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978-1-108-04425-7 - The Phantom World or, the Philosophy of Spirits, Apparitions,  
Etc.: Volume 1

Augustin Calmet

Excerpt

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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EVERY body talks of apparitions of angels and demons, and of souls separated from the body. The reality of these apparitions is considered as certain by many persons, while others deride them and treat them as altogether visionary.

I have determined to examine this matter, just to see what certitude there can be on this point; and I shall divide this Dissertation into four parts. In the first, I shall speak of good angels; in the second, of the appearances of bad angels; in the third, of the apparitions of souls of the dead; and in the fourth, of the appearance of living men to others living, absent, distant, and this unknown to those who appear. I shall occasionally add something on magic, wizards, and witches; on the Sabbath, oracles, and obsession and possession by demons.

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## THE PHANTOM WORLD.



## CHAPTER I.

THE APPEARANCE OF GOOD ANGELS PROVED BY THE BOOKS OF THE OLD  
TESTAMENT.

THE apparitions or appearances of good angels are frequently mentioned in the books of the Old Testament. He who was stationed at the entrance of the terrestrial Paradise,<sup>a</sup> was a cherub, armed with a flaming sword; those who appeared to Abraham, and who promised that he should have a son;<sup>b</sup> those who appeared to Lot, and predicted to him the ruin of Sodom, and other guilty cities;<sup>c</sup> he who spoke to Hagar in the desert,<sup>d</sup> and commanded her to return to the dwelling of Abraham, and to remain submissive to Sarah, her mistress; those who appeared to Jacob, on his journey into Mesopotamia, ascending and descending the mysterious ladder;<sup>e</sup> he who taught him how to cause his sheep to bring forth young differently marked;<sup>f</sup> he who wrestled with Jacob on his

<sup>a</sup> Gen. iii. 24.<sup>b</sup> Gen. xviii. 1—3.<sup>c</sup> Gen. xix.<sup>d</sup> Gen. xxi. 17.<sup>e</sup> Gen. xxviii. 12.<sup>f</sup> Gen. xxxi. 10, 11.

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return from Mesopotamia,<sup>g</sup>—were angels of light, and benevolent ones; the same as he who spoke with Moses from the burning bush on Horeb,<sup>h</sup> and who gave him the tables of the law on Mount Sinai. That Angel who takes generally the name of God, and acts in his name, and with his authority;<sup>i</sup> who served as a guide to the Hebrews in the desert, hidden during the day in a dark cloud, and shining during the night; he who spoke to Balaam, and threatened to kill his she-ass;<sup>k</sup> he, lastly, who contended with Satan for the body of Moses;<sup>l</sup>—all these angels were without doubt good angels.

We must think the same of him who presented himself armed to Joshua on the plain of Jericho,<sup>m</sup> and who declared himself head of the army of the Lord; it is believed, with reason, that it was the angel Michael. He who showed himself to the wife of Manoah,<sup>n</sup> the father of Samson, and afterwards to Manoah himself. He who announced to Gideon that he should deliver Israel from the power of the Midianites.<sup>o</sup> The angel Gabriel, who appeared to Daniel, at Babylon;<sup>p</sup> and Raphael who conducted the young Tobias to Rages, in Media.<sup>q</sup>

The prophecy of the Prophet Zechariah is full of visions of angels.<sup>r</sup> In the books of the Old Testament, the throne of the Lord is described as resting on cherubim; and the God of Israel is represented as

<sup>g</sup> Gen. xxxii.<sup>h</sup> Exod. iii. 6, 7.<sup>i</sup> Exod. iii. iv.<sup>k</sup> Numb. xxii. xxiii.<sup>l</sup> Jude 9.<sup>m</sup> Josh. v. 13.<sup>n</sup> Judges xiii.<sup>o</sup> Judges vi. vii.<sup>p</sup> Dan. viii. 16; ix. 21.<sup>q</sup> Tobit v.<sup>r</sup> Zech. v. 9, 10, 11, &c.

