

OCTOBER II.

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY ANGEL-GUARDIANS.

AMONGST the adorable dispensations of the divine mercy in favour of men, it is not the least, that he has been pleased to establish a communion of spiritual commerce between us on earth and his holy angels, whose companions we hope one day to be in the kingdom of his glory. This communion is entertained on our side by the religious veneration with which we honour them as God's faithful, holy, and glorious ministering spirits, and beg their charitable succour and intercession with God ; on their side by their solicitude and prayers for us, and the many good offices they do us. The providence of God, always infinitely wise, infinitely holy, and infinitely gracious, vouchsafes to employ superior created beings in the execution of his will in various dispensations towards other inferior creatures. According to St. Thomas, when he created the angels he enlightened the lowest amongst them by those who are supreme in those glorious orders of spirits. It is clear, in the holy scriptures, that those blessed spirits which we call angels (as much as to say God's messengers) receive this very name from their office, in being employed by him in frequently executing his commissions in our favour and defence. That he does this on many occasions, both general and particular, has been abundantly shown elsewhere from the testimony of the holy scriptures.(1) One of the most merciful appointments of God relating to this economy established by him between the blessed angels and men, is, that he commissions chosen high spirits to be particular guardians to each of us. In this providence are displayed the infinite majesty, wisdom, and power of God, and the excess of his goodness towards his creatures ; also a deep foundation is laid of the greatest charity and the highest mutual joy in each other between the angels and the elect for all eternity in their happy society of heaven.

That particular angels are appointed and commanded by

(1) See on the two festivals of St. Michael, May 8 and Sep. 29. Also Instruction Pastorale de M. Jean Joseph de la Bastiè, Evêque de S. Malo, Sur les SS. Anges, ann. 1758.

God to guard and watch over each particular person among his servants, that is, all the just, or such as are in the state of grace, is an article of the Catholic faith, of which no ecclesiastical writer within the pale of the church, in any age, ever entertained the least doubt. That every man, even among sinners and infidels, has a guardian angel, is the doctrine of the most eminent among the fathers, and so strongly supported by the most sacred authority, that it seems not to be called in question, especially as to all the faithful. The psalmist assures us, (1) *He hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.* And in another place, (2) *The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear him, and he shall deliver them.* The patriarch Jacob prayed his good angel to bless his two grandsons, Ephraim and Manasses; (3) *The angel that delivereth me from all evils bless these boys.* Judith said, (4) *His angel hath been my keeper, both going hence, and abiding there, and returning from thence.* Christ deters us from scandalizing any of his little ones, because their angels always behold the face of God, who, with zeal and indignation, will demand vengeance of God against any by whose malice precious souls, which were their wards, have perished. (5) Upon which passage St. Hilary writes: (6) "It is dangerous to despise one whose cries and prayers are carried up to the eternal and invisible God by the gracious ministry of angels." So certain and general was the belief of a guardian angel being assigned to every one by God, that when St. Peter was miraculously delivered out of prison, the disciples, who, upon his coming to them, could not at first believe it to be him, said, *It is his angel.* (7) That St. Michael was the protector of the Jewish nation, or of the people of God, and that countries or collective bodies of men have, at least several, their tutelar angels, is clear from holy scripture. (8) So unanimous and so express is the doctrine of the fathers, in asserting and illustrating this article of the Catholic faith concerning guardian angels, that it would require a volume to copy their testimonies. The devils, with implaca-

(1) Ps. xc. 11.

(3) Gen. xlviii. 16.

(4) Judith xiii. 20. See Exod. xxiii. 20.

(5) Mat. xviii. 10.

(7) Acts. xi. 15.

(2) Ps. xxxiii. 8.

(6) S. Hilar. in Mat. xvii.

