

extraordinary, eminent saints: otherwise all that go to heaven must have festivals kept in remembrance of them; and so we might have a million for a day. 3. That it be not made equal with the Lord's day, but kept in such a subordination to that day, as the life or death of saints is of inferior and subordinate respect, to the work of Christ in man's redemption. 4. And if it be kept in a spiritual manner, to invite men to imitate the holiness of the saints, and the constancy of the martyrs, and not to encourage sensuality and sloth.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### *Directions about our Communion with the Holy Angels.*

*Direct.* 1. 'Be satisfied in knowing so much of angels as God in nature and Scripture hath revealed; but presume not to inquire further, much less to determine of unrevealed things.' That there are angels, and that they are holy spirits, is past dispute; but what number they are, and of how many worlds, and of what orders and different dignities and degrees, and when they were created, and what locality belongeth to them, and how far they excel or differ from the souls of men, these and many other such unnecessary questions, neither nature or Scripture will teach us how infallibly to resolve. Almost all the heretics in the first ages of the church, did make their doctrines of angels the first and chief part of their heresies; arrogantly intruding into unrevealed things, and boasting of their acquaintance with the orders and inhabitants of the higher worlds. These being risen in the apostles' days, occasioned Paul to say, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind".

*Direct.* 11. 'Understand so much of the ministry of angels as God hath revealed, and so far take notice of your

\* Col. ii. 18.

communion with them ; but affect not any other sort of communion <sup>b</sup>.’

I shall here shew how much of the ministry of angels is revealed to us in Scripture.

1. It is part of the appointed work of angels, to be ministering spirits for the heirs of salvation <sup>c</sup>. Not ministers or servants of the godly, but ministers of God for the godly : as the shepherd is not a servant of the sheep, but for the sheep. It is not an accidental or occasional work which they do extraordinarily ; but it is their undertaken office to which they are sent forth. And this their ministry is about the ordinary concerns of our lives, and not only about some great or unusual cases or exigents <sup>d</sup>.

2. It is not some, but all the angels that are appointed by God to this ministration, “ Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth <sup>e</sup>.” Mark here, that if you inquire whether God have any higher spirits, that are not employed in so low an office, but govern these angels, or if you inquire whether only this world be the angels’ charge, or whether they have many other worlds also (of viators) to take care of ; neither nature nor Scripture doth give you the determination of any of these questions ; and therefore you must leave them as unrevealed things : (with abundance more with which the old heretics and the Popish schoolmen, have diverted men’s minds from plain and necessary things). But that all the angels minister for us, are the express words of Scripture.

3. The work of this office is not left promiscuously among them, but several angels have their several works and charge ; therefore Scripture telleth us of some sent of one message, and some on another ; and tells us that the meanest of Christ’s members on earth have their angels before God in heaven, “ I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven <sup>f</sup>.” Whether each true believer hath one or more angels ? and whether one angel look to more than one believer ? are questions which God hath not resolved us of, either in nature or Scripture ; but that each true Christian hath his angel, is here asserted by our Lord.

<sup>b</sup> Angelorum vocabulum nomen est officii, non naturæ : nam sancti illi celestis patriæ spiritus, semper sunt spiritus, sed semper vocari angeli non possunt. Gregor.

<sup>c</sup> Heb. i. 14.

<sup>d</sup> Psal. xxxiv. 6, 7. xci. 11, 12.

<sup>e</sup> Heb. i. 1. 4.

<sup>f</sup> Matt. xviii. 10.

4. In this office of ministration they are servants of Christ as the Head of the church, and the Mediator between God and man, to promote the ends of his superior office in man's redemption; "All power is given to me in heaven and earth <sup>a</sup>." "And set him at his right hand in the celestials, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church <sup>f</sup>." "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches <sup>g</sup>." Whether the angels were appointed about the service of Adam in innocency; or only began their office with Christ the Mediator as his ministers, is a thing that God hath not revealed; but that they serve under Christ for his church is plain.

