
A TREASURY
OF INSPIRING
QUOTATIONS
SPANNING
THE AGES

The Quotable Angel



Edited by Lee Ann Chearney

Foreword by Elizabeth Spires

The Quotable Angel



A Treasury of Inspiring Quotations
Spanning the Ages



Edited by
LEE ANN CHEARNEY

An Amaranth Book



John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
New York • Chichester • Brisbane • Toronto • Singapore

This text is printed on acid-free paper.

Copyright © 1995 by Amaranth and Lee Ann Chearney
Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Produced by PublisherStudio, Albany, New York.

An Amaranth Book
379 8th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11215

All rights reserved. Published simultaneously in Canada.

Reproduction or translation of any part of this work beyond that permitted by Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act without the permission of the copyright owner is unlawful. Requests for permission or further information should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. If legal, accounting, medical, psychological, or any other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought.

Pages 205 and 206 constitute an extension of the copyright page.

ISBN 0-471-13148-2

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*For Mike,
with love*



The editor thanks the following people, angels all, for their assistance and encouragement in the preparation of this book: Linda Ayres-DeMasi, Melanie Belkin, Gene Brissie, Will Camp (for Dante), Diane Chambers, John Cook, Colleen Clifford Corrice, Chris Jackson, Deirdre Kidder, Judith McCarthy, Christine McGoldrick, Andrea Edwards Myers, and, most of all, Bruce Sherwin. Their help is deeply appreciated.

Foreword



As a child, I was afraid of the dark. Lying in bed at night, barely breathing or moving, the only thing between me and my secret, unspoken fears was my guardian angel. For I believed that I had one. I had no clear picture of my angel. He stood in shadow, mute and brooding, a figure without a name or face, taller than my parents, winged, and always there. Reassured, I would fall asleep and dream not of my angel, but of myself, with wings, surveying the familiar landscape of my childhood:

Each night in astral dreams, I flew above
the peaked and pointed spires and steeples
of the whitewashed town, the streets like spokes
on a wheel, converging at the circle's center,
flew over the enthroned moon, fat and full
as a pumpkin, trying in vain to touch
its shifting, shimmering surface that rippled
and flowed like the nightshirts of sleepers
caught in the crosswinds of a dream. Below,
the townspeople pointed speechlessly upward
at a girl flying with outstretched arms
away from everything she knew. Believe
or disbelieve a story different from your own.
I was a chameleon, a dissembler, a conjuror of form . . .

(Puella Aeterna)

My dream and the subsequent poem I made out of it spoke of weightlessness, freedom, power and transformation—and the heart's desire of all of us, not just children, to possess the qualities of angels. I dreamed the dream many times over, and then the dream changed and darkened when I was ten or twelve. I was frustratingly earth-bound, no longer able to fly. A landscape "appareled in celestial light" was gone. Wordsworth in his famous ode on childhood was right.

Later, in my adult life, I met my angel face to face. It was soon before I was to leave on sabbatical to spend a year in England. In my dream, I was standing in a church. Light streamed through the high windows, struck and illuminated "my" angel, ageless, perfect, and beautiful. I saw his face, was given his name. The difficult part to describe is not the scene but the emotional tenor of the dream (emotions in dreams always seem purer, clearer, more intense—not mixed and muddled the way they are in waking life). The feeling between us was one of wordless accord, of perfect love. It was a dream of two souls touching. It was, most surely, an annunciation that boded well for the year ahead.

If guardian angels exist, then mine has saved me, in a very literal sense, on several occasions. Talk like this almost always elicits raised eyebrows from skeptical friends. One argues, "But if there are such things as guardian angels, where are they when a child is in an accident, when a child dies?" A belief in angels doesn't mean we are catapulted back into the walled safety of Eden. It simply means a belief in the *possibility*, not certainty, of grace or rescue. For how can we live without such a hope? Without a belief in a pure and boundless energy—love, grace, redemption, call it what you will—that acts as a countervailing force to the world's darkness? Is it preferable to believe that the physical world is all that we have and that the only thing standing between us and oblivion is our own small force and will?

