and afterwards she was saying, who were those other guards or policemen on the property? And the school executive said, no, there wasn't anyone like that.*

*So, um, we assumed that at that point, the angels were in, um, a guise that she could see, and she thought they were guards, but she just got a slight graze on her wrist from one bullet. Nothing else, even though the gunman would have only been about 10 meters away, if that, from her.*

## **John Dickson (studio)**

That's part of an account from some otherwise sensible people about their encounter with angels.

Yes, Director Mark somehow convinced us to do an episode on angels.

We'll come back to this particular (extraordinary) account later.

For now, it's worth noting that, even if you're extremely sceptical about this sort of thing, there's no avoiding angels—or at least reports of angels—across human cultures throughout history.

Especially Jewish and Christian history, of course ...

Angels are there in Genesis 3 guarding the way back to the tree of life. Joshua—of the Battle of Jericho fame—meets one just before he conquers the pagan city. And, interestingly, that particular celestial being (or whatever they are) says that he is neither for Joshua nor Jericho.

Angels are there in the original Christmas story, of course—declaring joy to the world at the birth of Christ.

Theologians after the Bible, like the second-century scholar Origen of Alexandria, believed angels shared in God's governance of the universe.

In the 4th century, some theologians were proposing that Jesus himself was an angel—not fully God, but something of a bridge between humanity and God. The Council of Nicaea knocked that one on the head in AD 325.

Around the same time in Egypt, though, some were suggesting that certain desert-dwelling monks were angels - something the monks themselves, I'm glad to say, vehemently denied.

The Middle Ages were something of a 'Golden Age' for all things angelic. Richard Sowerby in his book *Angels in Early Medieval England* writes,

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*“Early medieval England in fact produced such a volume of material relating to these immaterial spirits that it would be possible, if one were so inclined, to string it together as a narrative, starting with the Northumbrian slave-boys whose faces*

*were allegedly so angelic that a pope determined to convert their countrymen, and ending with the Norman fleet which landed in Sussex just as the churches of England were preparing to offer their annual prayers to the archangel Michael.”*

## **John Dickson (studio)**

Angels began to fall out of favour in early modern times, not because of the Enlightenment or secularism in the 17th and 18th centuries, but principally because of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. The Reformers connected angels with medieval Catholic superstition and so sidelined any discussion of them, at least as they relate to daily life. Who needs angels when we have Jesus Christ, was their vibe!

But ... angels made a bit of a comeback in the 20th century, spurred on by famous preachers like the Welsh powerhouse Martyn Lloyd Jones—who gave a detailed sermon in 1953 titled ‘Good Angels’ (someone had the good sense to record it and the audio is preserved—you’ll find a link to it in the show notes).

Then there's the one and only Billy Graham, the American evangelist, presidential advisor, and one-time holder of the world record for the largest audience ever assembled to hear a speech: 1.1 million people in Yoido Plaza, South Korea, in 1973. Anyway, he also wrote a best-selling book titled simply 'Angels'. It put angels back on the map for a lot of people.

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*"I am convinced that these heavenly beings exist and that they provide unseen aid on our behalf. I do not believe in angels because someone has told me about a dramatic visitation from an angel, impressive as such rare testimonies may be ... I believe in angels because the Bible says there are angels, and I believe the Bible to be the true Word of God ... We face dangers every day of which we are not even aware. Often God intervenes on our behalf through the use of His angels."*

### **John Dickson (studio)**

There are angel t-shirts, angel magnets, angel tattoos, angel sculptures, and of course, angels on your

Christmas tree. There's a Pulitzer Prize-winning play about angels, called: Angels in America.

Angel names are quite popular - Gabriel, Ariel, Raphael, Muriel... the Archangel Michael and ... Lucifer ... (not that many kids are named after him).

But does any of this mean we should take angels seriously?

Many would say no way. Others would reply absolutely.

The truth is probably somewhere in between ...