5. This care of the angels for us is exercised throughout our lives, for the saving of us from all our dangers, and delivering us out of all our troubles. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles: the angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him, and delivereth them <sup>h</sup>." "For he shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways: they shall bear thee up in their hand, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone <sup>i</sup>." In all our ways (that are good) and in every step we tread, we have the care and ministry of tutelar angels. They are our ordinary defence and guard.

6. In all this ministry they perfectly obey the will of God, and do nothing but by his command <sup>k</sup>, being his messengers to man.

7. Much of their work is to oppose the malice of evil spirits that seek our hurt, and to defend us from them: against whom they are engaged under Christ in daily war or conflict <sup>l</sup>.

8. In this their ministration they are ordered into different degrees of superiority and inferiority, and are not equal among themselves <sup>m</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxviii. 18. John xiii. 3. <sup>f</sup> Ephes. i. 20—22. <sup>g</sup> Rev. xxiii. 16.

<sup>h</sup> Psal. xxxiv. 6, 7.

<sup>i</sup> Psal. xci. 11, 12.

<sup>k</sup> Psal. ciii. 10. Zech. i. 8, 10. Matt. xviii. 10.

<sup>l</sup> Rev. xii. 7, 9. Psal. lxxviii. 17. lxxviii. 49. Matt. iv. 11.

<sup>m</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 16. Jude 9. Dan. x. 13, 20, 21. Eph. i. 21. Col. ii. 10. Eph. iii. 10. vi. 12. Col. i. 16. Zech. iv. 10. Rev. iv. 5. v. 6.

9. Angels are employed not only about our bodies, but our souls, by furthering the means of our salvation: they preached the Gospel themselves, (as they delivered the law<sup>a</sup>). Especially they deliver particular messages, which suppose the sufficiency of the laws of Christ, and only help to the obedience of it.

10. They are sometimes God's instruments to confirm, and warn, and comfort, and excite the soul, and to work upon the mind, and will, and affections; that they do this persuasively, and have as much access and power to do us good, as satan hath to do us evil, is very clear: good angels have as much power and access to the soul, to move to duty, as devils have to tempt to sin. As God hath sent them oft upon monitory and consolatory messages to his servants in visible shapes, so doth he send them on the like messages invisibly<sup>b</sup>. An angel from heaven is sent to strengthen Christ himself in his agony.

11. They persecute and chase the enemies of the church, and sometimes destroy them<sup>c</sup>: and hinder them from doing hurt<sup>d</sup>.

12. They are a convoy for the departing souls of the godly, to bring them to the place of their felicity<sup>e</sup>, though how they do it we cannot understand.

13. They are the attendants of Christ at his coming to judgment, and his ministers to gather his elect, and sever the wicked from the just, in order to their endless punishment or joy. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up<sup>f</sup>," &c. "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all offences or scandals, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. At the end of the world, the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire<sup>g</sup>," &c.

<sup>a</sup> Luke ii. 9, 10. i. 11, &c. Heb. ii. 2. Gal. iii. 19. Acts x. 4. Dan. vii. 16. viii. 15—17. ix. 21, 22. Luke i. 29. ii. 19.

<sup>b</sup> Judges v. 23. Matt. i. 20. Psal. civ. 4. Luke xxii. 43.

<sup>c</sup> Psal. xxxv. 5, 6. 2 Kings xix. 35. Isa. xxxvii. 36.

<sup>d</sup> Numb. xxii. 24. <sup>e</sup> Luke xvi. 22.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 16. <sup>g</sup> Matt. xiii. 41. 49.

