

## THE ANGELS

**M**y subject is the elevated one of the Angels. An astonishing place is assigned to them both in the Old and the New Testaments. They are represented as paralleling our own warfare, taking the most intense interest in us, and asserting themselves in all the events of life.

When you read through the Scriptures, you cannot but be struck by that recurring item: "God sent His Angel." As I reckon things, there are about 300 references to the Angels in the two Testaments.

St. Bernard insists that it is of paramount necessity that we should have a positive devotion to the Angels. So great is their office in regard to us that it must be repaid by the bestowing of some attention on them. It is of necessity, he says.

The Angels greatly suffer in the process of our efforts to make them visible to ourselves, i.e. by way of statues or pictures. So deprived are we of any notion of what the Angels are like, that the results are pitiful when it comes to representing them. They are usually shown as effeminate or undignified. The mighty Cherubim who play with the stars as a child would play with a ball are often depicted as bouncing babies with wings. Nothing could be further from the reality than anything of that sort, because each Angel is a veritable world in himself, on whom God has poured out His thought. There they are, might and beauty and intelligence beyond our imagining!

The Angels not only fulfil innumerable offices in regard to men, but also they have been given an important part in the operations of nature and the management of the universe.

### ANGELS AND NATURAL PHENOMENA

They have towards the animals a function which is akin to that of shepherding. This intelligent superintendence by the Angels or by particular ones among them would explain many things which are mysterious to us, such as for instance the migration of birds. This is an astonishing phenomenon. A certain day comes and immediately, by what we so loosely and casually call the operation of instinct, those birds mass themselves together from a whole country and wing their way to another land. There they remain until the signal is repeated, when they fly back again to their old abode. It is a baffling performance, but in the light of the angelic explanation it would be as understandable as the



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management of sheep.

A kindred manifestation is the purposeful pilgrimage of the salmon and the eel from the heart of the ocean back to their parent river. Out of all the rivers and streams of the whole world, when the time comes, they find unerringly the one in which they were born themselves. To it, and some people say, to the very spot where they were born themselves, they go to breed, to repeat the whole cycle of nature.

Even the fallen Angels have retained much of their former power. It is believed that they are responsible for many of the catastrophes of nature. Therein of course they are not allowed full play. If they were, they would rush to destroy us. To do so would be within their power. But in that matter, as in all others, they have against them the countering operations of the good Angels who fetter their malevolence, only allowing them the scope which the providence of God permits. Thus the very effort of the evil Angels to ruin and confuse are in the end turned to good by these angelic allies of ours.

### THE ANGELS AND THE LEGION

The Angels are specially invoked in the Legion prayers. When I look back to the early moulding days, I am not clear as to why the Angels were brought in. The thoughts of the Legionaries were not then upon the Angels. If asked what our attitude towards them was, I would have to say that it was incomplete. We did not at all appreciate the immensity of their office. We viewed our relations with them as individual, private ones. Each of us had an Angel Guardian in terms of whom we thought; and we had nothing to do with any other Angel Guardian. That is insufficient. What is at stake is something far more extensive. I have already described it as the paralleling of our own warfare; the Angels as a body as well as individually are co-operating with us. To an extent which we cannot realise, they are necessary to us. The withdrawal of that support might mean the total collapse of humanity in the face of the adverse attacks.

When we see the way in which our thoughts have developed in regard to the Angels, we can only believe that like children we were led on uncomprehendingly. The understanding would come at a later stage. Now I think that it has dawned.

### ST. MICHAEL AND THE JEWS

The Angels made their appearance on our prayer card to the extent of two invocations. The first one was St. Michael, who has an invocation to himself. That is most fitting, because St. Michael's office has been a unique one. In the Jewish days he was patron of that chosen people, a fact not often adverted to. When the Jews went off the track, and the Church took the place of the Jewish



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dispensation, St. Michael was carried over to the new chosen people - the Church of God.

This causes one to wonder what is St. Michael's relation towards the Jews today. It is certainly not conceivable that he would forget them. A mother will not forget her child, even though the child fall into bad courses. Neither could St. Michael, whose heart would hold the love of a thousand mothers, forget the people to whom he had been so solemnly appointed as guardian from the beginning of their history. Therefore, those interested in Jews should remember that particularly. Next after Mary the Jewess, and Joseph the Jew, they should turn to the powerful Michael for help in their efforts.

### A HEAVENLY LEGION

The second invocation was to the Angel Guardians. That defective point of view held the field for many a day, but a process of enlightenment went on. First, we were reminded that we must also invoke the Guardians of those whom we were seeking to help. Then, little by little we began to see the angelic host as the counterpart of our own campaigning - a heavenly Legion which fights blow for blow along with us.

This alliance has several aspects. Each Legionary has an Angel Guardian, intimately bound up with his life. That Guardian never sleeps. In a sense the Legionary's battle is far more to the Angel than to the Legionary. Because the Angel sees clearly the issues at stake, that is God's glory, and the peril of the Legionary's own soul and the fate of those other souls with whom we are in touch. All these momentous things, which we glimpse only dimly, as through a glass darkly, the Angel appreciates acutely.