I'm John Dickson and this is Undeceptions.

### **John Dickson (studio)**

Angels are ancient. The Zoroastrian religion dates back to at least the 2nd millennium BC—maybe earlier but the sources are notoriously difficult to date. Anyway, this ancient religion spoke of the Fravashi, the guardian spirits who help out in the cosmic struggle between good and evil. They're pretty much angels.

Unrelated, but part of the same melting pot of ideas, archaeologists have uncovered statues of winged guardian angels in Iraq dating to 3,000 BC.

Judaism and Islam both contain accounts of angelic beings intervening in earthly events.

The Greek god Hermes was also known as the messenger of the gods - the Greek word for messenger is 'angelos' and 'angel'.

Angelos is the same word used for angels in the New Testament. It's the NT understanding of angels that has most influenced history—including the new age versions today—so let's start with a Christian expert.

Dr. Graham Cole is an Aussie who moved to America for 25 years, where he was, among other things, a Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, just outside Chicago. He's since retired back to Australia, but he remains an active scholar and author.

He's written a bunch of theological tomes and he's the editor of the *Short Studies in Systematic Theology*

series. I wanted to talk to him because he's also the author of the recent, *Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons*.

I visited him when I was in Oz a couple of months ago in his lovely apartment in Melbourne. Our conversation started nice and simple.

**John Dickson:** Um, Graham, thanks for joining me, but can you give us a general definition? of an angel that isn't too biblical? Like, just, just what's a broad definition of angel?

**Graham Cole:** A broad definition of angel, John, is, um, a spirit, a creature that is, has been created to serve God.

**John Dickson:** Okay, I'll go with that. And how many of them fit on the end of a pin?

**Graham Cole:** Good question! They're spirits, as Augustine, a great thinker in the early church, put it. By nature they are spirits, and by office, or job, they are messengers. So, no, they don't fit in space and time like a material object.



**John Dickson:** Was there ever really a discussion about how many angels can fit on the end of a pin?

**Graham Cole:** I think there was, for that very reason, to see if people had a materialistic understanding of angels.

**John Dickson:** Right, okay, I like it. Um, angels, like the question I just asked you, have the air of ridiculous about them in the general public. Why do you think that is? Why is the instinct of our culture today to go, angels, come on.

**Graham Cole:** Well, I think it depends upon the person to whom you're speaking. If you were a new age person, you may be big on

**John Dickson:** Yep. I want to ask you about that a little later.

**Graham Cole:** If you're a secularist, no. Except for Hollywood. Hollywood loves angels. And whether it's touched by an angel, Back in the day or then supernatural or more recently the warrior nun Hollywood loves Angels and the demonic but secular people. Well, I can't touch taste see it. Um, my

response to a secular person is have you ever seen your own brain?

## **John Dickson (studio)**

For many, angels are at best, a pleasant inspiration for Christmas decorations ... at worst one of the many delusions of the feeble-minded.

But a lot of traditions have insisted on the importance of angels.

**John Dickson:** Do other cultures speak of angels? I mean, outside the Judeo Christian worldview? Um, well.

**Graham Cole:** Um, well, Islamic culture does. Of angels and demons. Um, the idea of spirits is very widespread in the world. Whether it's in Asia with ancestral spirits. Or, uh, good and bad spirits in African religion. Uh, the idea that there's more to the universe than what our senses give us access to is a very widespread belief and has been for millennia.

**John Dickson:** So you would compare, you think that's a real analogy, the, the spirits of say, Asian, you know,

ancient Asian religion and the notion in Judeo Christian and Islamic, uh, belief of angels.

**Graham Cole:** Now there's a very big difference. We go back to the idea that angels in the Judeo Christian tradition are creatures specifically made by God for certain tasks, the chief task is the worship of God. So in the Christian view, there are fallen angels, of course, and that's another subject.

### **John Dickson (studio)**

Fallen angels - better known as demons - are just one type of angel mentioned in the Bible.

