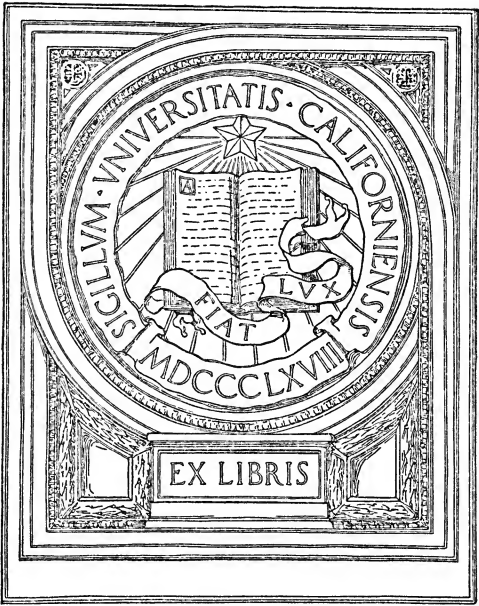
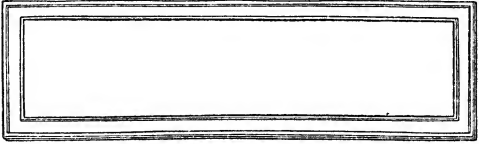


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Dr. Colman's
S E R M O N
on the Death
of the very Reverend
Mr. Peter Thacher
of B O S T O N.

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Faithful PASTORS
Angels of the Churches.

A
SERMON

Preached to the

Bereaved Flock,

March 4. 1739.

On the *Lord's-Day* after the *Funeral*
of the Reverend

Mr. Peter Thacher

of *Boston.* Ætat. 62.

And now *printed* at their Desire.

By *Benjamin Colman, D. D.*

Revel. ii. 1. *Unto the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, Write these things, saith He that hath the seven Stars in his right Hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden Candlesticks.*

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Faithful Pastors

T H E

Angels of the Churches.

R E V E L. I. 20.

THE Mystery of the seven Stars which thou sawest in my right Hand, and the seven golden Candlesticks : The seven Stars are THE ANGELS of the seven Churches, and the seven Candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches.



HE beloved Disciple *John*, who had lain in the Bosom of *Jesus* in the Days of his Flesh, was honour'd by Him to out-live the other *Apostles*, and to receive his last *Revelations* to the Church.

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From *JESUS CHRIST*, the faithful *Witness* and first begotten of the *Dead*, he wrote to the seven Churches which were in *Asia* by Name; and calls himself their *Brother* and *Companion* in *Tribulation*, and in the *Kingdom* and *Patience* of *Jesus Christ*.

He

He writes to 'em of *His Eternal Power and God-head*, " *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the LORD, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty!* He writes to 'em of his second coming in *Glory* ; " *Behold, He cometh with Clouds, and every Eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all Kindreds of the Earth shall wail because of Him: Even so, Amen.*

St. *John* was now in the *Isle* called *Patmos*, an *Exile* there and *Prisoner* for the *Testimony* of *Jesus Christ* his *Lord* ; and there on the *Lord's-Day* he was in the *Spirit*, in a *spiritual Trance*, *Extasy* or *Rapture* ; and heard behind him a great *Voice* as as of a *Trumpet* ; and turning to see the *Voice* that spake to him, he saw *seven golden Candlesticks*, and in the midst of them *One like the Son of Man*, his dear *Lord* and *Saviour* himself,--- but *O* how chang'd and more than *transfigured*, in an *ineffable Glory* ! so that instead of flying into his blessed *Arms* again. as in the *Days* of old, he fell at his *Feet* as dead ! For his *Eyes* were as a *Flame of Fire*, and his *Feet* as if they had burnt in a *Furnace*, and his *Voice* was as the *Sound* of many *Waters* ; and He had in his *right Hand* *seven Stars*, and out of his *Mouth* went a sharp *two-edged Sword*, and his *Countenance* was as the *Sun* shining in its strength. — No wonder then if the holy and most favoured *Disciple* was *dazzled* and *struck dead* before the surprising *Glory* ! but the *Lord* laid his *Hand* of *Power* and *Love* upon him, which sustain'd and *reviv'd* him ; saying to him, — " *Fear not, I am the First and the Last ! I am he that liveth and was dead ; and behold I am alive for evermore ; Amen, and have the Key of Hades.* *Reviving Word*, which

is *Life from the Dead to You this Day, bereaved of your Elder Pastor ! the Lives of all his faithful Ministers, and of all his Saints, thro' all his Churches, are in the right Hand of the risen and living JESUS.*

And now my *Text* brings us to the *Mystery* of the seven *Stars*, and of the seven golden *Candlesticks* ; the *Candlesticks* are the *Churches*, and the *Stars* are the *shining and burning Lights* set up in them ; *Ministers* in the Spirit of the *Baptist*, as he came in the Spirit of *Elias*, to give Witness unto *Christ* the Sun of Righteousness : We preach *Him the true Light* ; and his *Word* which is *the Light that shineth in a dark World.*

Now these *Stars*, these *Ministers* of the Word, are called *ANGELS*, the *Angels of the Churches* ; which is to say, the *Messengers of the Lord of Hosts* unto them, bringing his *Word of Truth and Life, the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ.* This *Light of God* in 'em and on 'em, which makes them *shine on and give Light to others*, both makes 'em *Stars*, and (what is more than *Stars*) it makes 'em *Angels.*

It is this *last Word* only that I shall now attempt to *explain* and illustrate to You, and so the *Mystery and Doctrine* before us is,

D O C T R I N E.