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GOOD ANGELS.

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having before his throne<sup>s</sup> seven principal angels, always ready to execute his orders, and four cherubim singing his praises, and adoring his sovereign holiness; the whole making a sort of allusion to what they saw in the court of the ancient Persian kings,<sup>t</sup> where there were seven principal officers who saw his face, approached his person, and were called the eyes and ears of the king.

<sup>s</sup> Psalm xvii. 10; lxxix. 2, &c.

<sup>t</sup> Tobit xii. Zech. iv. 10. Rev. i. 4.

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## CHAPTER II.

THE APPEARANCE OF GOOD ANGELS PROVED BY THE BOOKS OF THE NEW  
TESTAMENT.

THE books of the New Testament are in the same manner full of facts which prove the apparition of good angels. The angel Gabriel appeared to Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, and predicted to him the future birth of the Fore-runner.<sup>a</sup> The Jews, who saw Zachariah come out of the temple, after having remained within it a longer time than usual, having remarked that he was struck dumb, had no doubt but that he had seen some apparition of an angel. The same Gabriel announced to Mary the future birth of the Messiah.<sup>b</sup> When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds in the night,<sup>c</sup> and declared to them that the Saviour of the world was born at Bethlehem. There is every reason to believe that the star which appeared to the Magi in the East, and which led them straight to Jerusalem, and thence to Bethlehem, was directed by a good angel.<sup>d</sup> St. Joseph was warned by a celestial spirit to retire into Egypt, with the mother and the infant Christ, for fear that Jesus should fall into the hands of

<sup>a</sup> Luke i. 10–12, &c.<sup>b</sup> Luke i. 26, 27, &c.<sup>c</sup> Luke ii. 9, 10.<sup>d</sup> Matt. ii. 13, 14, 20.

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Herod, and be involved in the massacre of the Innocents. The same angel informed Joseph of the death of King Herod, and told him to return to the land of Israel.

After the temptation of Jesus Christ in the wilderness, angels came and brought him food.<sup>e</sup> The demon tempter said to Jesus Christ, that God had commanded his angels to lead him, and to prevent him from stumbling against a stone; which is taken from the 92d Psalm, and proves the belief of the Jews on the article of guardian angels. The Saviour confirms the same truth when he says that the angels of children constantly behold the face of the celestial Father.<sup>f</sup> At the last judgment, the good angels will separate the just,<sup>g</sup> and lead them to the kingdom of heaven, while they will precipitate the wicked into eternal fire.

At the agony of Jesus Christ in the garden of Olives, an angel descended from heaven to console him.<sup>h</sup> After his resurrection, angels appeared to the holy women who had come to his tomb to embalm him.<sup>i</sup> In the Acts of the Apostles, they appeared to the Apostles as soon as Jesus had ascended into heaven; and the angel of the Lord came and opened the doors of the prison where the Apostles were confined, and set them at liberty.<sup>k</sup> In the same book St. Stephen tells us that the law was given to Moses by the ministration of angels;<sup>l</sup> consequently, those were angels who appeared on Sinai and Horeb, and who spoke to him in the name of God, as his ambassadors, and as invested with his

<sup>e</sup> Matt. iv. 6, 11.<sup>f</sup> Matt. xviii. 16.<sup>g</sup> Matt. xiii. 45, 46.<sup>h</sup> Luke xxii. 43.<sup>i</sup> Matt. xxviii. John.<sup>k</sup> Acts v. 19.<sup>l</sup> Acts vii. 30, 35.