The poet's desire, it might be said, is to write like an angel. To forever fix in language some of the ineffable qualities angels possess. Imagination, for the poet, and the imagination's subsequent embodiment in words, occupies the place that faith and angels occupy for the believer. Imagination for Wallace Stevens was "the necessary angel." Randall Jarrell speaks of the poet standing out in a field, hoping to be struck by lightning six or seven times during a lifetime, surely similar

to the epiphanal experiences of saints. The divine moment, for the poet, for the saint or pilgrim, is always the intersection of two worlds: one visible, one invisible, one worldly, one otherworldly, one shadowed, one lightstruck. The poet or artist cannot escape time but his or her creation can—in words, stone, pigment. And so language becomes eternal and the poet occupies the odd and godly position of creator.

We seldom think about the limitations of the angelic lifestyle—what angels selflessly give up in service to the world: the utter lack of a personal life, the first cup of coffee in the morning, meals served in courses with good wine and shining silverware, freshly washed and ironed clothes thoughtlessly put on each morning and just as easily taken off each night, soft beds to sleep in. Angels do not garden, take walks, read books, or paint pictures. (Music seems to be the only diversion angels and humankind share.) Childless and undistracted, angels look to us for their meaning and purpose, waiting to be called upon with the patience of . . . angels.

One can, I suppose, live without angels just as one can live without ever reading a poem, looking at a painting, or listening to a symphony. But such an existence is an impoverishment. The fact of the matter is that, on the deepest level, we *need* angels. Angels (except for a few faulty defective ones) are our own best selves. As mirrors to our own unrealized potentiality and divinity, they speak to the deeper unvoiced parts of our soul and psyche. *The Quotable Angel* takes us back to an earlier time in our lives when belief was everything as it offers up rare and memorable glimpses of the angelic presences among us.

—Elizabeth Spires

Notes from the Editor



*A*ngels are everywhere. Crossing barriers of time, culture, language, religion, and geography, angels infuse the thoughts, dreams, and hopes of all humankind. Guiding stars in the heavens, shepherding the seasons, ministering to the strengths and the frailties of humanity assigned to their care, angels are the divine caretakers of our experience, our world, and our universe. In performing the research for this volume, I was moved by the eloquence of the words people used to talk about angels and by our global need to give voice to the divine—whether to worship, praise, explain, condemn, overcome, or simply to understand.

I eagerly invite the reader to share in this celebration of angels, a celebration as well of the divinity of language and our resolute human striving toward absolute beauty. The words of our world's greatest voices through the centuries—Socrates, Aquinas, da Vinci, Teresa of Avila, Shakespeare, Mozart, Lincoln, Whitman, Einstein, Picasso, Martin Luther King, Jr., Helen Keller, and hundreds of others, spoken as a prayer into the listening ears of our angels, form a chorus that will provoke, inspire, delight, and transport us. Together, we make a celestial pilgrimage to explore the nature of angels, and in doing so we come to discover all that we are,—ourselves, and would hope to be.

The Quotable Angel is divided into four parts: “Our Angels, Ourselves;” “About Angels and Their Mission;” “Angels Infuse Our Perception;” and “In Praise of the Sacred.” Each part contains sec-

tions that describe a new aspect of angels and our relationship to them. Individual quotations within sections are arranged to guide readers through a progression of speakers and ideas that create resonances and build meaningfully one upon the next. The biographical index and general index can be used to look up quotations by specific speakers or to locate passages by subject. References in quotations that appear gender biased, using the masculine to denote general human nature and angel nature, are the words of the speakers. Readers are encouraged, in such cases, to apply to their understanding of the quotations the spirit of a contemporary sensitivity in regard to the language of gender equality.

Who are angels? How do they look and what do they do? What is there that is angelic in our own human natures? Can it be that the laws of physics are the handiwork of angels? Do angel guardians protect, comfort, and nurture each individual human being? What if there are no angels, but only humankind? *Can* humanity give voice to the divine? Should we try?

We are insatiable in pursuit of a glimpse of the holy. We are filled, as Dante writes in the *Paradiso*, with “an agonizing need of knowing more.”