That the qualified faithful *Ministers* of the Gospel, and *Pastors* of the Churches of our LORD JESUS, are in his Sight, and ought to be esteemed by us, as his *ANGELS* to them.

You will say, This is a *high Style* indeed ! and sounds much *too high*, if the LORD Himself had not given it, for any of the sinful mortal *Sons of Men*. For what a *Solecism* were it to speak of an *infirm* imperfect *Angel* ! of a dying or dead *Angel* !—But it is the *Soul* that is the *Angel*, in the *Body* or out of the *Body* ! And as it is *easy* to the Grace of God to make some Persons *Angelical* in this mortal State, so if He please to call them *Angels* in *Flesh*, who shall presume to disallow the *Style* ? No *Angel* in *Heaven* will find fault with it, and no *Man* on *Earth* may.

Man in his first and best State was made *lower than Angels*, and but a *little lower* ; which is a *Crown of Glory and Honour* put on him, Psalm viii. 5 : but how far is he sunk below it by his *Sin* ? Who shall put him again as among the *Celestial Spirits* ? The *best of Saints* that ever have been in the Church of God, (*Abraham, Moses, Elias, Daniel* or the *Baptist*) what a poor kind of *Angels* were the *Holy Men* while in the *Body* ? in *Bodies of Sin and Death* ! of like *Infirmities and Passions* as other *Men* ! weak and *weary Angels* ! distemper'd, *diseas'd* and in *Deaths* often ! sick, and in *Pain*, and under *spiritual Disorders and Maladies* ! *Angels* that were subject to *Grief and Shame* and *Fear* ! with *Flesh* about 'em *lusting against the Spirit* ! *Paul* himself was but *such an Angel* ! *Angels* approv'd in *Patience, Afflictions, Necessities* and *Distresses* ! || hungry and thirsty and *naked Angels* !

|| Acts xiv. 15. Jam. v. 17. Rom. vii. 24. Gal. v. 17. 2 Cor. xi 27. Matth. viii. 20.

But was not the LORD Himself, the Lord of all *Angels*, once in like Circumstances in our Nature; *Sin* only excepted? The *Angel of the Covenant* Himself! the *Angel of Intercession*, now before the *Golden Altar*, in the *Holiest*, presenting our Prayers, Revel. viii. 3, 4. — Why then may not *Those* for whom He *died*, and is making *Intercession*, be called by Him *his Angels* in his Church on Earth? tho' they live here repenting and *dying daily*, wrestling with *Flesh and Blood* and *spiritual Wickednesses*, and thro' *Death* passing to *Incorruption*.

Yea, that which puts the *Crown* of *Angels* on them is their *dying well*! the *crowning Victory* is over the *last Enemy*! as the *Beggar* died, and *Angels* carried him to *Abraham's Bosom*, to their own *Paradise*! and so they *buried* the *Body* of *Moses*, after (as the *Jews* have been pleas'd to say) they had *kiss'd away* his *Soul*: — for He had been an *Angel* of a *Man*, both in the *Sight* of *God* and of his *People*, long before.

Yet far would it have been from *Moses*, or any of the following *Prophets*, *Apostles* or *Evangalists*, to have taken to *Themselves* this *Heavenly Style*, if *CHRIST* had not put it on them. He is the *Fountain of spiritual Honour*, † “*HEAD* over all things to the *Church*, and makes whom he will *Kings* and *Priests* and *Angels* unto *God*: *Nay this Honour* have all the *Saints*! *praise ye the Lord*.

It is not to *elate* or *puff up*; *God* forbid it! but to *admonish* us of our *Duty*, which ever *rises*

† Eph. i. 22. Revel. i. 6.

with Dignity ; what *manner of Persons* we may and ought to be, in Heavenly Temper and Conversation, as *Citizens* of the *Sion* above. *Philip. iii. 20.* And if we can but think and speak and live as *Angels* in the Church on Earth, we may leave our *going Spirits* at Death to the Care of real *Angels*, and the *Remains* of a *Stephen* to *devout Men* to take up (as they lately did your *Thacher's*) and carry to its *Grave* as *Angel's-dust!* the *Dust of Gold*, from the *Candlestick* in which it once *glitter'd*.

And so I return to the *MINISTER* and *PASTOR* in special, as my *Text* requires, and also the *sad Occasion* of my *visiting* You, at your *Desire*, this *mournful Day*, which my *Text* would turn into a *joyous* one.