(8) Dan. xi. l. xii. l. &c.

ble envy and malice, study to compass our eternal ruin, both by stratagems and open assaults.* God is pleased to oppose to their efforts his good angels, by making them our defenders. If

* The existence of evil spirits is manifest from experience, and from natural arguments drawn from the operations in demoniacs, from some examples among the heathenish oracles, and from various other effects. Mr. Seed, in his discourse "On the Nature and Being of Evil Spirits," and many other Protestant theologians of note, insist much upon this proof, that many have experienced dreams and temptations of such an extraordinary nature, and concerning subjects of which before they had no knowledge, and of which their imagination could not by itself have produced any species or images, that the ideas or effects must be excited by some external spirit, who by his nature must be an evil one. This argument is not only allowed but strongly urged by several famous deists for the belief of evil spirits. But it is from the divine revelation that we learn the origin and qualities of these invisible enemies. By this we are informed that the devils fell from a state of justice and sanctity, in which they were created, by their own malice and sin; and that their crime was pride, to which, enamoured of their own perfections, they consented in thought, and which is called the beginning of all sin. (Ecclus. x. 15.) The prince of the apostate angels is sometimes called Lucifer. Some theologians and interpreters have thought that he was chief of all the angelical choirs, and that he was meant under the figure of Beheemoth, who is called, according to the Seventy and Vulgate, *the beginning of the ways of God*. (Job. xl. 14.) Dazzled with his own exalted state and beauty, he said within himself: *I will be like to the Most High*. (Isai. xiv. 12.) *His heart was puffed up with his beauty, and in it he lost his wisdom*. (Ezech. xxviii. 17.) For, according to several learned fathers, Isaias compares the haughtiness of the king of Babylon, and Ezechiel that of the king of Tyre, to the pride of Lucifer, which they thence take occasion to describe. The apostate angel was followed in his revolt or sin by a great part of the heavenly host, who were in a moment hurled down from their seats, and condemned to hell. (2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6.) Whilst some were immediately confined to those dungeons, others are left more at large till the day of judgment; and in the mean time their torments seem less grievous. (Mat. viii. 29, 31, &c. See Petavius, Tr. de Angelis.)

These fiends are called the princes of darkness, of the air, and of the world. (Ephes. ii. 1, 2, vi. 12; Mat. xii. 22; Luke ix. 1.) They differ in their ranks in a kind of hierarchy, and some are worse than others. (Mat. xii. 24, Ephes. vi. 12, &c.) Their prince is called Belial, that is, the evil one; or rather (according to St. Jerom's interpretation of the word, 3 Kings xxi. 13.) the Rebel. Also Satan, or the Enemy, and Beelzebub, from the chief idol of the Accaronites. The rage, malice, and envy of the devils against man, their enmity to all good are implacable; and their natural subtlety and strength are exceeding great, as appears from the perfection of their being, which is purely spiritual, and from examples where God suffered them more remarkably to exert their power. They hurried the swine into the lake, killed the seven first husbands of Sara, have slain armies in one night, have often disturbed nature and stirred up tempests, which struck whole provinces with terror, and ravaged the whole world. Satan makes his attacks upon men by putting on all shapes, sometimes by craft, or by snares and strata-

Almighty God permits the devils various ways to assail and tempt us, and, both by wiles and open violence, to endeavour to draw us into eternal ruin, will he not allow his good angels

gems, as the old serpent; sometimes by disguises transforming himself into an angel of light, and assuming the air of piety; sometimes by open assaults and violence, as the roaring lion, and noon-day devil. What did he not do against holy Job? *There is no power on earth which can be compared with him.* (Job xli. 24.) But he is restrained and confined by God's command, nor can he spread his snares, or tempt men but by the divine permission; for which he sometimes obtains a special leave, as in the cases of Job (chap. 1.) and St. Peter, (Luke xxii. 31, 32.) The devils watch to entice men to sin. (1 Pet. v. 8, Ephes. vi. 16, &c.) We have examples of this in the temptations of Eve, Achab, &c. They are sometimes suffered to deceive false prophets, and wicked men. (3 Kings xxii. 21.) They accuse men before the judgment seat of God. (Zach. iii. 1, 2, &c.)

