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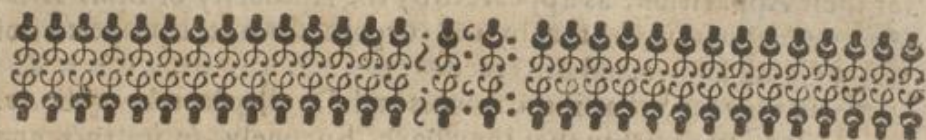
A Treatise of Specters

Bromhall, Thomas

[S.l.], 1658

The Arguments of those which deny that the Angells and Devils can take
unto them a body; consuted

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*The Arguments of those which deny that
the Angells and Devils can take unto
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They which do deny that the Angels and Devills can take unto them a body, do not aim at the mark to deny their essence, (as do the *Sadduces*;) but they do it onely to disprove and impugne their Apparition. For it is a good consequent; if the Angels and Devils take not upon them any body, then can they not appear: And if one should reply unto them and say; That in our spirit and understanding the Angels and Devills may give some shew and token of their presence. To this they have their exception ready: That things spirituall and intelligible and all sorts of Intelligences, do represent themselves by things that are sensible. We will see therefore by what reasons they endeavour to prove, that an Angell or a Devill cannot take a body unto them.

No Body (say they,) can be united to an incorporeal substance, but onely that it may have an essence and a motion by the means of that substance. But the Angells and Devils cannot have a body united in regard of any essence: for in so doing we must conclude, that their bodies should be naturally united unto them, which is altogether untrue; and therefore it remaineth that they cannot be united unto a body, but onely in regard of the motion: which is a reason of no sufficiency for the approving of their opinion. For thereof would follow an absurdity in regard of the Angels: to wit, That they might take all those bodies that are moved by them, which is a very great and grosse error. For the Angell did move the tongue of *Balaams* Ass: and yet he entred not in his tongue. And therefore it cannot be said that an Angell or a Devil, can take a body unto them.

To this Argument I answer, That true it is, that an Angel and a Devill, cannot (to speak properly) take unto them every body that is moved: For to take a body signifieth to adhere unto the body. Now the Angels and the Devils do take unto them a body, not to unite it to their nature, and to incorporate it together with their essence: as he that taketh any kind of meat for sustenance: much lesse to unite the same to their person: as the Son of God took upon him the humane nature: But they do it onely that they may visibly represent themselves unto the sight of men. And in this sort

the Angels and Devils are said to take a body, such as is apt and fit for their Apparition, as appeareth by the Authority of *Denis Ariopagyte*, who writeth, that by the corporal forms the properties of Angels are known and discerned.

Again they say, that if the Angels and Devils do take a body, it is not for any necessity that they have, but onely to instruct and exhort us to live well, as do the Angels; or to deceive and destroy us, as do the Devils. Now both to the one and the other, the imaginary Vision, or the temptation is sufficient; and therefore it seemeth, that it is not needfull they should take unto them any body.

I answer; that not onely the imaginary Vision of Angels is necessary for our instruction, but that also which is corporall and bodily, as we shall shew anon, when we intreat of the Apparition of Angels. And as concerning the Devils, God doth permit them both visibly and invisibly to tempt men, some to their salvation, and some to their damnation.

Moreover they thus agree: That God appeared unto the *Patriarchs* (as is to be seen in the Old Testament, and the good Angells likewise,) as *Saint Augustine* proveth in his book of the *Trinity*. Now we may not say, that God took upon him any body, except onely in the mystery of his Incarnation. And therefore it is needlesse to affirm, that the Angels which appear unto men, may take upon them a body.

I answer, (as doth *Saint Augustine*) who saith: That all the Apparitions which were in the old Testament, were made by the Ministry of Angells, who formed and shaped unto themselves certain shapes and figures imaginary and corporal, by which they might reduce and draw unto God, the Soul and Spirit of him that saw them: as it is possible, that by figures which are sensible, men may be drawn and lifted up in spirit and contemplation unto God. And therefore we may well say, that the Angells did take unto them a body, when they appeared in such Apparitions. But now God is said to have appeared; because God was the Butt and mark wherunto by Vision of those bodies, the Angels did endeavour and seek to lift up unto God the Souls of men. And this is the cause that the Scripture saith, That in these Apparitions sometimes God appeared, and sometimes the Angells.

Furthermore, they make this Objection. Like as it is agreeing naturally to the Soul to be united to the body: so, not to be united unto a body, is proper and natural unto the Angels and Devils. Now the Soul cannot be separated from the body when it will: Therefore the Angels and Devils also cannot take unto them a body when they will.