I. *Ministers* are the *Messengers* of *Christ* unto his *People*, and therefore *Angels* of the *Churches*. For what is the plain *English* of the Word *ANGEL*, but a *Messenger*, or *One sent*? *Angels* are *Messengers* from *Heaven* to *Earth*, and so are *Prophets*, *Apostles* and *Evangelists*, *Pastors* and *Teachers*, the *Messengers* of the *Lord of Hosts*, *Mal. ii. 7.* The *Baptist* was such an *Angel* of *God*, of whom we read, * *Behold I send my Messenger!* *Angels* desire to go on such *Missions*, even *Gabriel* Himself; and he *flew swiftly* to *Daniel* and *Zechariah* and the *blessed Virgin*, with the *glad Tydings* of *Salvation*. || *God's Mission* makes an *Angel of Light*, whomsoever He *sends*; and the *Messenger* is to be received even as *Gabriel* from the *Presence* of

* *Mal. iii. 1. iv. 5. Mark i. 2. Luke i. 76. vii. 27.*

|| *Dan. ix. 21. Luke i. 19, 26.*

God. An *Eglon* himself will own this, who arose out of his Seat, when *Ehud* said to him, "I have a Message from God unto thee, Judges iii. 20. How much more will the Churches of Christ reverently own his Ministers as his Angels to them? Gal. iv. 14. *Ye received me as an Angel of God, even as Jesus Christ.*

And have not You had your Messengers, my Brethren, Men of a thousand! was not your deceased Pastor such a Messenger from God unto You? did He not bring you the Lord's Messages in a solemn manner? with the Gravity and Authority of an Angel! used he any Lightness? Spake he not as the Oracles of the GREAT GOD? that was the glorious and fearful Name in his Lips, as often as you heard him from the Pulpit; the Great God! the Great God! and how greatly did he pronounce it! striking every One that heard Him with a sacred Reverence and Fear! and this was his Manner from his Youth, from his very first publick sacred Exercises: I think that I never heard the Name of God pronounced Great, more than in his praying and preaching.—— Accordingly he commanded the Ears and Consciences of his Hearers more than many a divine Teacher. He was bold, and took on him Authority, in his Master's Name, Worship, Truth and Laws. He could reprove, rebuke and exhort for his Will and Glory, in a vehement manner, pathetick and striking.—— *Joshua* was such an Angel to Israel, under the Conscience of the Charge given him; "Only be thou strong and very courageous! and after his Death came the Lord himself, in the Form of an Angel, reprovng the People at *Bochim*: Judges ii. 2. *But ye have not obeyed my Voice, why have ye done this?* Such a Witness, Leader and Comman-

der under CHRIST, such a Messenger from Heaven, was your *Thatcher* to You.

II. *Ministers* are yet with greater Propriety the *Angels* of the Churches, because sent to minister unto the Heirs of Salvation. This is an eminent Character of the *Angels* of God, Heb. i. 14. *Are they not ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be Heirs of Salvation ?* And what, more or less than this, is the Office and Work of *Ministers* ? Acts xvi. 17. *They are the Servants of the Most High God, who shew us the Way of Salvation.*

Abraham was visited by the Lord and his *Angels* as an Heir of Salvation. He sojourn'd on Earth as in a strange Land, looking for a better Country, which is the Heavenly. The Lord therefore came down from Heaven to his humble Tent. He sent his *Angels* that Day to single out Lot in Sodom, and save his House. Afterward they attended *Jacob* out and home, for he inherited the Promise ; He saw 'em on the Ladder as he went out, and Hosts of 'em about him on his Return. And all the little Ones of Christ to this Day have their *Angels* that behold his Face on High, and are on the Wing to serve them for *Jesus* sake.

Now, like Love and Care for the precious Souls committed to them, is the bounden Duty and natural Temper (thro' Grace) of a faithful Pastor. Such an Angel was *Timothy*, of whom said the Apostle, Philip. ii. 20. *I have no Man like-minded, who will naturally care for your Souls.*

So natural was the Care of yours become, thro' Grace, to your dear Pastor *. He travel'd in Birth to see Christ formed in You, and you born to God. As a Nurse cherisheth her Children, he was gentle among You. Because you were dear to him, and being affectionately desirous of you, he was willing to have imparted his own Soul with the Gospel. Was it not his visible Concern that he might both save Himself and them that heard him? And as there is Joy in Heaven among the Angels of God over one Sinner that repenteth, so was his Joy herein fulfilled, if he might save a Soul from Death, and cover a multitude of Sins. Had the LORD put it to your Peter, as he did to the great Apostle of his Name; "Lovest thou me? and wilt thou feed my Sheep and Lambs?" he would have answered with his Truth, Fear and Fervency; "Yea Lord! Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love Thee and them; to minister unto Thee for their Salvation:

III. Ministers should be as Angels for Light and Knowledge, Understanding and Wisdom; more especially in the Mystery of the Father and of Christ.

"Wise as an Angel of God, and Angels of Light, is the known Language of Scripture †. The Fear of the Lord is their Wisdom as well as ours; a good Understanding have all they that do his Commandments. The Knowledge of Angels is obedi-

* Gal. iv. 19. 1 Theff. ii. 7, 8. 1 Tim. iv. 16.
 Luke xv. 7, 10. 1 Pet. iv. 8. John xxi. 17.
 † 2 Sam. xiv. 20. 2 Cor. xi. 14. Psal. ciii. ult. Dan.
 ix. 22.

ential & practical, like that of Saints ; they excel in hearkning to the Voice of God's Word. " *Wiser than Daniel*, was a Proverb among the Nations, while he lived & presided over them, and after his Decease ; but the Man *Gabriel* was wiser than he ; for he came down to give him Skill and Understanding ; and he left some more Rays of Heavenly Light upon his Mind and Heart.