*Direct.* III. 'Understand our near affinity or relation to the angels, and how they and we are concerned in each others condition and affairs.' As to our nature our immortal souls are kin or like unto the angels, though our bodies are but like the brutes. Those souls that are created after the image of God, in their very natural essence (as rational and free agents) besides his moral image of sanctity<sup>u</sup>, may well be said to be like the angels: "He made us little lower than the angels<sup>v</sup>." And God hath made us their charge and care; and therefore no doubt hath given them a special love unto us, to fit them to the due performance of their trust. As ministers have a special paternal love to their flocks, and as Christians are to have a special love to one another to enable and engage them to the duties appointed them by God towards each other; so these excellent spirits have no doubt a far purer and greater love, to the image of God upon the saints, and to the saints for the image and sake of God, than the dearest friends and holiest persons on earth can have. For they are more holy, and they are more perfectly conformed to the mind of God, and they love God himself more perfectly than we, and therefore for his sake do love his people much more perfectly than we. And therefore they are more to be loved by us than any mortals are; both because they are more excellent, pure and amiable, and because they have more love to us. Moreover the angels are servants of the same God, and members of the same society which we belong to. They are the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem, of which we are heirs: they have possession, and we have title, and shall in time possess it. We are called to much of the same employment with them; we must love the same God, and glorify him by obedience, thanks and praise, and so do they: therefore they are ministers for our good, and rejoice in the success of their labours, as the ministers of Christ on earth do<sup>w</sup>. There is not a sinner converted, but it is the angels' joy<sup>x</sup>, which sheweth how much they attend that work. "We are come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels<sup>y</sup>," &c. They are especially present and attendant on

<sup>u</sup> Gen. ix. 6.<sup>v</sup> Psal. viii. 5.<sup>w</sup> Heb. i. 14.<sup>x</sup> Luke xv. 10.<sup>y</sup> Heb. xii. 22—24.

us in our holy assemblies and services of God; and therefore we are admonished to reverence their presence, and do nothing before them that is sinful or unseemly<sup>b</sup>. The presence of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, must continually awe us into exact obedience<sup>c</sup>. With the church they pry into the mystery of the dispensations of the Spirit to the church<sup>d</sup>. And so "by the church," that is, by God's dealings with the church, is "made known the manifold wisdom of God," even to these "heavenly principalities and powers<sup>e</sup>." In conclusion, Christ telleth us that in our state of blessedness we shall be "equal to the angels<sup>f</sup>," and so shall live with them for ever.

*Direct.* iv. 'When your thoughts of heaven are staggering or strange, and when you are tempted to doubt whether indeed there is such a life of glory for the saints, it may be a great help to your faith, to think of the world of angels that already do possess it.' That there are such excellent and happy inhabitants of the superior orbs, besides what Scripture saith, even reason will strongly persuade any rational man: 1. When we consider that sea, and land, and air, and all places of this lower, baser part of the world, are replenished with inhabitants suitable to their natures; and therefore that the incomparably more great and excellent orbs and regions should all be uninhabited, is irrational to imagine. 2. And as we see the rational creatures are made to govern the brutes in this inferior world, so reason telleth us it is improbable that the higher reason of the inhabitants of the higher regions should have no hand in the government of man. And yet God hath further condescended to satisfy us herein, by some unquestionable apparitions of good angels, and many more of evil spirits, which puts the matter past all doubt, that there are inhabitants of the unseen world. And when we know that such there are, it maketh it the more easy to us to believe that such we may be, either numbered with the happy or unhappy spirits: considering the affinity which there is between the nature of our souls and them; to conquer senseless Sadducism is a good step to the conquest of irreligiosity; he that is well persuaded that there are angels and spirits, is much bet-

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 10.    <sup>c</sup> Eccles. v. 6.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Pet. i. 12.

<sup>e</sup> Eph. iii. 10.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Tim. v. 21.

<sup>f</sup> Luke xx. 36.

ter prepared than a Sadducee to believe the immortality of the soul; and because the infinite distance between God and man, is apt to make the thoughts of our approaching his glory either dubious or very terrible, the remembrance of those myriads of blessed spirits that dwell now in the presence of that glory, doth much embolden and confirm our thoughts. As he that would be afraid whether he should have access to and acceptance with the king, would be much encouraged if he saw a multitude as mean as himself, or not much unlike him, to be familiar attendants on him. I must confess such is my own weakness, that I find a frequent need of remembering the holy hosts of saints and angels, that are with God, to embolden my soul, and make the thoughts of heaven more familiar and sweet, by abating my strangeness, amazedness and fears; and thus far to make them the media (that I say not the mediators) of my thoughts, in their approaches to the Most High and Holy God: (though the remembrance of Christ the true Mediator is my chief encouragement). Especially when we consider how fervently those holy spirits do love every holy person upon earth, and so that all those that dwell with God, are dearer friends to us, than our fathers or mothers here on earth are, (as is briefly proved before,) this will embolden us yet much more.