—Lee Ann Chearney

Contents



Foreword by Elizabeth Spires	ix
Notes from the Editor	xiii

I. Our Angels, Ourselves

Believing in Angels	3
Songs of the Angels	10
Angels Within Us	15
Angelic Soul	21
Angel Visions	25
Angels of Mercy	33
Healing Powers of Angels	36
Angels to Watch Over Us	42

II. About Angels and Their Mission

Angel Guides	51
Angels to Intercede	55
Angels by Name	61
Angelic Love	67
Flight of Angels	74
Wings	81
Angel Dress and Appearance	85
On Earth and In Heaven	92
Angels of Death	97
Dark Angels	103

III. Angels Infuse Our Perception

Of Human Nature and Angels	113
In the Garden	122
Angel Voices	127
The Gaze of an Angel	130
Angels of the Natural World	133
Prayer and Angels	140
Wrestling with Angels	145

IV. In Praise of the Sacred

The Universe	151
Where Angels Dwell	158
Who Are Angels?	162
Guardian Angels	169
Cathedral	175
The Ethereal and Eternity	179
Steps unto Heaven	185
Angel Food	189
Hosanna	194
Lofty Ambition	197

List of Illustrations	203
Biographical Index	207
Index	237

I

*Our Angels,
Ourselves*

Believing in Angels



*T*hey say miracles are past, and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence it is that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

I believe in angels; angels in heaven, on earth, and in the midmost air; angels with flaming swords expelling our parents from Paradise and obstructing Balaam's ass; French angels assisting the Allied armies at Mons and turning back General Von Kluck's march on Paris; Ulster angels crowding about Derry; Thomist angels crowding on needles; weeping angels distressed at what they see; guardian or tutelary angels steering our wayward course.

ROSE MACAULEY
"BELIEVING" FROM PERSONAL PLEASURES

*T*here is not enough love and kindness in the world to permit us to give any of it away to imaginary beings.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
"RELIGIOUS LIFE"

The idea that nothing is true except what we comprehend is silly.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Not only do 96% believe in God, most Americans also believe in: Heaven, 90%; Miracles 79%; Angels, 72%.

USA TODAY/CNN/GALLUP POLL

Make friends with the angels.

ST. AUGUSTINE

So many learned heads should so far forget their metaphysics, and destroy the ladder and scale of creatures, as to question the existence of spirits.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE
RELIGIO MEDICI

A large part of the popularity and persuasiveness of psychology comes from its being a sublimated spiritualism: a secular, ostensibly scientific way of affirming the primacy of "spirit" over matter.

SUSAN SONTAG
ILLNESS AS METAPHOR

The Bible ought to teach him that he will become a black angel and go home to a black God at death.

MARCUS GARVEY
PHILOSOPHY AND OPINIONS OF MARCUS GARVEY

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 do not believe in angels because UFOs are astonishingly angel-like in some of their reported appearances. I do not believe in angels because ESP experts are making the realm of the spirit world seem more and more plausible. I do not believe in angels because of the sudden worldwide emphasis on the reality of Satan and demons. I do not believe in angels because I have ever seen one—because I haven't.

I believe in angels because the Bible says there are angels; and I believe the Bible to be the true Word of God.

I also believe in angels because I have sensed their presence in my life on special occasions.

BILLY GRAHAM
ANGELS: GOD'S SECRET MESSENGERS

*P*robable impossibilities are to be preferred to improbable possibilities.

ARISTOTLE
POETICS

*M*an is certainly stark mad; he cannot make a flea, and yet he will be making gods by dozens.

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

*M*aybe they need to conform to our ideas in order to be, in order to exist. Maybe our believing in them and conceiving of them gives [angels] existence.

RICKIE LEE JONES

*I*t seemed to me I was going up to heaven through birchwoods, snow and clouds of smoke, with all those plump women, those bearded peasants tirelessly making their signs of the cross.

MARC CHAGALL
MY LIFE

*S*o long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship.

FEDOR DOSTOEVSKY
THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV

*T*here is no question that there is an unseen world. The problem is, how far is it from midtown and how late is it open? Unexplainable events occur constantly. One man will see spirits. Another will hear voices. A third will wake up and find himself running in the Preakness.

WOODY ALLEN
"EXAMINING PSYCHIC PHENOMENA"

We must be linked up with the Holy Angels: we must form with them one strong family.

POPE PIUS XII

*B*ut the Angel came only to Mary, and no one could understand her. After all, what woman was so mortified as Mary? And is it not true in this instance also that one whom God blesses he curses in the same breath?

SOREN KIERKEGAARD
FEAR AND TREMBLING