Ministers are Angels in being apt to teach * ; the Law is to be sought from their Lips ; they need the Tongues of Angels, the Tongue of the Learned, to speak in Season to weary Souls : Angels have such Tongues, as *Hagar* found, and answer'd ---- " *Thou Lord seest me !* — The *Urim* always belonged to the Priesthood, and it shines more and more under the Gospel, toward the perfect Day. Heavenly Knowledge is the requisite Ornament, and the necessary Furniture of a Gospel Minister : Ignorance is *Darkness* when we speak of Souls.

But the Knowledge that eminently becomes the *Ministers of Christ*, and makes 'em like the *Angels*, is a clear Understanding in the *Mysteries* and *Doctrines* of Salvation by Him. As we read of the *Cberubims of Glory* over the *Mercy-Seat*, with their *Faces bowed* and *Eyes fixed* down upon it : *Exod. xxv. 17.* The Gospel of which we have, *1. Pet. i. 12.* " *Which things the Angels desire to look into : scil. the manifold Wisdom and marvelous Grace of God, in Christ's taking our Nature and not theirs.* — The Minister who has well studied and preach'd the *unsearchable Riches*

* 1 Tim. iii. 2. Mal. ii. 7. Isai. l. 4. Gen. xvi. 13
Deut. xxxiii. 8.

of Christ, shines as an *Angel* in the Churches. Blessed Paul was such a *Cherub of Glory* in the Christian Church †: “ I desire, said he, to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified: “ And to make all Men know what is the Fellowship of the Mystery, that hath been hid in God from the Beginning of the World: and again, “ that your Hearts may be comforted with the Riches of the full Assurance of Understanding, to the Acknowledgment of the Mystery of God, and of the Father and Christ; in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.

So Angels *above*, and those *below*, study and proclaim the Glories of free Grace in Christ Jesus our Lord. And thus did our Mr Thacher; You are Witnesses and GOD also. The Wisdom of God was in Him, he was wise to Salvation, and to win Souls: A Scribe instructed, and instructing others, to the Kingdom of God: a judicious Divine and strong in the Doctrines of Grace; able and ready to advise and direct Souls in the Way of Life. He could as feelingly as any Man adore the distinguishing Mercy of God in putting him into the Ministry, and counting him faithful: “ That to me, the least of all Saints, this Grace should be given, to preach among you the unsearchable Riches of Christ! Eph. iii. 8. He is gone to join the Multitude of the Heavenly Host in that Doxology, Luke ii. 14. “ Glory unto God in the Highest, on Earth Peace, Goodwill towards Men.

IV. Ministers should be *Angels* for Purity, Sanctity and Holiness; and for Zeal in the Cause of

† 1. Cor. ii. 2. Ephes. iii. 9. Col. ii. 2, 3, 4.

GOD and Godliness ; for his Truths and Laws, Kingdom and Interest on Earth.

Holiness shows the *Angel* more than all Knowledge, and so it doth the *Minister* and *Paster* in the Church. Without this, has our *Saviour* said, the *Light that is in you is Darkness*, and how great is that *Darkness*? Matth. vi 23. *Holiness* is most of all the *Light of Heaven*; *God* is infinitely *Holy*, *Christ* is the *Holy One of God*, and *Angels* are in his *Likeness* holy, in all their *Worship* and *Obedience*. Their *Purity* is without a *Stain*, in high *Perfection*, and gives 'em their *Glory* and *Bliss* for evermore.

The *Style* of the *Angels* of *God* is taken from their *Sanctity*; and so is that of *Ministers* on Earth †. Even the *Court* of *Nebuchadnezzar* knew this before the *Instructions* of *Daniel*: “*I saw a Holy One come down from Heaven*, said the *King*, relating his *Visions* on his *Bed*. But our *Lord Jesus* has confirmed the *Style* unto us, in that *gracious Promise*, “*The Son of Man shall come in his Glory, with all his holy Angels*. An *unholy Angel* is a *Devil*. *Angels* and *Saints* are represented in *white Robes*, and such were of old those of the *Priesthood*; to signify a *Profession* of and *Obligation* unto *singular Purity* and *Holiness*. *St. Paul* teaches the *Minister* how to become an *Angel* in the Church; 1 Tim. vi. 11. “*Thou O Man of God, follow after Righteousness, Godliness, &c.* And again, “*Be thou an Example of the Believers in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.*

† Dan iv. 13. Mat. xxv. 31. 1. Tim. iv. 12. 1. Thes. ii. 10.

Such was your *Thacher* among You, thro' the Grace given him from on High. Much of the *Holiness of Christ*, and of *Angelical Sanctity* was in Him. He was a *Watcher* and a *holy One* among us in his *Measure*; which was an *Abundance of the Gift of Righteousness*; like *Phineas* zealous for his God, and as *Elias* zealous for the Lord of Hosts. Like the *Angel of the Lord*, he could have withstood *Balaam* in his Way; *valiant* for the Truth, and *resolute* in the Cause of Piety.