I haven't done the fact-check but the Billy Graham book I mentioned earlier says there are more than 300 references to angels in the Old and New Testaments, like this one from the NT book of Hebrews, which almost gives a job description for angels: "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century wrote in his Summa Theologiae about the 'logic' of angels: "...the highest perfection of the universe requires that there

should be some creatures in which the form of the divine intellect is reproduced ... creatures of an intellectual nature.”

He’s sort of saying: if the Creator exists as pure intellect and he made creatures like us that are body and intellect, there can be nothing illogical about God making creatures whose nature is somewhere in between humans and God: that is, creatures who have a purely intellectual, rather than fleshy, form.

The current Catechism of the Catholic Church insists on angels. In section 336 it teaches not only that angels exist but that “From infancy to death human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession.” Then it quotes Basil the Great from the 4th century (who deserves his own episode one day), “Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd.”

This is the concept of a ‘guardian angel’.

I like the idea, but I’m not sure what I make of it.

**John Dickson:** Yes, um, you've already hit on it, um, a little, I wouldn't mind you teasing it out. In the Bible,

what is the key idea of an angel and the key point of them?

**Graham Cole:** Okay, servants. And they serve in a variety of ways. They can be involved in the process of making God known, communicating messages, guarding God's people.

**John Dickson:** Um,

**Graham Cole:** They pop up in the Bible at key junctures. Like right at the beginning in the garden story, the story of Israel coming out of Egypt, for example, some of the great prophets had experiences of angels.

And of course, when Jesus comes on the scene, then angels have a profile higher than anywhere else in the entire Bible. But in the Christian tradition... Um, God the Spirit has now come into the world. Jesus, according to the tradition, has died, risen, returned to God the Father, will come back again. But in the interim, the Holy Spirit of God has come, and angels seem to go further into the background.

Right. Because the Holy Spirit is now here.

**John Dickson:** And so does, does the word angel, which connects with the word messenger, uh, capture their key task, do you think, or, um, are there other key tasks that aren't about conveying things?

**Graham Cole:** Well, we do have, uh, uh, some stories in scripture of an archangel by the name of Michael combating with his, uh, entourage the devil and his entourage.

And it's in a highly symbolic book, the book of Revelation, but it's the idea of there was a war in heaven and, uh, the demonic hosts, uh, led by Lucifer or the devil was discomfited in that, uh, particular, uh, Um, a battle. So you've got this combative side to the good, involved in the story of good and evil.

### **John Dickson (studio)**

The angel Michael is presented as an archangel in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Baha'i faith.

The earliest mentions of his name are found in the Old Testament book of Daniel (chapters 10 through 12), but also in some 3rd and 2nd-century BC Jewish works - The Book of Enoch and The Book of Tobit. There

Michael is the chief of angels, the guardian prince responsible for protecting Israel.

Michael appears in the next century or two in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where he is the heavenly Captain of the angelic army in the final battle of history!

Something similar appears in the NT book of Revelation:

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*7 Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*

*10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:*

*“Now have come the salvation and the power*

*and the kingdom of our God,  
and the authority of his Messiah.*

*For the accuser of our brothers and sisters,  
who accuses them before our God day and night,  
has been hurled down.*

*11 They triumphed over him  
by the blood of the Lamb  
and by the word of their testimony;  
they did not love their lives so much  
as to shrink from death.*

*12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens  
and you who dwell in them!  
But woe to the earth and the sea,  
because the devil has gone down to you!  
He is filled with fury,  
because he knows that his time is short.”*

*Revelation, chapter 12*

## **John Dickson (studio)**

Then there's the Michael of pop culture:

[Michael excerpt](#)



## John Dickson (studio)

That's a scene from the Mike Nichols film, *Michael*, starring John Travolta as the great angel.

It's written by Nora Ephron of 'Sleepless in Seattle' fame (great movie!), and she tries to incorporate a significant amount of biblical stuff, even if Travolta comes off as a ... a rough-housing 'old boy' angel with a taste for cigarettes and sugary cereals.

