

and who yet have been deputed by God to guard us in our way through life and to help us when our footsteps falter. Whom we forget so frequently, whose help we so little acknowledge; but who do, nevertheless, help us and deserve our gratitude.

So great, says an old writer, is the natural dignity and the excellence of origin of the angels that in some way it rivals divine generation itself, for before all creatures God conceived in His mind and produced the angelical powers. Job calls the Angels 'sons of God.' St. Denis says an angel 'is a ray of divine goodness, an image of God, a declaration of hidden light.' St. Hilary tells us the angels are the eyes, the ears, the hands, the feet of God, so quick are they to foresee our wants, so ready to compassionate our miseries, so active in conveying to us the divine aids.

As to their nature, their number, their perfections, to try to define anything with certainty is beyond the mind of man. Following Revelation and the beacon-lights of tradition very closely, we can arrive at some knowledge of the Angels, which we will try to summarise as clearly as may be within the limits of this paper.

The word 'Angel' etymologically means messenger. St. Augustine says 'Spirits are angels; and when they are spirits they are not angels; but when they are sent they become angels: the name angel being from their office, not their nature. Do you ask the name of this nature? It is spirit. Do you ask their office? It is messenger (angel).' So that although the word angel usually means good spirits, and strictly only messenger spirits, it is taken broadly to signify all purely spiritual, subsisting, intellectual, created substances, whether these be good or bad.

Atheist and rationalists deny the existence of such spirits, and many Protestants say that the angels referred to in sacred Scripture were either good inspirations or else men sent by God. Catholics believe that angels really exist, and that the literal sense of the Bible is at stake if we deny their existence. The Lateran Council teaches us that 'God is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, spiritual and corporeal, Who made both natures, the spiritual and the corporeal, that is to say *angelical* and *mundane*.' Apart from the documents of faith even pagan philosophers were convinced of the existence of spiritual beings endowed with power over visible creation. Extraordinary events, signs, portents, vouched for with historical certainty, have at various times brought home to men's minds the existence of an invisible spirit world. Too wonderful to be attributed to human powers, often too profane and immoral to be the works of God, such happenings establish with certainty that spirits do exist and that their powers are beyond our comprehension.

It is of faith that all spirits were created by God, without Whom was not made anything that was made. They were created, in the first place, to glorify God: whence, St. Bernard calls them, 'Singers of Heaven,' St. Gregory, 'Heralds of divine praises'. St. Athanasius, 'The endless hymn and unceasing praise of God's greatness,' and God Himself says to Job, 'Where wert thou when the morning stars were praising Me, and all the sons of God were joyful?' Secondly, God created the angels, as the Scripture as well as the pagan sage, Seneca, tell us, to be His ministers in the administration of His kingdom of the universe. Thirdly, as St. Paul teaches, He created them as ministering spirits to men, 'sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation.'

The common teaching of theologians regarding the powers of angelic substances may be briefly summed up as follows:—

(1) Angels are superior to men in intelligence. Through innate ideas they know God, other angels, and men, future things which are necessarily connected with present or past causes. As for contingent future events, such as for example would be the result of a horse-race, angels have of them merely a conjectural knowledge, so that even by the power of the devil fortune-tellers cannot with certainty foretell free futures, that is, future events which have no necessary con-

nection with known causes. They can communicate with each other, making known their thoughts freely in a way unknown to us.

(2) Angels are naturally endowed with free will. This is evident from the fact that many of them sinned and were punished by God, the faithful spirits being rewarded by the beatific vision.

(3) Angels cannot occupy spaces in the same way as material substances, which are so placed in space that their location is defined by their surfaces. Angels may be said to be in places where their power is exercised, and as their power, however great, is still finite, they can in no way be said to be everywhere.

(4) St. Peter tells us (II. chap. ii, 11) that angels 'are greater in strength and power' than men. Examples of this are frequent in the Bible. Thus an angel destroyed one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians. How far their power extends we know not; we do know, however, that it is always limited by the will of God.

The sin of the fallen angels was pride. St. Thomas says that their pride manifested itself in an inordinate desire to be like God. Suarez thought it possible that their sin was rebellion against the Incarnation and refusal to obey Christ, the God-Man.

Holy Scripture represents the number of angels as immense: 'thousands of thousands ministered to Him.' Most theologians divide them into three hierarchies, each of which comprises three orders. The first hierarchy, which is devoted to the contemplation of God, comprises the Seraphim, the Cherubim, the Thrones: the Seraphim are united to God by love; the Cherubim know the divine secrets; the Thrones are elevated to be God's familiar ministers.

The second hierarchy, occupied in the government of the world, consists of Domination, which in the superiority of their dominion, excel others in government; Principalities, which preside over nations and provinces; Powers, so called from the power they wield over evil spirits.

The third hierarchy comprises the Virtues, who perform wonders and excel in fortitude; Archangels, entrusted with important messages from God to man; Angels, one of whom is deputed to guard each of us.

Christ asked the evil spirit his name; and it is not improbable that each spirit has a proper name. Seven names only are recorded: Michael, or who is like to God; Gabriel, the strength of God; Raphael, the healer or the medicine of God; Uriel, the light or fire of God; Salathiel, the prayer of God; Jehudiel, the confession, or praise of God; Barachiel, the blessing of God. Against these seven St. Bernard tells us seven evil spirits are told off by Lucifer; Leviathan, the prince of pride; Beerith, the prince of wrath; Mammon, the prince of avarice; Beelzebuth, the prince of envy; Asmodeus, the prince of luxury; Beelphegor, the prince of gluttony; Astaroth, the prince of sloth.

Almighty God in His infinite wisdom gave to all created things a proper virtue, and so ordained that out of the mutual action and reaction of secondary causes the marvellous harmony of creation should result. The power that draws a falling body to the earth, the action of heat and moisture, the inter-dependence of the various scales of living things, the mystery of the planets with all their sublime poetry and unheard harmony, result in an order so stupendous that only those who wilfully shut their eyes fail to see the hand of God behind the vast panorama of the universe. In the invisible spiritual world the analogy still holds. God, Who has given man an immortal soul, with an intellect naturally inclined to the knowledge of God, and a will, restlessly moving, often with wilful blindness, but ever moving inexorably in its quest for happiness, which can be found only in God, could deal with the soul directly if He willed, but again His Providence ordained that each soul should be brought into touch with the spirit world higher than man and inferior to God. The devils in hell, who, be it remembered, are fallen angels, and therefore spirits of extraordinary power, are permitted to tempt man and to use their great intelligence and their evil will to bring about his damnation. The