Angels are called *Seraphims* from their burning with holy *Zeal*. Your *Thacher* was such a *Spirit and Flame of Fire*, in the Service of his God, and in acting for his Glory. || The *Baptist* was such a *Burning Light*, a flaming Minister; "O Generation of *Vipers*, who hath warned you to flee from the *Wrath* to come? bring forth therefore *Fruits meet for Repentance*. *Peter* was another; He drew and smote in the Cause of *Christ*, till he was bid to put up his *Sword*. *Stephen* spake to the Council with the *Face and Ardor* of an *Angel*; and *Epaphras* had a great *Zeal* for the *Colossians*, labouring fervently in Prayer for them. But He was more than an *Angel*, of Whom we read, "the *Zeal of thy House* hath eaten me up.

Light and *Heat* go together in the *Kingdom of Nature* and of *Grace*. *Fervour* in the *Soul of Man* produces *Activity* in his *Life*, and that again cherishes and increases *Fervour*.

V. *Ministers* should be like *Angels* for *Spirituality* and a *heavenly Mind*. Such their *Temper*, and

|| Mat. iii. 7. John xviii. 11. Acts vi. 15. Col. iv. 12. John ii. 17.

perpetual *Pleasure*: their Heart and Work, their Employ and Joys, all *spiritual*. Heaven is therefore their *Dwelling-place*. They rest not Day or Night, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! which art and wast and art to come, *Revel. iv. 8.*

So *Ministers* are to lead and continue in the *Worship* of God with sacred *Pleasure*; the *Mouth* of others to God, and of God to them, out of the *Abundance* of their Heart to both. St. Paul was such an *Angel* to the Churches, incessant in *Prayers* for them, and in his high *Devotions*; and as a singular Reward hereof, he was caught up to *Heaven**; whether in the *Body*, or out of it, he could not tell. Appollos was like him, "mighty in the *Scriptures*, fervent in *Spirit*, and teaching diligently the *Things* of God.

The *Heavenly Minister* lives like *Moses* in the *Mount*, has *Bread* there which the World knows not of, his *Diet* is on the *Manna* of Angels, *Bread from Heaven*; and his *Meat* and *Drink* should be (in *Conformity* to *Christ* his *Master*) to do the *Will* of God, and finish his *Work*. His *Interest* is in Heaven, his *Acquaintance* there, his *Heart* and *Treasure* there and his *Life* is hid with *Christ* in God within the *Vail*. He would be accurate in his *Devotions* and *Obedience*, as are the *Angels*; "doing the *Will* of God on *Earth* as it is done above. He would be reverend and earnest in *Duty* and *Service*; would find *Wings* to fly, as well as *Feet* to run; "run and return as the *Flash* of *Lightning*!

* 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4. Acts xviii. 25. John iv. 32, 34. Col. iii. 3. Ezek. i. 14. Isai. xl. 31.

so the *Angels* are represented, and from their *Agility* are called *Cberubim*.

Angels in Flesh can't attain this ; it is too *wonderful* and *high* for them ; they soon flag and *tire* in their *Work* ; even the *Youths faint* and are *weary*, how much more the *Aged* in their *Decays* ? tho' not *weary* of it : Yet is there a *Promise* of *Angelical Strength* and *Vigour* to all that *wait* on the *Lord* ; ‘ *They shall renew their Strength, mount up with Wings as Eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint.*

How *spiritual* and *rais'd* was *Mr. Thacher* in his *publick Devotions* ? more especially in the *Duty* of *PRAYER* ! that was his *Gift* and *Element* ! then he *breath'd* his *native Air* ! then his *Asthma* left him ! he *soar'd* up as on *Eagles Wings*, and with its *Eye* he could look into the *Light* of the *Throne* of the *Majesty* in the *Heavens* ! He came *near unto his Seat*, and fill'd his *Mouth* with *Adorations* : The nearer his *Access* was unto *God*, the more *awful* was his *godly Fear*, and profound his *Reverence* ! like that of the *Celestial Spirits*, *Rèvel. xv. 4. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify thy Name ? for Thou only art holy.*

I say again, He was a *heavenly Man* in *Prayer* : He excell'd in *this* ; in a great *Copiousness* and *Solemnity* ; whether in *Adoration*, *Confession*, *Supplication*, *Thanksgiving*, *Intercession*, *Profession* and *Pleadings* before the *Throne*. He could *wrestle* like an *Israel*, and as a *Principality* in the *heavenly Places*, having *Power* with *God* and from *Him*. How often have you *seen* him in this *Desk*, as it were *cover his Face* and cry *Holy, Holy, Holy*, before the *Lord of Hosts* ! many a time mak-

ing your Hearts to *move*, and filling them with a *Smoke of fragrant Incense*, *Isai. vi. 4.*

VI. *Ministers as Angels of the Churches are to preside, rule and govern, with Meekness, Equity, Tenderness; Benevolence, Humility and Patience; Wisdom and Integrity; by the Rules of the Kingdom; for the Glory of Christ and the Good of Souls.*

Angels are "Thrones and Dominions and Powers under God, and us'd by Him, in the Grand Affairs of Nations and Empires, States and Provinces, as we are led to think from the Prophecies of Daniel †; and more especially must we suppose their Ministry in those of the Visible Church.