In the film, the archangel 'Michael' is sent to protect an old woman from a voracious bank. It's the old biblical battle between good and evil set in a modern context – the great evil being capitalism, I guess!

One classic example in the Bible is in 2 Kings, chapter 6.

The servant of the prophet Elisha is terrified when the armies of the king of Aram besiege them. Elisha is chilled ... because he can see an army of angels. He prays that the servant will see it, too: "Open his eyes, Lord," Elisha prays, "so that he may see." Then we read: "the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he

looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around.” It doesn’t go well for the enemies!!

Jesus speaks of this same military idea of angels when he’s arrested and one of his disciples (Peter, of course!!) overreacts and cuts off the ear of one of those trying to arrest Jesus, “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” That’s Matt 26, by the way.

Legions of angels. That’s military language. So, I asked Graham about ‘ranks’ in this army of angels.

**John Dickson:** Well, what I want to know is, You mentioned the Archangel, so what is an Archangel and are you saying there's a hierarchy?

**Graham Cole:** There is a hierarchy, but uh, the Bible is pretty reticent. Mm-hmm. . Um, there was an early church field called ESUs, the Oppa Guide. Um, people who don't like his theology called him Dennis the Menace. But, uh, he came up with the view that there were, um, three. Tears of celestial beings. The highest were the seraphim, the throne angels nearest to God,

and down at the bottom end are angels and archangels who relate to humanity.

Now, it doesn't work in terms of the Bible story, but it's what's come later by way of speculation.

**John Dickson:** So what do you think is the Bible's archangels, angels, how does it relate to seraphim and

**Graham Cole:** Cherubim? I can only say that we know there's an archangel, which means that some kind of, uh, leadership of angels. But as for the rest, uh, I would have to float a theory.

Because the Bible is, um, as I say, uh, reserved about this. And there's a very good reason for this, John. The Bible's not addressed to angels. It's addressed to human beings. And therefore, lots of stuff we want to know isn't there, because they're not the major players in the biblical story.

**John Dickson:** Rightio. Um. the Nephilim. Have they got anything to do with angels, do you think?

**Graham Cole:** Is there another question you could ask me?

## John Dickson (studio)

Ha! These mysterious ‘Nephilim’ that turn up in Genesis chapter 6. The passage says, “The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came into the daughters of mankind, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.” (Genesis 6:4)

I’ve never been confident I knew what that was all about ... So here was my chance to ask an expert ...

**Graham Cole:** It's one of the most challenging passages about the sons of God marrying the daughters of Himekin.-It is weird. And there are three main theories.

One of the classical theories is, um, um, bad angels, fallen angels, uh, interact and marry human beings. And so you have these Nephilim, these gigantic figures, uh, Ridley Scott in his, you know, film on Noah, you know, he has a go at trying to imagine these beings, um, you know, far beyond anything that scripture would tell us.

Another view though is also going right back to the early churches that these were, um, the sons of, um, Cain

marrying the daughters of Seth, that line. And the Nephilim, or probably giants, whatever you want to call them, don't really have anything to do with it at all. Um, and then there's yet another view, um, which I think is more recent, that these are the sons of God and the daughters of men.

These were renowned figures, human figures, who, um, who married beneath their station. So there are several views. Look, I honestly don't know. But Augustine said he found it hard to imagine a spirit actually having sex with a human being because they'd have to be incarnate.

**John Dickson:** Yes. Inevitably, this leads us to the question of devils and demons, which to many seem even more implausible. Are these just bad versions of angels?

**Graham Cole:** Well, I guess the way they've been understood is fallen angels, rebellious angels. So how that took place, we're not told. Um, there may be hints in the Bible, but again, the Bible was addressed to human beings. And it deals with what is particularly relevant to us. But there appears to have been, if you like, a fall before the fall of humankind.