*Direct. v.* 'Make use of the thoughts of the angelical hosts, when you would see the glory and majesty of Christ.' If you think it a small matter that he is the Head of the church on earth, a handful of people contemned by the satanical part of the world, yet think what it is to be "Head over all things, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," (that is, gave him a power, dignity and name, greater than any power, dignity or name of men or angels,) "and hath put all things under his feet<sup>s</sup>." "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they:" of him it is said, "Let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 4. 6. Read the whole chapter. Our Head is the Lord of all these hosts.

*Direct. vi.* 'Make use of the remembrance of the glo-

<sup>s</sup> Eph. i. 21, 22.

rious angels, to acquaint you with the dignity of human nature, and the special dignity of the servants of God, and so to raise up your hearts in thankfulness to your Creator and Redeemer who hath thus advanced you<sup>a</sup>. 1. What a dignity is it that these holy angels should be all ministering spirits sent for our good! that they should love us, and concern themselves so much for us, as to rejoice in heaven at our conversion! "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour<sup>b</sup>." 2. But yet it is a higher declaration of our dignity, that we should in heaven be equal with them, and so be numbered into their society, and join with them everlastingly in the praise of our Creator. 3. And it is yet a greater honour to us, that our natures are assumed into union of person with the Son of God, and so advanced above the angels. "For he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham:" nor hath he put the world to come in subjection to the angels<sup>c</sup>. This is the Lord's doing, and it is wondrous in our eyes.

*Direct.* VII. 'When you would admire the works of God and his government, look specially to the angels' part.' If God would be glorified in his works, then especially in the most glorious parts: if he take delight to work by instruments, and to communicate such excellency and honour to them as may conduce to the honour of the principal cause, we must not overlook their excellency and honour, unless we will deny God the honour which is due to him. As he that will see the excellent workmanship of a watch or any other engine, must not overlook the chiefest parts, nor their operation on the rest: so he that will see the excellent order of the works and government of God, must not overlook the angels, nor their offices in the government, and preservation of the inferior creatures, so far as God hath revealed it unto us. We spoil the music if we leave out these strings. It is a great part of the glory of the works of God, that all the parts in heaven and earth are so admirably con-

<sup>a</sup> Magna dignitas fidelium animarum ut unaquæque habeat ab ortu natiuitatis in custodiam sui angelum deputatum: imoplores. Hieron. Luke xx. 36.

<sup>b</sup> Psal. viii. 4, 5.

<sup>c</sup> Heb. ii. 5. 16.



joined and jointed as they are ; and each in their places contribute to the beauty and harmony of the whole.

*Direct. VIII.* 'When you would be apprehensive of the excellency of love and humility, and exact obedience to the will of God, look up to the angels, and see the lustre of all these virtues as they shine in them.' How perfectly do they love God and all his saints ! Even the weakest and meanest of the members of Christ ! With what humility do they condescend to minister for the heirs of salvation ; how readily and perfectly do they obey their Maker ! Though our chiefest pattern is Christ himself, who came nearer to us, and appeared in flesh, to give us the example of all such duties, yet under him the example of angels is also to be observed, and with pleasure to be imitated. And ask the enemies of holiness, who urge you with the examples of the great and learned, whether they are wiser than all the angels of God ?