But *least of all would the true Ministers of Christ affect a Resemblance of the Heavenly Hierarchy, in respect of Preheminence, Authority or Dominion! for "we have not Dominion over your Faith, but are the Helpers of your Joy.*

Yet *Power is committed to the Pastors of the Churches for their Order, Peace, Edification and Purity, for which they can show an ample Commission, needless to produce before You, who have not so learned Christ, as not to remember Them that have the Rule over You, and watch for your Souls and admonish you; to submit yourselves and obey them in the Lord; that they may give their Account with Joy & not with Grief! Heb. xiii. 7, 17.*

He is the *Angel of a Minister in the Church of Christ, Who in the Love and Gentleness of his Lord,*

the *Meekness of Wisdom*, behaves gravely, humbly and affectionately in the *House of the Living God*, the *Pillar and Ground of Truth*, 1 Tim. iii. 15. Who like the *Watcher* from on High is intent on his *Mission* and particular *Charge*, watching in all things to make full *Proof of his Ministry*; to prevent *Evil* and *Sin* all he can, and promote all he can what is good and holy.

If *St. Paul* were again in the *Flesh* just so would he rule and manage; exercise no other *Jurisdiction* nor affect any other *Prebeminence*, than the holy *Ends* of his *Ministry*, in the *saving Effects* of it, make necessary to the *Souls* of Men; their own and those in *Fellowship* with them. And if *He* were again to take *Leave* of the *Flocks* to which he had ministered, it would be still in the same humble and *endearing* Words, with which he melted the *Elders* at *Ephesus*: Acts xx. 18, &c. “Ye
 “ know how I have been among you at all Sea-
 “ sons, serving the *Lord* with all *Humility* of
 “ Mind, and have kept back nothing that is pro-
 “ fitable to you; but have shewed you publickly
 “ and from House to House, testifying unto all
 “ Repentance toward God and Faith toward our
 “ *Lord Jesus Christ*: And now that you are to
 “ see my Face no more, I take you to Record this
 “ Day that I am pure from the Blood of all Men;
 “ for I have not shunned to declare unto you the
 “ whole Council of God. Take heed therefore
 “ unto your Selves, and unto all the Flock over
 “ which the *Holy Ghost* hath made you *Bishops*;
 “ to feed the Church of God which He hath
 “ bought with his own Blood. And now *Bre-*
 “ thren, I commend you to God, and to the Word
 “ of his Grace, which is able to build you up,
 “ and

“ and to give you an Inheritance among all them
 “ that are sanctified.

This is the true *Evangelical, Christ-like, Aposto-
 lical* and *Angelical* Spirit of Rule and Govern-
 ment in the Churches; the true Christian *Pasto-
 ral* Spirit and Regimen. And just thus your *Tbacher*
 desired to be among You and *over You in the Lord*,
 and you *esteemed him highly in Love* herefor, while
 he return'd the *Bowels of Love* to You and yours
 for your *Reverend Respects* and *Kindnesses* to him;
 You received him always *gladly in the Lord*, as an
Angel of Jesus Christ.

And now you may be ready to *fall* upon his
Picture as I hold it before you, and *kiss* it in your
deep Sorrow, “ *that you must see his Face no more*.
 But if this *Face of an Angel* that I have shewn
 You, and you see that it is *He himself*, will not
dry up your *Tears for Him*, and turn your *Sor-
 row* into *Joy on his Account*; tho' it open new
Sluices for your *Selves* and for your *Children*;
 you would seem *Insensible* indeed, and to have no
spiritual Sensation of things joyous or grievous.---
 But this is *far from you*: You are *true Mour-
 ners*, and many of you I doubt not *spiritually* so,
 amidst abundant *Consolation* before the *Lord*.---
 I have accordingly express'd my hearty *Sympathy*
 with you on *both Accounts*; that we may be *edi-
 fied* together by a *mutual Faith*; as with respect
 unto the *Doctrines of Grace* in general, so in the
Application of them, on the present *Bereavement*
 from God upon you.

And now to go into a more enlarged *Applica-
 tion* of the *Subject*, than the *Circumstances* of a
particular Congregation led me to, I would say,

I. Let

1. Let the Churches of Christ and his Ministers be admonished of that *special Regard* and Respect which they owe unto the *blessed Angels*. There is a mutual *Relation* between us and Them, which obliges us to *honour them* as the *Sons of God*, we know not how *far* before us, both in Order of Nature and Time. We should highly reverence 'em for all the *Graces of God* to 'em and in 'em. Let us realize their *Presence* with us in our holy *Studies*, secret *Devotions*, private *Discourses* with Persons on the Service of their Souls, and in our publick *Assemblies*; and let it be an *Argument* with us to be serious and solemn in all, "*because of the Angels*. Let us desire to *commend* our Selves to their *Love* and *Assistance*, in our *Meditations*, *Prayers* and *Administrations*; and also in our *Temptations*, *Afflictions* and *dying Hours*. But however *good* they are in our Sight, yea though they were to bring us even the *Revelations* of God, yet *may we not worship 'em*, for they are our *Brethren* and *Fellow-Servants*, that *keep the Commandments of God and the Testimony of Jesus*; Rev. xxii. 9.