But that is far from being the only relation. All the other Angels are actively interested. For instance, the Angel Guardians of those with whom you are associated in any shape or form. Then all the other Angel Guardians of the whole world are not outside this loving arrangement. Just as every Legionary heart throughout the world beats in a sort of unison with every section of our work, so would it be with the Angels. Their entire host would be ardently concerned in the affairs of each Angel and of each one of us. Therefore we have the individual aspect complemented by the universal or combined aspect. The whole host of the Angels take part as one in the human warfare, playing a part analogous to that of an Air Force in relation to a surface army. Each is necessary in the combination.

### SPIRITUAL POWER WASTED

The emerging of these ideas presented a problem. Our system was lagging a little behind that up-to-date realisation. The Handbook only shadowed it. The



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prayers did not reflect it clearly. There was a wealth of symbolism and spiritual force in the position which was not being turned to purpose. This would be a disaster considering that eternal issues are at stake.

Some people do not understand the importance of grasping the full meaning of a doctrine. What is the purpose, they say, of going into all this detail? If we have a devotion to the Angels, what more is there to it? Why this unnecessary luxuriance?

Do they not understand that the potency of all warfare depends on the understanding which is behind it. If we in the Legion do not understand the doctrines according to which we are working, or if we only partially understand them, that means a deprivation of grace. It is not a total one, but we cannot afford to be without what I might venture to call an ounce of grace. The stakes are too great. We must have all the possible support.

In the Legion we have got a machine of grace; we must understand it and we must work it to its fullest capacity. We must get everything out of it that is in it.

### “LEGIONS OF ANGELS”

So we must be found exploiting in regard to the Angels that idea of the united army allied to our own, working hand in hand with us. One effective way of doing this is to think of them as a Legion. Actually Our Lord Himself applied that very word to them, thereby giving the term an august sanction. He made it a holy word. This latter note was lost in history until we in our own little way proceeded to revive it. The word “Legion” existed with many associations, but none of them had a spiritual significance until we, perhaps, restored it.

You will recall that when menaced by His enemies, Our Lord said on one occasion: “Thinkest thou that I cannot ask the Father and He will give me presently twelve legions of Angels.” There is the authority for our own use of the word. He hallowed it. Secondly it asserts that image which I have been stressing of a great disciplined force above, a heavenly army seconding our feebleness.

But it has seemed to us that if those ideas are to be brought home to the minds of all our members, it would be necessary to alter or amplify the existing invocations which minister too much to that individual and inadequate idea.

### PRACTICAL PROPOSALS

A suggestion was voiced at the Concilium. It received formal discussion on a number of occasions. It was also talked about a good deal informally. The result was the proposals which were the subject of animated examination at a number of Concilium meetings, and which have been referred to the whole Legionary world for consideration.



Sometime before these present considerations, there was another discussion at the Concilium on the subject of the prayers to be used by the Legionaries of the Oriental or Byzantine Rite. You know that the Eastern Rite is for the most part separated from ourselves and is known as the Orthodox Church. But there is a section of that Eastern Rite which is united to the Papacy, and which has been allowed to use the distinctive Eastern Ritual. The Concilium has been instructed by Rome to make allowance for their differences when applying the Legion to them. This has meant that we have sanctioned some different usages for the Byzantine Legionaries.

Among the propositions which were under examination at the time were the Angelic Invocations. It was found to the surprise of many that the Greek Ritual had a profound appreciation for the role of the Angels. Sanction was given for the following invocation in the case of St. Michael: "St. Michael, Prince of the heavenly Legion, pray for us."

That has been in use among them for some time. You will agree that it is extremely expressive, even though it transgresses one of our customs, namely that we do not embellish the names of our Patrons. For instance, we do not say: "St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church"; nor "St. John the Baptist, Precursor of the Lord." We just content ourselves with the name. So to indulge in that embellishment of St. Michael is a departure from practice, and not to be commended. But what is admirable about it is that before its time it introduced into our prayers that idea of invoking the heavenly Legion.

Then in place of our invocation of the Guardian Angels, we had to sanction for the Byzantines the form: "All ye heavenly Powers of Angels, pray for us."

In comparison with those two invocations, our own existing ones are inadequate and colourless, I think you will agree. But there is more needed even than that Byzantine picturesqueness and symbolism. We should remember that Mary, our Queen, is also Queen of all the Angels. But we do not so acclaim her in our present prayers. If we mention the Angels, we Legionaries should eagerly seize the opportunity of hailing her under that remarkable title of hers. To do so would further stress the closeness of the Angels' warfare to our own for of both she is Commander.

The method for effecting those different purposes is that which has been circularised to you all, namely the alteration of the invocation of the Guardian Angels to the following: "All ye heavenly Powers, Mary's Legion of Angels, pray for us." This is a paraphrase of the third verse of the Te Deum, with the name of Mary added.