And the serpent, we read in Genesis 3, comes from outside the garden zone. And is the great spoiler of paradise. So, um, angelic beings, but now in rebellion against their creator.

**John Dickson:** But the same stuff as angels, even though stuff isn't the right, the right word to use of non corporeal things, but they are beings.

**Graham Cole:** That's right. Morally skewed and corrupt. Yes. And the classic story is the, know,

**John Dickson:** Lucifer was an angel who tried to take God's throne and was thrown down from heaven. And this is loosely based on a passage in Isaiah, right? But is that the right way to think of it or is that talking about something else? Um,

**Graham Cole:** well, Isaiah and Ezekiel refer to, um, figures that appear to be supernatural figures. Um, through pride, uh, get, as it were, cast down by God. Now, Most scholars would say it's talking about ancient Near Eastern rulers.

there may be something archetypal happening here. And at that level, if it's true of an earthly ruler like the Prince of Tyre, how much more would it be true. An

angelic being in rebellion against God. The classic, uh, again, Augustine. I'm quoting Augustine and Aquinas. And Aquinas. There we go. Two big ones. Um, Pride. Um, Paul talks to Timothy in a letter about the condemnation of the devil, which seems to be one of pride. Um, but again, um, we ran out of information pretty quickly.

**John Dickson:** Yeah, okay. Um, in what sense are these beings creatures made by God?

**Graham Cole:** Well, in the sense that, uh, as the creator, they wouldn't exist without his creative act and his sustaining act. Um, because there's a mystery here as to why God doesn't, um, anyway, stop the show right now and, and deal with, uh, rebellious angels. But then, of course, that would mean dealing with rebellious human beings too. Um, people often say, I've heard it more than once, you know, why doesn't God do something? Why doesn't he turn up? Well, they're actually asking for the end of the world as far as the Bible is concerned. Um, God will turn up as far as the biblical worldview is concerned, but that'll be the end of the show. And that'll be the end of the show for fallen angels too.

## **John Dickson (studio)**

According to the Bible, angels have a big role to play at the end of the world.

Jesus said they will accompany him when he comes to judge the world - “The Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.” - Matthew chapter 16.

And again in Matthew 13, “So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous.”

According to the book of Revelation, four angels hold back the winds of judgment until God’s appointed time. And seven angels will sound the trumpets signaling that God’s judgment has come. And it’s an angel that’s given the role of seizing, “the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the Devil and Satan,” and throwing him into the abyss.



This is highly figurative language, as Graham is quick to point out, but the overall impression is clear: angels are involved in the final judgment! Somehow!

But that is *then* - whenever 'then' is.

What about now?

Do angels have a role to play here and now, in our personal lives?

After the break, a real-life account of angels guarding people from peril.

Truth or fiction? You can be the judge.

## [The Adjustment Bureau excerpt](#)

### **John Dickson (studio)**

That's Matt Damon in *The Adjustment Bureau*, having his own angelic encounter.

The film is based on a famous science fiction story by Philip K Dick (Director Mark assures me it's a famous

story). Anyway, Damon is introduced to angels who have the responsibility of nudging history in the right direction when people do things they shouldn't.

They work for 'The Chairman' (a kind of God-figure, I guess) and they function as guardian angels of a sort. They make sure people don't get hurt when they're not meant to.

Psalm 91 might endorse that idea:

“For He will give His angels orders concerning you,  
To protect you in all your ways.  
On their hands they will lift you up,  
So that you do not strike your foot against a stone.”

Are there such things as guardian angels?

**John Dickson:** Jesus remarked in Matthew 18, famous passage, See that you do not despise one of these little ones,

**Graham Cole:** For I tell you that their

**John Dickson:** for the face of my Father in heaven. And this. Does it not give rise to the idea of a guardian

angel that these children have their own angels? Is that a thing?