For answer whereof, I confesse that every thing is born and ingendred hath not any power over his being; for all the power of any thing floweth from the essence thereof, or presupposeth an essence; And because the Soul by reason of her being, is united un-

to the body, as the form thereof; it is not in her puissance to deliver her self from the union of the body. And so in like manner it is not in the power of any Angell or Devill to unite themselves to any body as the form thereof; but they may well take a body whereof they may be the moving cause, and (if a man may so speak) as the figure of the figure.

They affirm moreover, that between the body assumed, (if I may use this word) and the party assuming, there ought to be some proportion and similitude; But between the Angell or Devill, and a body, there is not any proportion; for both the one and the other are of divers kinds, and by consequent both of them are incomparable together.

To this I answer, That if the proportion be taken according to the quantity, greatnesse, and measure, there is no proportion between the Angels or Devils, and a body; because their greatnesse is not of one and the same kind, nor of one and the same consideration. Notwithstanding nothing can let but that there may be a certain habitude of an Angell to a body: as of a thing that moveth to the motion, and of a thing figured to the figure, the which may be termed a proportion.

Another Argument they make, which is this: No substance finite (whatsoever it be) can have in any operations together. An Angell is a substance finite; and therefore it cannot both minister unto us, and take to it self a body together.

But this is easily dissolved: for I say, that these two operations, To take a body, and to serve in their Ministry, are ordained mutually to the Angels: and therefore nothing hindreth them, but that the Angels may use both of them at once, and together.

Again they inferre, that if Angels and Devils do take a body either it is a *Celestial Body*, or some other, having the nature of some of the four Elements. Now the Angels cannot take a *Celestiall Body*, for that the Body of the Heaven cannot divide it self, nor cannot make any abstraction from it self; much lesse can the Devils have that power, seeing the Angels have it not. Besides, they cannot take unto them a body of *Fire*, for then they should consume and burn the body, near to which they do approach: much lesse can they take a body of the *Ayre*, for that is not figurable; neither can they take any body that is a moveable Element, and retaineth no form; nor yet by the same mean can they have a *Terrestriall* body; for we see it written how the Angels do very soon and suddenly vanish away out of sight, as it appeared by that Angell which came to *Tobias*. And the Devils also when they shew themselves in any Apparition, can in a moment withdraw themselves from the sight of men. And therefore being unable and unapt to take upon them any body, either Elementary or Celestiall; it must needs follow that they appear not at all.

To this I answer, That the Angels and Devils may take a body of any Element whatsoever, and which themselves will; yea and of many Elements mixt together. Neverthelesse it is most likely to be true, and the common opinion is; that they do soonest of all take unto them a body of the Ayre, by thickning the same, and forming it of vapours, that mount and arise from the Earth, and in turning and moving it at their pleasure, as the wind moveth the Clouds, being able to make the same to disappear and vanish away again whensoever they will, by reason that it is nothing but a vapour.

But yet this will not satisfy them, but they go further, saying; That every assumption of a body, is limited and bounded with some union: But of an Angell, and of a Body, there cannot be made any of those *Three means of Unity*, of which *Aristotle* speaketh; For they cannot be made one by *Continuation*, by *Inseparability*, nor by *Reason*.

To this a man may answer as before. That there is not any union in the assumption of a body by an Angell. For if there were a union, then in truth that which *Aristotle* speaketh, should be requisite between the Angell and the body which it assumeth. But there is not between them any union, save onely that which is of a thing moving to the thing moved, as we have before affirmed.

Again, the good Angels (say they) in appearing unto us, either do take *True Figures visible and palpable*, or such as are altogether false: if they have such as be true, it should then follow, that if they appear in a humane body, then they do assume a *True humane body*; But this is impossible, unless we should say, That an Angell may enter into the body of a man, which is a thing not convenient nor agreeable unto the Angelicall Nature. And if they have *False Figures*, this would be much more unfitting and unbecoming them: for that all feigning and dissembling, or any kind of fiction is very unseemly in the Angels of Truth. And therefore in what sort and fashion it be, the Angels cannot take any *Body upon them*.

To this objection I answer, That the bodies which the Angels do take, have *True and unfeigned forms so far forth, as they may be seen and perceived by the senses, be it in their colour or their Figure*, but not according to the nature of their kind, For that cannot become sensible but by accident. That therefore is no cause why a man should say, that there is any fiction and feigning in the Angels: for they do not oppose and set before our eyes humane shapes and forms, because thereby they would be thought and esteemed to be men; but to the end that by their humane properties, we should know the virtues of the Angels. And like as *Metaphorous* speeches are not therefore any whit the sooner to be reputed false, in which by the similitude of things, other significations are comprehended; So the figures and forms of Angels are not false, because they are

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More then so (they reply) that the Angels and Devills by the vertue of their Nature, cannot work or create any effects within humane bodies, save onely by the means of their naturall vertues. But their naturall vertues cannot be in things corporall to form any Figure of a humane body, but onely by the usual and determined mean of Generation, to wit, by the seed naturally ordained to that effect: in which sort the Angells and Devills cannot take a body upon them. And the same reason and consideration is there of other figures of earthly bodies also which they take unto them.

