

Church ought always to occupy a region above the common level of mere worldly life—a region in which she shall be free from earthly obstacles. In the world she should not be *of it*, but live *above it*—living, so to speak, on the wing of holy desire and activity.

The constitution of human nature is threefold, man is a trichotomy, *animal, intellectual, spiritual*, and this last characterises the region in which the Church should strive to live and move, to breathe and work—above the *mere animal*, “the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life,” subordinating all animal faculty and force to spiritual work; above the *mere intellectual*, subordinating the mind and its powers to spiritual aims and efforts, *above mere business and worldly politics and human associations*, ever skilfully subordinating bending and directing all these to spiritual objects and ends; having the affections thus set on heavenly things and the activities of life directed to heavenly work, the angel—the Church ought to live “in the midst of heaven.”

To this heavenly vision of the place the Christian Church should occupy, oh, what a melancholy contrast the professed Church of our day presents! The sons and daughters of the King grovelling and burrowing in the earth, grasping among the greedy and struggling for self among the unregenerate selfish! Oh! brethren, when shall we acquire the habit of living “in the midst of heaven,” of keeping above the common low level of unrenewed humanity in the higher region of personal holiness, of living and moving in the heavenly atmosphere of habitual communion with God? In our every day walk and conversation when, oh, when shall we appear like this angel—like the messengers of the Lord, holding such a glorious commission as this of carrying the everlasting gospel to perishing men!

Whatever be their sphere or business in “this present evil world” the called of God, if they would be successful in the great work they live on earth to do, should ever keep “in the midst of heaven,” so that the world will see their “fellowship truly is with the Father and His Son” and their “citizenship in heaven.”

“So let our lips and lives confess
The holy gospel we profess.
So let our words and actions shine,
To prove the doctrine is divine.”

That this state is one of holy activity must be very obvious from the aspect of the symbolic angel in the vision before us now; John saw the angel “*flying* in the midst of heaven.” This *flying* does not mean a presumptuous adventuring out of our proper sphere; holy angels are not presumptuous. Nor does the word mean mere religious flights—flights of poetry or emotion or imagination or ignorant enthusiasm. Nor does it mean daring flights of architectural display in church edifices, or flights of questionable financial speculation so frequently the accompaniment of such ecclesiastical architecture; nor flights of fanciful novelties in church services; nor flights of scientific doctrine, or bombastic pulpit eloquence—the skilful flying of intellectual balloons charged with heated gas and the display of religious pyrotechnics designed to interest, amuse and attract the unregenerate. No such thing. This *flying* of the angel—the Church, signifies a going straight to one object, like the arrow to the target, like the dove to its nest, like the eagle to its eyrie; it signifies a fearless rising over all earthly hindrances, human notions, worldly prudence, selfish caution, above the gravitating power of materialism, above “the fear of man that bringeth a snare,” above religious names and hobbies, above the common standard of religious opinion and custom,—in short it is the daring of a dauntless faith, and a holy dignified earnestness of purpose and directness of aim in the wide, liberal diffusion of the message of saving mercy, carrying it over all opposition and adverse argument to all nations and tongues and peoples. Such is the place and spirit of the angel-church of Jesus Christ.