*Direct. IX.* 'When you are tempted to desire any inordinate communion with angels, as visibly appearing or affecting your senses, or to give them any part of the office or honour of Jesus Christ, then think how suitable that office is to your safety and benefit which God hath assigned them, and how much they themselves abhor aspiring to, or usurpation of, the office or honour of their Lord : and consider how much more suitable to your benefit this spiritual ministration of the angels is, than if they appeared to us in bodily shapes<sup>1</sup>.' In this spiritual communion they act according to their spiritual nature, without deceit ; and they serve us without any terrible appearances ; and without any danger of drawing us to sensitive, gross apprehensions of them, or enticing us to an unmeet adhesion to them, or honouring of them : whereas if they appeared to us in visible shapes, we might easily be affrighted, confounded and left in doubt, whether they were good angels indeed or not. It is our communion with God himself that is our happiness ; and communion with angels or saints is desirable but in order unto this : that kind of communion with angels therefore is the best, which most advanceth us to communion with God ; and that reception of his mercy by instruments

<sup>1</sup> Timet angelus adorari ab humana natura, quam videt in Deo sublimatam. Gregor.

is best, which least endangereth our inordinate adhesion to the instruments, and our neglect of God. We know not so well as God, what way is best and safest for us; as it is dangerous desiring to mend his Word by any fancies of our own, which we suppose more fit; so it is dangerous to desire to amend his government, and providence, and order, and to think that another way than that which in nature he hath stated and appointed, is more to our benefit. It is dangerous wishing God to go out of his way, and to deal with us, and conduct us in by-ways of our own; in which we are ourselves unskilled, and of which we little know the issue.

*Direct. x.* 'When you are apt to be terrified with the fear of devils, think then of the guard of angels, and how much greater strength is for you than against you.' Though God be our only fundamental security, and our chiefest confidence must be in him, yet experience telleth us how apt we are to look to instruments, and to be affected as second causes do appear to make for us or against us; therefore when appearing dangers terrify us, appearing or secondary helps should be observed to comfort and encourage us.

*Direct. xi.* 'Labour to answer the great and holy love of angels with such great and holy love to them, as may help you against your unwillingness to die, and make you long for the company of them whom you so much love. And when death seemeth terrible to you because the world to come seems strange, remember that you are going to the society of those angels, that rejoiced in your conversion, and ministered for you here on earth, and are ready to convoy your souls to Christ<sup>m</sup>.' Though the thoughts of God and our blessed Mediator should be the only final object to attract our love, and make us long to be in heaven, yet under Christ, the love and company of saints and angels must be thought on to further our desires and delight: for even in heaven God will not so be all to us, as to use no creature

<sup>m</sup> Simus devoti, simus grati tantis custodibus: redamemus eos quantum possumus, quantum debemus effectuose, &c. Bernard. Væ nobis si quando provocati sancti angeli peccatis et negligentis, indignos nos judicaverint presentia et visitatione sua, &c. Cavenda est nobis eorum offensa, et in his maxime exercendum, quibus eos novimus oblectari: hæc autem placent eis quæ in nobis invenire delectat, ut est sobrietas, castitas, &c. In quovis angulo reverentiam exhibe angelo, ne audeas illo presente, quod me vidente non auderes. Bernard.

for our comfort; otherwise the glorified humanity of Christ would be no means of our comfort there: and the heavenly Jerusalem would not then have been set out to us by its created excellencies as it is Rev. xxi. xxii. Nor would it be any comfort to us in the kingdom of God, that we shall be with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob<sup>a</sup>.

*Direct.* xii. 'Pray for the protection and help of angels, as part of the benefits procured for the saints by Christ; and be thankful for it as a privilege of believers, excelling all the dignities of the ungodly. And walk with a reverence of their presence, especially in the worshipping of God.' It is not fit such a mercy should be undervalued or unthankfully received: nor that so ordinary a means of our preservation should be overlooked, and not be sought of God by prayer. But the way to keep the love of angels, is to keep up the love of God: and the way to please them, is to please him; for his will is theirs.

*Direct.* xiii. 'In all the worship you perform to God, remember that you join with the angels of heaven, and bear your part to make up the concert.' Do it therefore with that holiness, and reverence, and affection, as remembering not only to whom you speak, but also what companions you have; and let there not be too great a discord either in your hearts or praises. O think with what lively, joyful minds they praise their glorious Creator; and how unwearyed they are in their most blessed work! And labour to be like them in love and praise, that you may come to be equal with them in their glory<sup>o</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Luke xiii. 28. Matt. viii. 11.

<sup>o</sup> Luke xx. 36.