The devils are sometimes permitted by God to exert their natural power and strength on natural agents by moving second causes, in producing distempers in human bodies, raising storms, and causing other physical evils in the world; as appears from such effects being sometimes ascribed in the holy scriptures to these wicked spirits. (See Calmet, *Disc. sur les Mauvais Anges.*) Before Satan was bound, or his power curbed by the triumph of Christ over him, and the spreading of the happy light and influence of the gospel throughout the world, the empire which the devils exercised on earth was much greater than since that time. But it is most certain that the devils are sometimes permitted by God to continue in some degree the mischievous influence of their malice against men various ways, against which the church has instituted, and always practised exorcisms and blessings. With regard to effects of magic and possessions of devils, though prayer and the other arms of piety and religion are to be always employed against our invisible enemies; yet such extraordinary effects are not to be easily supposed; superstition, credulity, and imposture are to be guarded against; and natural distempers, such as certain species of madness, extraordinary palsies, epilepsies, or the like, are not to be construed into effects of enchantments or possessions; which are not to be presumed upon ridiculous compacts and signs, (such as are mentioned in many popular pretended examples related by Delrio, &c.) nor upon vulgar prejudices and notions of the manner in which such things are done, but must be made apparent by circumstances which are preternatural, or beyond the ordinary course of nature. By clear proofs it is manifest that God sometimes permits corporeal possessions (in which the devil seizes on some of the corporeal organs or senses in a human body) and obsessions, (in which he represents certain images as present to the eyes or imagination with an invincible obstinacy;) and that these have been more or less frequent in different times and places. This is confirmed by the testimony and experience of all ages, and of all nations, even to the remotest Indies, as John Clerc observes. (Bibl. Universelle, t. 15, c. 4.) Such facts both the Old and New Testament manifestly evince. (See Laurence Clarke in his *Life of Christ*, against Woolston, p. 474, and the *Dissert. on the obsessions and possessions of devils*, prefixed to the Gospels in the new Latin and French bible, with dissertations, t. 10, p. 590.) Further proofs of the reality of demoniacs are reserved for a particular disquisition.

to exert their zeal for his honour, and their charity for us? No sooner had Lucifer and his adherents set up the standard of their revolt from God, but St. Michael and all the good angels entered upon a war against them, and, executing the sentence which God passed upon them, expelled them out of their blessed abodes. Man being created to fill up the places of these apostates, Lucifer, with his associates, is permitted by God to spread his snares, and exert the efforts of his malice against us, that in these trials we may give proof of our fidelity, and may purchase, by victories and triumphs, that bliss for which we are created. Satan thus effects the ruin of innumerable souls, and the Holy Ghost gives us this warning: *The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath.*(1) And such is his arrogance, that he trusteth that Jordan, that is, the whole race of mankind, may flow into his mouth, and be swallowed up by him.

The good angels out of the same zeal with which they continue their war against these wicked spirits, come to our relief, according to the order established by divine providence. And God, out of his infinite tenderness and compassion for us, commands his highest spirits to watch over and guard us. O my God! what is man that you should take such care of him, and give him for his governors the sublime princes of your heavenly court, the assistants of your throne! What am I but a worm of the earth, a slave to it, and to this body of filth, sin, and corruption? Must an angel, a creature so noble, so pure and holy, attend on me? "O wonderful condescension! O excess of goodness and love!" cries out St. Bernard.(2) "*He hath given his angels charge over thee.*"(3) Who is he that hath given this charge? To whom, and of whom hath he given this order? And what is its import? Let us seriously consider and weigh every part of this mystery? Who is he that hath given this charge? The Lord of angels, whom they obey. The supreme majesty of God hath laid a command upon the angels, and his own angels; those sublime, those happy spirits, who approach so near his divine majesty, his own domestics; and it is the care of thee that by this sacred command he hath intrusted to them. What art thou? Is not man rottenness, corruption, and the pasture

(1) Apoc. xii. 12. (2) Serm. 12, in Ps. xc. p. 962. (3) Ps. xc. 11

of worms? But what dost thou think he hath commanded them concerning thee? *That they guard thee; that they keep thee in all thy ways.* Nor do they loiter; they even *bear thee up in their hands*, as it were, *lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*" Shall we not praise such goodness? We are also to consider the watchful attention of these blessed spirits over us. They most readily and most carefully execute every order of God, and embrace his will in every thing with the utmost ardour, and with their whole strength. With what diligence then do they watch over us, who are committed to them by the strict charge and appointment of God himself!(1)