**Graham Cole:** don't believe so. I don't think, uh, I'd like to. Oh, okay. Sorry. Well, ask a different question.

There's a, there's a, you know, um. A philosopher, a very fine philosopher, Peter Kreeft, who wrote a book on angels and if he's right he can work out how many angels are present on earth right at this moment because there's one for every human being. But what I find the Bible talks about is guardian angels plural. Like in Psalm 91. So there is the idea of, um, you know, angels guarding, uh, God's people, but localising it as it were to one to one, I think that's building too much on too little to turn into a doctrine.

### **John Dickson (studio)**

That's the amazing Peter Kreeft who's professor of philosophy at Boston College. He made a brief appearance on Undeceptions back in episode 61, Kingdom Come, and Undeceptions Plus subscribers got a full-length interview with him.

Graham Cole is referring to Kreeft's 2009 book, *Angels and Demons*: what do we know about them?

In it, you'll find this provocative statement: "Humans are the lowest (least intelligent) of spirits and the highest (most intelligent) of animals ... We are rational animals, incarnate minds, the smartest of animals and the stupidest of spirits ... [Angels] are our bodyguards and soulguards, but not as servants or as pets. If anything, we are like pets to them."

Whoa ... I don't know what I think of that!!!

**John Dickson:** Um, our more new age friends tend to believe in angels. You hinted at that at the beginning, probably more than some Christians. They're more conscious of it. What, what similarities and differences? Have you picked up in your study of angels between the New Age concept and the biblical concept?

**Graham Cole:** Well the New Age concept, um, is so inflated in terms of, uh, personalities of angels, in terms of what you can do with angels if you have the right technique. The right way of addressing, uh, angels, which I think shears off into magic. Um, you know, what

the, what Christianity offers is a personal relation to God rather than a magical one.

And I think that's one reason why we don't get every prayer answered the way we want to. Because I think the human heart really does gravitate to the magical and magical thinking. And all you need is the right, uh, technique. The right form of words, and you can harness the power of the unseen. And I think we see that in the New Age movement.

Um, I think New Age folk are seeking to fill a void. Um, but it's a void that I think only Christ can fill.

### **John Dickson (studio)**

My next guests are anything but New Agers ...

Georgina and David Newmarch are graduates from Western universities and citizens of the secular city of Sydney ...but they insist they've had a close encounter with angels ...

Georgina and David were missionaries in Pakistan for 15 years.

They were associated with Murree Christian School, about an hour's drive northeast of Islamabad. The school's mountaintop serenity was broken on August 5, 2002, when gunmen attacked the school. The Newmarches were in desperate need of a guardian ...

**Georgina:** So, that day was, uh, a normal day for the summertime. Um, I was teaching a small class of kindergarten children, so I had seven children of um, missionaries who were their families were working in Pakistan and, uh, we started to hear loud banging noises and Um, I was thinking it's just the electrical transformer up the pole going bang again like it does regularly, uh, and we were outside doing singing games, having lots of fun.

And then suddenly, um, the, uh, primary prince principal ran out and, um, started gesticulating wildly and, um, telling me to go inside. So I started to. Feel my heart beat and, um, grab the kids and said, come on, come on, we've got to go inside.

And I looked back and I could see two men with, um, cloth wrapped around their heads and holding a

weapon. And that was making the banging noises. It was gunfire.

**David:** The kids said to me in my class, they said, Mr. Newmarch, I think it's gunfire, I think we need to do something. So what, so my reaction was to get under, say let's all get under the tables, because that's what you do when you have earthquakes there.

### **John Dickson (studio)**

Just ten minutes before the gunmen entered the school, all 150 students had been playing outside during their morning break.

Six people were killed during the attack. But none of the students were injured.

An arsenal of weapons was found by police next to one of the school fences - we're talking grenades, daggers, rifles and ammunition clips. It seems the outcome that day could have been much, much worse.

David and Georgina Newmarch say it was a miracle.