2. Our *Doctrine* should *comfort*, animate and invigorate *Ministers* in their Work, and at the same time greatly *humble and abase* 'em before God and Man.

On the one hand let us *magnify our Office*, and take Pleasure in our high and *Heavenly Calling*; as when the Hand of the *Angel* touched *Daniel*, it set him on his Feet: What a *Name* is this *within God's House and Walls*? called to be *Angels*! a *Name* meet to be *written in Heaven*! And what a *good God* do we serve, who *raises the poor out of the Dust*, to set them among the *Principalities* and Powers

Powers above, and make them *inherit the Throne of Glory.*

It is to encourage us in our *Work*, and at the same Time lead us to *reflect*, how little meet we are to wear this Name, and how *asham'd* the blessed *Angels* may well be to own us, were they not Good like *Christ* their Lord and ours. — Compare their *Accomplishments* and *Ministrations* with ours, and how do we indeed walk as Men, and below *Angels*! yet “*behold we take upon us to speak to the most High God, who are but Dust and Ashes!* as *Abraham* said before the Lord, in the Day and Hour that his *Angels* had visited him. The best of *Prophets* must fall before the *Mercy-Seat*, as *Isaiab* did, when he had seen the *Seraphims* worshipping with *cover'd Faces*: *Isaiab* vi. 5. “*Then said I, Wo is me, for I am undone; because I am a Man of unclean Lips, and I dwell among a People of unclean Lips.* — Lord *Jesus*, send “*some heavenly Seraph, with a Coal from thy Altar, to touch my Heart and Lips; that my Iniquity may be taken away and my Sin purged.*

Ah! were we but thus *humbled*, we should be also thereby greatly *quickned* and excited, to *approve* our Selves unto God and his People, as *Angels* in his Church. Let us feel this sacred heavenly *Ambition*, since God calls us to it. *Aspire* to walk worthy of the *Vocation*. Let the *Character* of the *Christian Bishop* make us emulate that of *Angels* themselves: *Titus* i. 7, 8, 9. *For a Bishop must be blameless, as a Steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to Wine, no Striker, not given to filthy Lucre; but a lover of Hospitality, a lover of good Men, sober, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful Word, &c.* 2. *Tim.* ii. 24. And the *Servant*

Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, &c. What but the Idea of Michael, the Arch-Angel, arises in our Minds, upon our reading these Words? in his "Contending with the Devil about the Body of Moses, not daring or inclining to bring a railing Accusation against him.

O that we could be in any manner as the Angels of God for Knowledge, Sanctity, Devotion, Charity, Humility, in every Excellency! whatsoever things are just, pure, lovely and of good Report; every Vertue and Praise! more especially in holy Zeal and Activity in serving and praising God. Let us in Spirit be daily ascending to the Son of Man in Heaven. Let us be in the Mount with God often, preparing for the Presence and Vision of God for evermore. Let us be pleasant and joyful in our Lord's Work. Let us be glad to serve the poor Members of Jesus Christ in their bodily Needs, Sickneses and Sorrows, but much more in their spiritual Wants, Grievs, Fears, Temptations and Distresses.

Thus Ministers have been *ch. rg'd* before God and his *Eled* Angels, to be like 'em here, that they may be with them for ever. And could we realize the Charge coming from the Mouth of the Son of Man, in the Midst of the Golden Candlesticks, in that tremendous Glory wherein John saw Him in our Context, it would strike us dead at his Feet. But at least let us be struck with Jacob's holy Dread, on his seeing the Ladder from Heaven to Earth, with the Angels of God upon it; "How dreadful is this Place! it is no other than the House of God, and the Gate of Heaven.

3. As here is great Honour put upon the *faithful Ministers* of Christ, and on his *holy Churches*; or rather only on the *Free Grace* of God to 'em and in 'em; so what *Condemnation* and *Confusion* belongs to wicked and *ungodly Ministers*, and unto *like Professors* in all the Churches of the Saints; who are *earthly, sensual, devilish*; *Enemies to the Cross of Christ*, and as contrary to *Him* and his *Angels* as *Darkness to Light*, as *Belial to the Heavenly Host*. So, as the *Apostle* teaches us, "*Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of Light*; therefore it is no great thing if his *Ministers* also be transformed as the *Ministers of Righteousness*; whose *End* shall be according to their *Works*, 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

4. Here is a singular *Direction*, with a mighty *Motive*, to the *Candidates* for the *Evangelical Ministry*; with what *Aims* and *Hopes*, with what *Humility, Fear* and *Prayer*, they ly at the *Foot* of *Grace* for the requisite *Gifts and Graces*, and *Endowments* from *on High*, to their *shining one Day* among the *Angels of the Churches*. Of the *Fulness* that is in *Christ* they must seek and *Grace for Grace!* and "*O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the Earth, who hast set thy Glory above the Heavens; and out of the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings ordaineſt Strength!* Psal. viii. 1, 2.

5. Here is special *Direction* unto *Churches* in their *Election* of *Persons* into the *Pastoral Office* over them. May God direct them always unto *Such*, as they truly hope will most *shine* in the *Gifts and Graces* of *Angels* among them; and ever *behave* toward them with *Angelical Holiness, Wisdom, Benevolence* and *Care* for their *Souls*.