### THE PROPOSALS EXPLAINED

That gets at the whole idea, even though at first sight it may suggest itself to



you as a little cumbersome. Perhaps it is, but many people have spent much time endeavouring to improve on it. But in the end we have had to be thus cumbersome to secure the fullness of what was in view. I might mention that when this invocation was first communicated to the Legionary bodies throughout the world, that very objection was stated by some. Likewise, it had presented itself at the Concilium, but there it was possible to argue the matter in patient detail. There was no hurry. If one meeting did not have the time, there would be another meeting next month! But the case of the Legion bodies abroad is different. It is next to impossible to argue the fullness of the question on paper.

You will notice the form of that invocation: "All ye heavenly Powers." No more would it be a case of addressing only our individual Guardian Angels. The note of individualism is eliminated. We cry out: "All ye heavenly Powers." The nine choirs of Angels are being invoked, and may I name these in case your knowledge has grown dim with the passage of time: Angels, Archangels, Cherubim, Seraphim, Powers, Principalities, Thrones, Virtues, Dominations.

Objection was made at the Concilium that the use of this new form would mean the bringing in of new patrons. This only demonstrates how necessary the change was; it showed that Legionaries did not realise that the existing invocation was really a calling on all the Angels. They thought they were calling upon a mere section of them. Actually every member of each of the nine choirs of Angels, not merely those called Angels and Archangels, has a guardianship of some kind, some over individual souls, others over cities, provinces, countries. The Dominations, we learn with more than a little interest and curiosity, are guardians over lesser Angels.

And Mary commands all the heavenly choirs.

Another interesting point is that references in Scripture prove that even heathen kingdoms have their Guardian Angels. The fact that they are out of the truth does not deprive them of heavenly help. Moreover the very infidels, the atheists, the haters of God, each has his Angel Guardian, so that the invoking of that Angel by us when dealing with those cases should not be neglected.

#### ST. MICHAEL AND ST. GABRIEL

The other suggestion made and passed at the Concilium and now being canvassed by the entire Legion was that instead of naming St. Michael singly as at the moment, we should couple with his name that of St. Gabriel. Here let us return to that question of the Byzantine Rite where we find that those two Angels are commonly invoked together, just as we couple the names of Saints Peter and Paul. In one Byzantine Missal, the 8th of November is the Feast of "Saints Michael and Gabriel and all the heavenly Powers." There is a wonderful Mass said on that day, and in it we find the constant invoking of those two



mighty Angels. They are jointly hailed as: champions, princes, leaders of the heavenly army; captains of the Angels, servants of the Divine glory, guardians and guides of human creatures, and leaders of the incorporeal beings. To invoke the two of them in the manner proposed would incidentally be a link with the Byzantine or Eastern Liturgy. This would be of no small advantage in these days when there is talk of Reunion.

It is to be noticed that in the picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, the original of which is in the care of the Redemptorists in Rome, two Angels are shown, one on each side of Jesus and Mary, bearing the instruments of the Passion. One is St. Michael, the other is St. Gabriel.

St. Gabriel, who it is suggested should enter into our prayers specifically, is not at present invoked, which seems to be a strange anomaly and defect. He is only admitted in the crowd, i.e. among the Angels. Yet he rates very big in our philosophy. He is the Angel of the Annunciation, which is the centre point of the Legionary devotion. He is generally supposed to have been the Guardian Angel of Our Lady herself. We often talk of the Legion as being a sort of projection of Mary. Such a thought would lead us to the further one that St. Gabriel might fittingly be the Angel Guardian of the Legion as a body, because it depends as a child upon Mary and does its little best to work for her glory and carry out her mission.

It was through St. Gabriel that the unique compliments of the Holy Trinity were presented to Mary; that the revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity was first made to mankind; that the Incarnation was announced; that her Immaculate Conception was declared. St. Gabriel inaugurated the Ave by uttering its first part. It is his words that we repeat millions and millions of times every day, and which are the foundation of the Rosary.

### FRIENDS OF THE ANGELS

Since these proposed invocations were circularised through the Legion, our attention has been drawn to the Association called the Philangeli or Friends of the Angels. It has a wide diffusion throughout the world and enjoys distinguished patronage. His Eminence Cardinal Godfrey of England is its President, and other princes of the Church are supporters. As its name indicates, its purpose is to develop devotion to the Angels. Its outlook on the Angels and on the place which they have towards mankind is the same as that which has produced the proposed invocations. If we had been acquainted with the Philangeli at the time of our discussions, we would have sent the Legionary bodies specimens of the literature of the Philangeli.

The Philangeli states that the special prayer of their Association is one composed by the Venerable Abbé Cestac in 1863. By a rescript of St. Pius X,



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dated 8th July, 1908, an indulgence of 300 days was granted for the saying of the prayer once daily.

I conclude this chapter by setting out the prayer:

"Queen of Heaven and Sovereign Mistress of the Angels, who has received from God the power and mission to crush the head of Satan, send forth, we humbly beseech thee, thy holy legions of Angels, that under thy commands they may pursue the enemy on every side, resist their bold attacks, and drive them into the abyss."