**David:** Hamid, who was our, um, the cleaner at the school, he was down the back of the school.

Uh, he'd heard the noise, but he was, uh, a fair way from the noise, so he wasn't quite sure what was going on, so he just continued with unloading the rubbish and, and then he was just starting to come back up the hill, uh, it's a fairly slopey sort of, uh, property. He was just coming back up the hill and he was, he felt someone grab his legs and pull him down.

And just as he was pulled down, two bullets went flying over his head. The gunman had come around the corner of a building and had seen him and he looked around and there was no one there.

And then another, another friend who was, who'd panicked and he was running down to the fence, a very high fence that surrounds the school and he was trying to clamber over.

And he, he wasn't, he had a, um, an injured, um, an injury and so he wouldn't have been able to do it.



Anyway, he suddenly saw these, uh, two guys in white, in white shell alchemies. And he, uh, they, they grabbed him and threw him over the, um, over the fence. And then he looked around and just for a second they were there, then they were gone.

Another friend who was in the maintenance staff, he'd been At the back of the school and, um, going past, just walking past the maintenance sheds, he'd heard some noises as well, wasn't sure what was going on, but then as he walked past the, um, the doorway of, of the maintenance shed, someone grabbed him, dragged him inside and locked the door and, um, he looked around and there was no one there and, and would have only been a couple of seconds later, the gunman would have walked right past that, that That, uh, maintenance room.

### **John Dickson (studio)**

Here's the first line of an article that ran in a major Australian newspaper just days after the attack:

“There was talk of miracles yesterday, as 14 Australians pondered their survival and prayed for the dead after

gunmen killed six people in a raid on a school for the children of foreign missionaries in Pakistan on Monday.”

Perhaps it's only natural to think, in a situation that could have been so much worse, that some higher power was looking out for you.

Of course, what does it say about angels if 6 other people were still killed? And what about the other school shootings that have happened before and since? Hundreds of people, including children, have been killed in school shootings in the United States alone in the past 20 years. Where were their guardian angels?

The answer is: I don't know.

Neither do David and Georgina.

But on Tuesday, August 6, 2002, at least 6 people in different places around Murree Christian School told David and Georgina that something - or someone - had pushed them through a door, or over a fence to block them from the gunmen, or had shielded them from bullets.

Some of the children had separately said that they had heard angelic singing even as the gunfire rung in their ears.

They're confident there were angels there that day.

**John Dickson:** fill. And what might you say to my sceptical listeners, um, who may have tuned out already in this interview, but for those who are still with us, bless you, um, they may be wondering Graham seems highly educated. How on earth does he believe in angels?

**Graham Cole:** Well, I believe in angels for one reason, Jesus did, and I take my cue from him. Um, I've got the view he knew a lot about, uh, the unseen world, and indeed he came from it and returned to it, um, taking his, uh, humanity with him. Um, so it goes back to my view of Jesus and his authority.

Um, it's a characteristic of the Christian mind. There's a wonderful book written years ago called *The Christian Mind* by Harry Blamires In which, uh, one thing he says, uh, that characterizes the Christian mind is its supernatural orientation. Um, we believe the universe is a, is a much bigger canvas than the secularist thinks it

is. Um, because we believe there's a revelation from God.

## **John Dickson (studio)**

Harry Blamires, by the way, was an English Anglican theologian, literary critic and novelist, who was also head of the English department at what's now the University of Winchester.

He started writing in the 1940s after receiving encouragement from his friend and Oxford tutor, C.S. Lewis.

Blamires' best-known work is *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?*. It's still read around the world in seminaries and other Christian institutions because it calls on people who think God exists to think about the world as if God exists, NOT as though we are in a merely materialist universe.

“Do we as Christians,” he writes, “mentally inhabit the world presented to us by faith as the real world?”

“The collision between a Christian mind and a solidly earthbound culture ought to be a violent one.”

I admit, I feel that rebuke. I've so often got my head in sceptical things that I can approach the world as if it were simply matter, time, and energy. And that kind of world has no place for things like angels and miracles or even God.