6. And let a *People* so favoured of *God* see how they ought to receive and entertain the *Messages* bro't them from *God* by their *Ministers*: Even as the *Asian Churches* did, and those of *Galatia*, who notwithstanding the *Temptations* in their *Teachers* *Flesh* (whatever they were) despis'd them not, but accounted of 'em and submitted themselves as unto the *Angels* of *God*. Or if the *Angel* visit you in your *Tent* or *Field*, as sometimes *Abraham*, *Gideon*, *Manoah* and *Mary* were graciously visited, receive *Him* gladly as the *Heavenly Visitors* of old were welcomed, and hearkned to.

7. But what must we say then unto *Those* who have sat long under the *Ministry* of an *Angel*, and their *Hearts* have not been touched, affected, enlightened and set a burning within them! “ Neither would they be perswaded (they should fear) tho' one came from the *Dead*! altho' a *Lazarus* were sent down to them from the *Bosom* of *Abraham* *.

Your *Pastors*, as they have received *Mercy*, have not fainted; but by *Manifestation* of the *Truth* have commended *Themselves* to your *Consciences* in the *Sight* of *God*! a far more proper *Means*, ordained by *God*, for your *Conversion* and *Salvation*, than any *Angels* *Descent* from the *Skies* in a luminous *Form*. But if our *Gospel* be hid (as we are awfully admonished from *God*) it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the *God* of *this World* (*Satan*, the fallen *Angel*, the *Angel* of the bottomless *Pit*) has blinded their *Minds*, lest the *Light* of the glorious *Gospel* of *Christ*, who is the *Image* of the *Invisible* *God* should shine into them ||.

* Luke xvi, 31, || 2 Cor. iv. 2, 3, 4.

To draw unto a *Close*,

8. We learn from all that has been said, what a *sorrowful Sense* we ought to have of the *Decease of faithful Ministers and Pastors*, who have been *Angels of Men* among us.—And therefore learn your present *Duty*, O *Flock of Christ* bereaved of such a *Pastor*.

Drop now all the *Dust*, and bury every *Infirmity* in the *Grave*, and look only *upwards* after the *ascended Angel*! All that was *Angelical in Him* and in his *Ministry*, let *that live* with you, and *abide* in a *pleasing, thankful, profitable* and *perpetual Remembrance*.

The *Angel* is gone; the *Soul* was that! gone to *God*, who made and remade it! to *Whom* it has liv'd *devoted thro' his Power and Grace*. It is gone to the *innumerable Company of holy Angels*, and is as *one of them* among the *Spirits of just Men made perfect*. It is gone to *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, in the *Kingdom of God*; gone to be *with Christ in Paradise*, to behold his *Glory* and *see Him as He is!* and to come *again with Him*, when he shall return in the *Glories of the Father*, with all his *holy Angels*. He is gone, whither you *cannot follow Him now*, but we hope many of *You* will soon *hereafter*.

His *Going* is to *quicken* you in a *diligent Preparation*, by following him in *holy Living*, to meet him in the *Foys* of his *Lord* for ever. --- O what an *Angel* will you see *Him* then, and he *You*; his *Foy and Crown of rejoicing!* Are not even *You* to be *this*, in the *Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ* at his *Coming*? for *Ye are his Glory and Foy!*
When

When *Christ* Himself shall present *You* and *Him* together, saying, or give *him* leave to say, “*Behold I, and the Children whom thou hast given me* †.

Then the *Soul* of the now *desolate Widow*, trusting in *God*, shall see the *Angel* of a *Husband* that once was, for *pious Affection* and *strong Endearment*! but *O* how much more *holy* and *lovely*, in the *Image* of *Christ* perfected on *him*! to be therefore *embrac’d* again with a *Joy* unknown in our present *State*.

Then the weeping *Relatives*, such as *Mary* and *Martha* were to *Lazarus*, the *Family* of *Faith* and *Piety* which *Jesus* loved, shall see their *Brother* alive again, and all *Tears* shall be *wip’d* from their *Eyes*.

Then the *Friends*, that were as his *own Soul*, and the *dear Colleague-Pastors*, who were *knit* together in *Spirit*, as *Jonathan* to *David*, in *Angelic Bonds*; having *united* their *Endeavours* to *turn many* unto *Righteousness*, shall *shine* as the *Stars* together in the *Firmament* of *Glory*.

And then all *You* that have shown the *Kindnesses* of *God* unto the *Deceased* for his *Works* sake, and shall do it *still* from *Love* to *Christ* unto the *Half* of *Him* left below, shall hear the *Lord* of *Glory* take it to *Himself*; “*Ye did it unto Me*.

And finally, Then all the *Elect* of *God* among *You*, and *sanctified* in *Jesus Christ*, shall at length meet in an everlasting *Sabbath* of *Rest* from *Sin*

† 1 *Theff* ii. 19. *Hebrews* ii. 13.

and Sorrow, in the General Assembly and Church of the First born, whose Names are written in Heaven; a glorious Church indeed, not having Spot or Wrinkle or any such thing; to serve Him day and night in his Temple above, and to sing the New Song for ever and ever:—"Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy Blood, out of every Kindred and Tongue and People and Nation! Wherefore Blessing and Honour and Glory and Power be unto Him that sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

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