But hereunto this answer may be made them, That albeit the natural vertues of a body, do not suffice to produce a true shape of a humane body, but onely by the due and ordinary mean of Generation: Nevertheless so it is, that the Angells and Devills are capable to cloath themselves, and to put on a certain similitude of humane body, as touching the colour and figure, and other such exteriour Accidents, and that especially at such a time, as when it may suffice them by a locall motion to move any such bodies; by means whereof both the vapours are thickned, and again purified and made thin, as also the Clouds are diversly painted and figured.

But they object again, that this is not sufficient: But (they say) that it behoveth the cause moving, to infuse some vertue into the body moved, but cannot infuse any vertue, except it touch it. And if it be so that the Angells have not any touching nor feeling with the body, it seemeth that then they cannot move it. And therefore it must needs be, that they cannot take upon them any body.

But it may be said, that the Angells by their Commandement onely, may move the body with a motion locall, which they give unto it in touching of it, not with a corporall kind of touching, but a spirituall.

Against this solution, they dispute further saying; It behoveth the mover, and the thing moved, to be connexed, and united together, as appeareth by *Aristotle*. But in saying that an Angell doth command any thing of his own will, it is to be presupposed that then he is not together with the body, which is said to be governed by him; and therefore he cannot move the body onely by his commandement.

Hereunto I answer; That the Commandement of the Angell doth demand an execution of his vertue and puissance: and therefore it must of necessity be, that there be some spirituall touching of that body by which it is moved.

They insist yet further, and say; That the Angells cannot move bodies with any locall motion: and that therefore in vain should the bodies be obedient unto them, seeing they should still remain

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remain immoveable. And to prove this they bring divers Arguments.

Their first Argument is taken from the Authority of *Aristotle*, who saith; That the locall motion is the principall, and most perfect of a l other motions. Now the Angells (if it be granted that they take a body) cannot use any lesser or inferiour motions; It followeth therefore by a more forcible reason, that they can much lesse use any locall motion, which is the greatest, and the most excellent of all others.

But the answer is easy, and we say; That the Angels moving themselves with a locall motion, by the phantasmaticall body which they took, may also cause the other lesser motion, by using some corporall agents for the producing of those effects which they purpose; like as the Smith useth fire to soften the Iron, and to reduce it to that which they have an intention to make of it. And as touching that saying of *Aristotle*; That the locall motion is the chiefest of all motions; the reason thereof is, because every corporall nature having life, is apt to move it self locally by the means of the Soul, be it either reasonable or sensitive, which giveth life unto it;

Their second Argument is; That the locall motion of naturall bodies doth follow their forms: But the Angels are not causes of the forms of natural bodies, and therefore they cannot be a mean to give them any local motion.

Nevertheless, answer may be made them, That in bodies there be other locall motions then those that do adhere unto the forms: as the flowing and ebbing of the Sea, do not follow the substantiall form of the water, but the influence of the Moon; with much greater reason, therefore, may other locall motions (then such as adhere to to the forms) follow spirituall and incorporall substances.

Their third Argument is; That the corporall members do obey to the conception of the Soul in a locall motion, in asmuch as they have from her the beginning of life: now the bodies which the Angells take unto them, have not from them the beginning of life: for then it would behove that the bodies and the Angels should be united together. And therefore it followeth, that the bodies by them assumed, cannot be obedient to any locall motion.

I answer, That the Angells have their vertue lesse restrained or hindred then the Souls, insomuch that being separated from all corporall massinesse, they may nevertheless take an Ayry body, the which they can move locally at their will and pleasure.

Besides all the former Arguments, they reply yet further, and say: That every corporall motion doth not obey to the command of the Angells, as touching the forming and fashioning thereof: now the figure which the Angells take, is as a kind of form.

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And therefore by the onely Commandement of the Angels, cannot any body take any form or figure whatsoever, be it either of man, or of any other diverse kind comprised under one gender.

To this the answer is, That the figure which the Angells take, is in very truth a form which is made by the abscision and dismembring (as a man may say) of the thickning of the Ayre, or by the putrefaction of it, or by the similitude and motion which may be taken of the same matter. But there is a very great difference between the Form and Figure that is made so accidentally, and that which is naturall and according to the true substance of a thing, the which cannot possibly be confounded with this accidental Figure.