And, yet, when I really think it through, I know that matter can't be all that there is. There must be an underlying rational/spiritual reality. I mean, for one thing, how could there be any true and rational thought about matter if our minds are themselves just part of matter. If my thinking is just an emergent property of matter, there is absolutely no reason to trust my thinking about matter. But if there is a non-material rational reality undergirding matter (that transcends matter)--in other words, God--then I get my thoughts back. I get both thought and matter. I have a universe in which I can believe in material things and believe that my thoughts about material things can be independently true. That gives me the spiritual world, a world of angels, miracles, God ... and science.

CS Lewis put this best:

## READING

*Granted that Reason is prior to matter and that the light of that primal Reason illuminates finite minds, I can understand how men should come, by observation and inference, to know a lot about the universe they live in. If, on the other hand, I swallow the scientific cosmology as a whole, then not only can I not fit in Christianity, but I cannot even fit in science. If minds are wholly dependent on brains, and brains on biochemistry, and biochemistry (in the long run) on the meaningless flux of the atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees. And this is to me the final test. This is how I distinguish dreaming and waking. When I am awake I can, in some degree, account for and study my dream. The dragon that pursued me last night can be fitted into my waking world. I know that there are such things as dreams: I know that I had eaten an indigestible dinner: I know that a man of my reading might be expected to dream of dragons. But while in the nightmare I could not have fitted in my waking experience. The*

*waking world is judged more real because it can thus contain the dreaming world: the dreaming world is judged less real because it cannot contain the waking one. For the same reason I am certain that in passing from the scientific point of view to the theological, I have passed from dream to waking. Christian theology can fit in science, art, morality, and the sub-Christian religions. The scientific point of view cannot fit in any of these things, not even science itself. I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen not only because I see it but because by it I see everything else.*

## **Lewis Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church .**

**Georgina:** we can see just so many different ways that God was watching over us that day. And yes, we believe in angels ... they each had an experience where they were miraculously saved, grabbed or shoved or, or whatever. And even myself, like normally at that time of day, I would have been with the, the children on the basketball court, which is right at the front gate where the gunman walked across.

But, um, for various reasons, I didn't have time to get all the equipment out for our PE lesson. So that's. That's the reason I was elsewhere on the campus, not near the front gate. But if we had been there, there's doing PE, there's no way I could have rounded up seven excited five year olds and got them to safety.

But the Lord had us in another place just on that one day. So I saw that as a miraculous rescue. And the fact that the gunman we found out later had been. Um, planning this for months and they were going to come at recess when everyone was outside, but they got there late and, um, everyone was back inside except my, my little class and, um, and one other class.

Um, but the teacher who was with that class had lived in Afghanistan and from the very first shot, he knew that it was guns and knew the danger and it was year six. Yes. And he said to them, you know, run now. And they were, they ran.

**Dave:** I'll never forget that day and I, and it would, and it's, yeah, it's just convinced me that there are definitely angels around. And, you know, it's interesting how



different times I've heard people say, you know, there was someone who came in and helped me there.

I don't know who it was, but I never saw that person again.

**John Dickson:** Do you ever find yourself thinking about angels in, in daily life? I, I don't just mean theologically, of course, you wrote a big book on this topic, but I mean... I don't know, do you ever think, oh lord, send your angels to do this, or, you know, I wonder if that was an angel, do you, in your actual experience?

**Graham Cole:** I never found myself saying, well maybe that was an angel that I got that parking ... But, um, I have a brother-in-law, very sick with Alzheimer's. I was by his bed yesterday. He's a Christian person, um, but he's no longer verbal, um, no longer mobile. And I just said, Lord, compass him about with your holy angels. You don't pray to angels, but you can pray to God the Father about angels.

**John Dickson:** I love it. Beautiful point to end. Graham Cole, thank you so much.

**Graham Cole:** My pleasure, John.