A second motive or inducement which exceedingly endears us to their protection, is their compassion and charity for us. They consider that we are shortly to be their companions in eternal bliss, and are at present by grace and the divine adoption their brethren, their dear fellow-members in God, dear to him who is their God and our God, and precious in his sight, being purchased by him at the infinite price of his incarnation, passion, and death. They, on the other side, see the miseries of sin into which we are fallen, the dangers which surround us, and the infinite evils under which we groan. Their compassion is the more tender, as their charity is the more perfect and more pure, and as they are seated nearer to the infinite source or fountain of charity. They see the snares which the devils lay to entrap us, and they remember the cause of God, and the sacred war in which they are engaged against those his enemies. They therefore earnestly exert themselves in defeating their projects, and in protecting us: "For they love their fellow-citizens, by whom they long to see their breaches and ruins repaired," as the devout author of the Soliloquies of the Soul, among the works of St. Austin,(2) and with him Hugh of St. Victor write: "Therefore they watch over and guard us with great care and diligence in all places, and at all hours, assisting us, providing for our necessities with solicitude; they intervene between us and thee, O Lord, conveying to thee our sighs and groans, and bringing down to us the desired blessing of thy graces. They walk with us in all our ways; they go in

(1) Ps. xc. 11.

(2) Cap. 27. Op. S. Aug. t. 6. Append. p. 86, ed. Bcn.

and out with us, attentively observing how we converse with piety in the midst of a perverse generation ; with what ardour we seek thy kingdom and its justice, and with what fear and awe we serve thee. They assist us in our labours, they protect us in our rest, they encourage us in battle, they crown us in victories, they rejoice in us when we rejoice in thee, and they compassionately attend us when we suffer or are afflicted for thee. Great is their care of us, and great are the effects of their charity for us. They love him whom thou lovest ; they guard him whom thou beholdest with tenderness ; but they forsake those from whom thou withdrawest thyself, and they hate them that work iniquity, because they are hateful to thee. If we fall from good, we give joy to the devils, and rob the angels of theirs. When we do well, we afford a triumph to the angels, and we vanquish and contristate the devils. Make us, O Father, always to bring joy to your holy spirits. Rehearsing these your benefits, I praise and thank you. You had bestowed on us whatever is contained within the circumference of the heavens ; and, as if all this was little, you would add what is above the heavens, giving us your angels to serve us, ministering spirits for them who receive the inheritance of salvation. May all your angels praise you, may all your works glorify you, and all your saints bless you for ever ! How high is the honour by which you have so greatly exalted and enriched us !”

St. Bernard(1) observes, that we owe to our guardian-angel ‘great reverence, devotion, and confidence ; reverence,” says he, “for his presence, devotion for his charity, and confidence in his watchfulness. Penetrated with awe, walk always with circumspection, remembering the presence of angels to whom you are given in charge in all your ways. In every apartment, in every closet, in every corner, pay a respect to your angel. Dare you do before him what you durst not commit if I saw you ?” In another place, he thus urges the same motive : (2) — “Consider with how great respect, awe, and modesty, we ought to behave in the sight of the angels, lest we offend their holy eyes, and render ourselves unworthy of their company. Woe to us if they who could chase away our enemy be offended by our negligence, and deprive us of their visit. We must shun

(1) Sermon. 12. in Ps. xc.

(2) Sermon. 1. in festo S. Michael. n. 5.

what grieves them, and practise that which gives them delight, as temperance, chastity, voluntary poverty, prayer with fervour and tears. Above all things, the angels of peace expect in us unity and peace. Should not they be most delighted with that in us which represents the form of their own holy city, that they may admire a new Jerusalem, or heaven on earth? On the contrary, nothing so much provokes them as scandals and dissensions, if they discern any in us." St. Basil enlarges upon the same argument to recommend to virgins the strictest modesty in all places. "Let the virgin, when she is alone," says he,(1) "fear and respect, first, herself and her own conscience; then her guardian-angel, who is always with her; *Their angels always see the face of my Father.*(2) A man ought not to contemn the face of the angel to whose care his soul is intrusted, especially a virgin, whose paranymph he is appointed, and the guardian of her fidelity to her spouse. Above all, she must respect her spouse himself, who is always with her, and together with him the Father and the Holy Ghost; not to mention the infinite multitudes of the angels, and the blessed souls of the holy fathers; for though they are not visible to our carnal eyes, they behold us with their incorporeal sight. If the virgin fears the eye of others, much more must she the sight of these who are so holy and excellent, and so much greater than any men. She dreads particularly the eyes of the multitude; now, it being impossible she should escape the observation of this so great and holy a multitude, she will be careful never to do any thing unbecoming her state."

