

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 16.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #16. *How did God create angels?*

A. God created all the angels¹ spirits,² immortal,³ holy,⁴ excelling in knowledge,⁵ mighty in power,⁶ to execute his commandments, and to praise his name,⁷ yet subject to change.⁸

Question 1—*What are the angels of God?*

Answer—Angels are to be accounted amongst those things which are created, not eternal, and advanced to the highest dignity and honor amongst created things, though they subsist as things invisible, Neh. 9:6. The angels are to be noted amongst the intelligent creation and, thus, employed in the most honorable of services, Dan. 9:21, 22. In fact, they are the more excellent of the two species of the intelligent creatures, angels and men, created by God, Ps. 8:4, 5. When God created, he first created the heavens and then the earth, Gen. 1:1, 2. The angels were amongst those things which appear at the beginning of the creation of the earth and all that constitutes the material universe, Job 38:4-7. They are called morning stars because they exceed all other creatures, including man, in glory, Rev. 2:28; even as the stars exceed the lower parts of creation in glory, 1 Cor. 15:40. They are also called the sons of God, as they were produced by him, and created in his image, Job 1:6; they are, therefore, creatures arrayed under the headship of Christ, Col. 1:15-18. These angels of a very great number, so as to be seemingly without number, Heb. 12:22. Lastly, their existence is a matter of necessary observance against the Sadducees, whether ancient or modern, who deny that there are angels or spirits, either good or evil, Acts 23:8.

Question 2—*What is the nature of the angels?*

Answer—These angels, as to their nature, are called spirits, Ps. 104:4; by which the apostle makes clear that we are speaking of intelligent incorporeal beings, Heb. 1:7. Angels, being pure spirit, are not possessed of corporeal existence, flesh and bones, Luke 24:39. We may derive some sense of the nature of angels from the nature of our souls which, in some respect, agree with their nature, Zech. 12:1; Heb. 12:23. Being spirits, they have a power of thinking, understanding, willing, choosing or refusing, 1 Pet. 1:12; Rev. 19:10. Likewise, they are the subjects of moral government, being under a law, and capable of moral good or evil, happiness or misery, Eph. 6:12. Moreover, angels have a power to move, influence and act upon material beings, even as the soul moves and

¹ Col. 1:16.

² Ps. 104:4.

³ Matt. 22:30.

⁴ Matt. 25:31.

⁵ 2 Sam. 14:17; Matt. 24:36.

⁶ 2 Thess. 1:7.

⁷ Ps. 103:20, 21.

⁸ 2 Pet. 2:4.

influences the body, to which it is united, Gen. 3:1; Acts 19:15, 16. This is understood by comparing the nature and power of angels, as spirits, and comparing them with the nature of the soul, Heb. 12:9. The chief difference is that the souls of men are made to be united to corporeal bodies, and to act by and upon them, Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 18:4; the angels are designed to exist and act without corporeal bodies, Heb. 1:14. Nonetheless, they are not omnipresent, but circumscribed and locally present spirits, Dan. 10:10-14. Although they exist without union to corporeal bodies, yet they are not without some form discernable at times to men, Gen. 18:2; Acts 1:10; sometimes this subtle form shields their true identity, Heb. 13:2; and sometimes this form does not, Matt. 28:2-4. Indeed, their appearances in a form resembling men indicate some analogous relation between angels and men, Luke 24:4, 5. Thus, the saints from their birth are under their care, Ps. 34:7; 91:11; and, apparently, they accompany them as “guardian” angels, Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:15.

These angels, being spirits, and incorporeal, are immortal, not subject to corruption, Luke 20:36. Nothing is subject to death or dissolution, but that which is compounded of parts, for death is the dissolution of composition of those parts before united, Eccl. 12:7. Although a spirit might be annihilated, since the power that brought it out of nothing could return it to nothing, 1 Cor. 1:28; Matt. 19:26; yet, God has ordained that they shall exist forever, Matt. 22:30; thus, they are immortal, not only from the constitution of their nature, but by the will of God, Rev. 21:4.

That God created these angels with certain excellencies and qualities appears especially in these three things: 1.) They were all created holy, without blemish of any kind, Matt. 25:31. If he had created any of the angels in a state of enmity, opposition to, or rebellion against him, he could never have pronounced all things very good, Gen. 1:31. However, this holiness does not compare with that of the Lord, Rev. 15:4; in whose eyes the very heavens are not clean, Job 15:15. 2.) They were created excelling in knowledge, or in wisdom, which is the greatest beauty or advancement of knowledge, 2 Sam. 14:20; yet, they are not privy to that knowledge which alone pertains to the Deity, Matt. 24:36. In comparison of which the knowledge of the very angels is but folly, Job 4:18. Nevertheless, this knowledge consists in a capacity to reason upon matters of moral relevance and perceive all things subject to created knowing, 2 Sam. 14:17. 3.) They were created mighty in power, whereby they are fitted to accomplish whatever tasks might fall to them, 2 Thess. 1:7. This power far exceeds the power given to any men, or army of men, upon the earth, 2 Kings 19:32-35.

Question 3—*What is the work in which the angels are engaged?*

Answer—The work, or employment, of these angels consists in two branches:

First, they are created to execute the commands of God in the creation, Ps. 103:20, 21. They wait constantly upon the Lord in glory in order to carry out his will in all things, Isa. 6:2, 6, 7. There is nothing which is subject to his command that they will not do being in all respects fitted to this service, Matt. 26:53.

Second, they were created to praise his name, Ps. 148:2. This extends to the work of redemption as well, Luke 2:13, 14; which, by divine warrant, they yielded at the incarnation, Heb. 1:6.

Question 4—*Were they created immutable?*

Answer—Notwithstanding all the natural advantages with which they were created, they were subject to change, 2 Pet. 2:4. Thus, some who were created holy, not only were subject to change, but fell, becoming rebels and enemies of God, Jude 6.