

ANDREWES AND THE ANGELS

By Dr. Marianne Dorman

*The Heavens, and the heavens of heavens,
The Angels, and all the Celestial Powers sing praise unto;
Uncessantly crying one to another,
(And we, base and unworthy we,
with them, under their feet,)
'Holy, Holy, Holy,'
Lord God of Hosts,
Heaven and earth is full of the Majesty of Thy glory.¹*

ANDREWES' teaching on "Angels of Heaven" differed little from the Fathers with their emphasis that the "celestial hierarchie is constituted in a most holy order; ... And as there shall be distance among the saints even in divers diversities of mansions (Jon 14. 2) so the like may be affirmed of the angells (Jud.9 Dan 10.13)." In this hierarchy there are nine orders: Archangels, Angels, Virtues, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Powers, Cherubim, and Seraphim. They are "heavenly Spirits" and although "wholly spiritual", they are not "shadowes"; although "invisible", they have "spirit"; although "immortal [and] incorruptible, yet not so immortal but that God may destroy them."²

In the war in heaven "the Angels that served under Michael are *they that excell in strength and doe the command of God in obeying the voice of his word*", while "the Angels that warre on the Dragons side are the *evil Angels*. ... *The Angels that sinned*, ... fight for the dragon, and he is their Captain; as Christ saith, *The Prince of the Devils is Beelzebub*." As "there is *principatus & primus principatus*", "among the good Angels" so there "is among the wicked Angels, for there must be order in all companies, stated Andrewes."³

After the war in heaven the angels' charge has been to continue battle against the devil on our behalf as the battle "in Heaven among the Angels, is come down to men on earth." "Knowing his time is but short", the devil "is the more fierce and his wrath kindled", as he "fights with the womans seed." Yet it not just the devil but all his throng that have to be combated. So "our wrastling is chiefly with the spirits", but our wrestling is not done alone as the good angels succour us by leaving God's presence which '*is the fulnesse of all joy*' to come down to earth to minister to our "vile bodies", "to take charge of us and keep us from danger." Hence we should thank God for having "created and commanded such excellent spirits to fight for us", and for enabling the angels to form "*bellum sociale*, a holy league" against all the enemies of the "Church of God".

¹ *The Works of Lancelot Andrewes*, eds. J. Bliss & J. P. Wilson, 11 vols. LACT (Oxford, 1841-54), afterwards referred to as Andrewes, Vol. 11, p. 265.

² *Ibid.*, p. 274, Vol. 1, p. 4; Lambeth Palace Library, Ms. 3707, p. 64.

³ *Apospasmata Sacra: Or A Collection of posthumous and orphan Lectures: Delivered at St. Pauls and St. Giles his Church by the Right Honourable and Reverend Father in God Lancelot Andrewes, Lord Bishop of Winchester* (London, 1657), afterwards referred to as Andrewes, *Apos. Sacra*, p. 589.

Thus in God's service they are God's swift-winged messengers whom He uses to destroy His enemies or to bestow "His mercy in the preservation of His truth". In this role they are '*Heavenly Souldiers or Gods host*', which do "their militarie service" when they "pitch their Camp about the Godly *ad muniendum* for defence, Psal. 34.7 and *ad puniendum* they doe pursue and scatter the wicked." Thus they stretch "out a fiery sword against the evill" but protect the good by "spreading their wings over" them. In effect "they doe continually defend us."⁴ The Old Testament has many illustrations. For example they helped Lot to destroy Sodom, they fought on the side of Joshua and Daniel against their enemies, and defended Ezekiel against '*the host of Senacherib*, who was an enemy to God's people". They also "guarded over Tobias and Abraham" whilst they hindered Balaam and the Egyptians in "their bad courses and enterprises".⁵

In this Michaelmas sermon Andrewes also indicated what, he believed, should be the attitude and response of Christians towards angels. We have a "duty" to thank God for the benefits we receive from them, although "we doe not adore them with divine honour." We also should "take heed that we provoke not the Angels with our misdeeds, ... nor alienate them from us with the wicked words of our mouths." We especially must remember not to offend nor alienate them by acts of irreverence in church. If we want their affection and their "care for our safeguard" we shall humbly cast ourselves before God.⁶

Andrewes also queried the mediæval teaching of whether each person had his own special guardian angel on the grounds that Scripture does not specifically mention this. However we know that "they pray for us in generall, wishing well unto all Gods chosen upon earth as their fellow servants as in their heavenly anthem they wish peace in the earth (Luc 2.14)." They also express their "joy in Heaven" when sinners repent with "penitent teares", these tears are "such wine as the blessed Angells drinke." Although the angels pray for and protect us Andrewes nevertheless warned against seeing them as mediators. It is not sound theology to think of angels as offering up "our Prayers to God as Mediators", for again there is no ground for this in Scripture. Nor should we "pray unto them or perform any worship to them" as all our prayers should be addressed "to God only, through J[esus] Ch[rist] our Lord."⁷

Angels serve God continually. In heaven they "cast their crowns down before Him," and in humility they hide "their faces before the Lord of Hosts" as they worship Him. Yet their worship is not limited to the heavenly realm as they surround each altar when the Eucharist is celebrated by joining their praises and thanksgivings with those of priest and people. They also act as intermediaries as during worship they descend and ascend the ladder between heaven and earth conveying God's favour and grace to men via His Church and carrying their prayers via the priest back to heaven. In this life their last service for us "is to carry and convey us into *Abrahams bosome*".⁸

Undoubtedly for Andrewes one of the main functions of angels is their support for Christians in their daily warfare against the devil's temptations to strive towards perfection. Hence throughout his ministry he placed much importance on the existence of

⁴ Ibid., pp. 119-20, 587.

⁵ Ibid., p. 587.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 586, 593-4.

⁷ Lambeth Palace Library, Ms. 3707, pp. 63-4.

⁸ Andrewes, *Apos. Sacra*, pp. 119, 573, 586.

angels and their various functions. He often cited from the eastern rites, which has far more emphasis on the participation of these heavenly hosts in the Liturgy than in the Western. For instance in a sermon at St. Giles, when teaching on the forgiveness of sin in the Sacrament, he preached that according to Basil that “after the Sacrament was ministered to the people, the Preist stood up and said” that passage from Isaiah where “the Seraphin does touch the prophet’s mouth with the coal, saying to him, “*Behold this hath touched your lips, your iniquity shall bee taken away, and your sinne purged*”. He also followed the Orthodox emphasis of angels guarding the tree of life against Adam and Eve after they had sinned; “with a shaken sword [they] kept the entry of Paradise.” As one would expect many of his Nativity and Paschal sermons have references to angels, and particularly their part in God’s plan for man’s redemption as they announced the first and second births of Christ.⁹ His own prayers too reflect his ever consciousness of angels.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who createdst the firmament of the heaven, *Gen. i. 6.*

The heaven and the heaven of heavens, The Celestial Powers,

Angels, Archangels, Cherubim, Seraphim; ... Glory be to Thee, O Lord, Glory be to Thee, Glory be to Thee, And glory be to Thy most holy Name.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid., p. 515, Andrewes, Vol. 1, p. 210, Vol. 3, p. 10.

¹⁰ Ibid., Vol. 11, pp. 266, 318.