This is not all which they object: for they say further touching the Devills: That if they do invest themselves with a body, then they ought to be within the body which they have taken. Now Saint Jerome interpreting that place of the Psalmist; *The Lord is in his holy Temple*; and the *Glosse* do say, that the Devills do command and rule over Images and Idolls externally, and cannot be in them internally: and the Idolls are bodies as every man knoweth. And therefore it cannot be said, that the Devills can take upon them any bodies.

I answer, That to be in or within a body of some substance, hath a double and twofold entendment of understanding. In the first sort it is understood under the *Terms of Divinity*. And in this manner, nothing letteth but that the Devill may be in a body. In the second sort it is meant according *To the essence*, as in giving a being to the thing, and in working man in it, which is proper unto God onely: howbeit that God doth not make a part in the essence of any thing; *For God is a substance separated and abstracted solely and onely in it self*. And for the further interpretation of Saint Jerome and the *Glosse*, which say, That the Devill is not in Images: we may affirm, that they do privily and closely reprehend the false opinion of the paynims and Idolaters, who made but one thing of the Idoll (were it of Wood, Brasse, or Stone,) and of the unclean spirit that remained within it; and by that means would have made a living substance of that which in its own nature was senselesse and without life, not having either hands to touch withal, or feet to go on, or tongue to speak with; except such onely as the Devill did seem to give unto it, by his deceitfull illusions.

To make short, they object this Argument also: If the Angells and Devills do take to them any body, either they are united unto *The whole body*, or to some *Part* thereof: If they be united one-

ly to a *Part* thereof, then can they not move the other part, but onely by the means of that part which they do move. But this cannot possibly be; for otherwise the body assumed, should have such parts as should have the Organs determined to the motion, which is proper to none but living bodies. But if the Angells and Devills be *United immediately to the whole body*, it behoveth them then also to possess every part of that body which they have taken to them; and so by that means they should be in many places, which is proper and appertaining to God onely: And therefore the Angells and Devills cannot take any body unto them.

To this Argument answer may be made in this manner; That the Angell or Devill so taking any body upon him, is wholly in the whole body which it assumeth, or else in a part thereof, as the Soul is in the body. For albeit he be not the form of the body which it assumeth, as is the Soul; yet so it is, that he is the mover thereof. Now it behoveth that the mover and the thing moved, should be together; and it is nothing to the purpose to say, that an Angell or Devill, filling a body whole and entire of substance, can be in divers places: for the whole body assumed by an Angell or Devil, is not but in one place onely, albeit the same be admitted to have many members and many parts.

Thus far have I done my best, both to set down and to refute all the reasons and Arguments objected by those who deny that Angels and Devils can assume and take unto them a body; to the intent that from hence forth their mouths might be stopped, and that they may not esteem as fables the History of Specters, and of the Apparitions of Spirits.

But before I come to conclude this discourse, I may not forget to tell you how that many of the *Rabbins* and *Jews* which have taken upon them to interpret the holy Scriptures, have held opinion, and been of the belief, that those Angels which appeared to the *Patriarks* and *Prophets*, did not appear in any body, nor did assume unto them any body to make themselves visible. And of this opinion amongst others was *Rabbi Moses*, one of the most learned *Rabbins* of the Jews, who said; That all that which is read and recorded in the Old Testament of the Apparition of Angels, did come by an imaginary Vision; that is to say, sometimes in sleeping, and sometimes in waking. But this position (as *Saint Thomas of Aquine* calleth it,) cannot prevail against the truth of the Scriptures; for by the phrase and manner of speeches which are usuall in the books of the Old Testament, it is easy to know and discern a difference, that which is signified and declared to have *Appeared purely and simply to our eyes*, from that which is said to be done by the means of a *Propheaticall Vision*. For when it ought to be understood, that any Apparition

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rition was made by way of Vision, there are some words put down and inserted, which do properly appertain to the Vision, such as the Scriptures do intend; as in *Ezechiel*, the Spirit of the Lord (saith he) *lifted me up between the Heaven and the Earth, and led me into Jerusalem by the Visions of the Lord.* I say therefore, that when it appeareth that things are said to be done simply, we ought to understand them as done simply and truly. Now we read in the Old Testament, that many Apparitions have been made in body: And therefore we ought to grant, that the Angells do sometimes assume and take unto them a body, in forming such a body as is sensible and subject to the external and corporal Vision, as well as some kind of shapes do form themselves in our imagination, which do produce an imaginative Vision, when we are sleeping. But this shall suffice touching this matter.

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