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authority; also, the same Moses, speaking of the angel of the Lord, who was to introduce Israel into the Promised Land, says that “the name of God is in him.”<sup>m</sup> St. Peter, being in prison, is delivered from thence by an angel,<sup>n</sup> who conducted him the length of a street, and disappeared. St. Peter, knocking at the door of the house in which his brethren were, they could not believe that it was he; they thought that it was his angel who knocked and spoke. St. Paul, instructed in the school of the Pharisees, thought as they did on the subject of angels; he believed in their existence, in opposition to the Sadducees,<sup>o</sup> and supposed that they could appear. When this Apostle, having been arrested by the Romans, related to the people how he had been overthrown at Damascus, the Pharisees, who were present, replied to those who exclaimed against him—“How do we know, if an angel or a spirit hath not spoken to him?” St. Luke says, that a Macedonian, (apparently the angel of Macedonia,) appeared to St. Paul, and begged him to come and announce the Gospel in that country.

St. John, in the Apocalypse, speaks of the seven angels, who presided over the Churches in Asia. I know that these seven angels are the Bishops of these Churches, but the ecclesiastical tradition will have it, that every Church has its tutelary angel. In the same book, the Apocalypse, are related divers appearances of angels. All Christian antiquity has recognised them,

<sup>m</sup> Exod. xxiii. 21.<sup>n</sup> Acts xii. 8, 9.<sup>o</sup> Rom. i. 18. 1 Cor. iv. 9; vi. 3; xii. 7. Gal. iii. 19. Acts xvi. 9; xxiii. 9. Rev. i. 11.



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the Synagogue also has recognised them; so that it may be affirmed that nothing is more certain than the existence of good angels and their apparitions.

I place in the number of apparitions, not only those of good or bad angels, and the spirits of the dead who show themselves to the living, but also those of the living who show themselves to the angels or souls of the dead; whether these apparitions are seen in dreams, or during sleep, or awaking; whether they manifest themselves to all those who are present, or only to the persons to whom God judges proper to manifest them. For instance, in the Apocalypse,<sup>p</sup> St. John saw the four animals, and the four-and-twenty elders, who were clothed in white garments and wore crowns of gold upon their heads, and were seated on thrones around that of the Almighty, who prostrated themselves before the throne of the Eternal, and cast their crowns at his feet.

And, elsewhere: “I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the world,<sup>q</sup> who held back the four winds and prevented them from blowing on the earth; then I saw another angel, who rose on the side of the east, and who cried out to the four angels who had orders to hurt the earth, Do no harm to the earth, or the sea, or the trees, until we have impressed a sign on the foreheads of the servants of God. And I heard that the number of those who received this sign (or mark) was a hundred and forty-four thousand. Afterwards I saw an innumerable multitude of all nations, tribes, people and languages, standing before the throne

<sup>p</sup> Rev. iv. 4, 10.<sup>q</sup> Rev. vii. 1—3, 9, &c.

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of the Most High, arrayed in white garments, and having palms in their hands.”

And in the same book<sup>r</sup> St. John says, after having described the majesty of the throne of God, and the adoration paid to him by the angels and saints prostrate before him, one of the elders said to him,—“Those whom you see covered with white robes, are those who have suffered great trials and afflictions, and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb; for which reason they stand before the throne of God, and will do so night and day in his temple; and He who is seated on the throne will reign over them, and the angel which is in the midst of the throne will conduct them to the fountains of living water.” And, again,<sup>s</sup> “I saw under the altar of God the souls of those who have been put to death for defending the word of God, and for the testimony which they have rendered; they cried with a loud voice, saying, When, O Lord, wilt thou not avenge our blood upon those who are on the earth?” &c.

All these apparitions, and several others similar to them, which might be related as being derived from the holy books as well as from authentic histories, are true apparitions, although neither the angels, nor the martyrs, spoken of in the Apocalypse, came and presented themselves to St. John; but, on the contrary, this Apostle was transported in spirit to heaven, to see there what we have just related. These are apparitions which may be called passive on the part of the angels and holy martyrs, and active on the part of the holy Apostle who saw them.

<sup>r</sup> Rev. vii. 13, 14.<sup>s</sup> Rev. vi. 9, 10.