We must not only respect, but gratefully and devoutly love and honour our tutelar spirit. He is a faithful guardian, a true friend, a watchful shepherd, and a powerful protector. He is a high spirit of heaven, and a courtier of the immortal king of glory; yet his tender charity, goodness, and compassion move him, through the divine appointment, to employ his whole power in guarding and defending us. He often protects our bodies, as the devils have sometimes power to hurt them. But what does he not do for our souls! He instructs, encourages, secretly exhorts, and reproves us; he defends us against our enemy, often discovers his stratagems, averts many dangers,

(1) L. de Verâ Virginit. n. 740.

(2) Matt. xviii. 10.

and comforts and supports us in our trials, and in the terrible hour of our death. He invisibly performs for us the offices which that angel who led the Jews into the promised land, did for them; and which Raphael performed to the younger Toby, in his journey to Rages; for he is our good and sure guide through the dangers of this life to eternal glory. What return shall we make by gratitude, confidence, respect, and obedience to this our faithful Raphael, our good angel! what praise and thanks do not we owe to God for so inestimable a benefit! Toby, reflecting on the great favours he had received from the angel Raphael, his faithful conductor, said to his father: "What shall we give him? or what can be worthy of his benefits? He conducted me, and brought me safe again; he received the money for me, he caused me to have my wife, and he chased from her the evil spirit; he gave joy to her parents; myself he delivered from being devoured by the fish; thee also he hath made to see the light of heaven, and we are filled with all good things through him. What can we give him sufficient for these things?" (1) That holy family seeing the immense goodness and condescension of God in the benefits conferred upon them by his angel, "falling prostrate on their faces for three hours, blessed God." (2) Ought not we to imitate their gratitude? "In God," says St. Bernard, (3) "let us affectionately love the angels, these glorious spirits which are to be one day our companions in glory, and co-heirs; and are at present appointed our tutors and guardians by our Father. Let us be devout, let us be grateful to such protectors; let us love them, let us honour them as much as we are able," &c.

We likewise ought to place a confidence in the protection of our good angel. St. Bernard writes in the same place as follows: "Though we are so weak, and our condition so low, and though so long and dangerous a way lies before us, what can we fear under so great guardians? As often as any tribulation or violent temptation assails you, implore your guardian, your guide, your assistant in tribulation, and in all times of need." To deserve his protection, we must, above all things, fly sin. Even venial sin troubles him. "As smoke chases away bees, and stench doves, so the ordure of sin driveth away the angel,

(1) Tob. xii. 21.

(2) Tob. xii. 22.

(3) In Ps. xc.

the keeper of life," says St. Basil.(1) Impurity is a vice particularly abominable to holy spirits; and sins of scandal make the angels of the little ones whom we scandalize demand vengeance against us. God says: *Behold I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Respectfully observe him, and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned: for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and my name is in him. But if thou wilt hear his voice, and do all that I shall speak, I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and will afflict them that afflict thee: and my angel shall go before thee, and shall bring thee into the place which I have prepared.*(2)

ST. THOMAS, BISHOP OF HEREFORD, C.

OUR island once saw the happy days when prayer and contemplation were the delight even of courts, the camp, and the shop; when Christian humility and true poverty of spirit sat on the thrones of kings, chastity flourished in palaces, and princes had no other interest of state but the glory of God, no other ambition than to dilate his kingdom, nor any greater happiness than to espouse their daughters to Christ crucified, in the rigours of solitude and severe penance. The beauty of this holy vineyard in the church excited the envy of the devil, who, like a furious wild boar, sought to lay it waste. Tepidity in the divine service and sloth opened him the door; pride, ambition, luxury, and the love of the world and of pleasure soon gained ground, and miserably changed the face of this paradise. Wars, oppression, and desolation were the scourges by which God in his mercy sought to bring back an ungrateful people to their duty before he cast them off. He still raised up many holy pastors and patterns of virtue who laboured by word and example to stem the tide of iniquity. Amongst these shone most eminently St. Thomas Cantelupe, some time high-chancellor of England, and bishop of Hereford. He was most nobly born, being eldest son to William Lord Cantelupe, one of the greatest generals that England ever produced; who, by the total overthrow of the barons and of the French, fixed the crown on the head of King Henry III., and was lord high steward of the

(1) Hom. in Ps. xxxiii.

(2) Exod. xxiii. 20, &c.