

Firm Foundation

Angels

Introduction:

An observer of trends in modern lifestyles and popular theology would quickly agree that the principle subject around which everything revolves is the I. Such an ego-centric orientation toward life, both natural and supernatural is reflected in many ways, including the more or less skeptical attitude toward the teaching of Scripture on the existence of good and evil angels. All that remains here is to determine the degree of skepticism toward the teaching of angels. The degree of skepticism is determined by the consistency with which the Ego controls the motives our thoughts and actions.

The attitude of the liberal thought can be summarized as follows:

The existence of good angels may be possible, but there is no convincing proof; at all events, the existence of a personal devil cannot be proved. Thought: (one cannot declare no angels and then say there is no proof)

A more conservative constituency, still presupposing Ego-centric theology but less consistent with its teachings, will summarize its position as follows:

the idea should not be removed from the language but the Scriptures do not warrant the catalog of Angels to a Doctrine; since there is no direct connection with the saving truth and the experience of salvation. It is not the business of dogmatics to set up a particular doctrine of angels.

There are modern theologians who have become convinced of the existence of good and evil angels through their own investigations. However, of what do we need to be reminded concerning the source of information as we investigate the doctrine of angels?

The Christian doctrine of Angels can be ascertained only from Scripture as God's infallible Word. We cannot address this teaching and disregard Scripture at the same time.

Finally we need to address the argument that since the doctrine of angels does not occupy a central position in the order of salvation, it should not be called a "doctrine" at all. One spokesman says: "We cannot regard the idea of angels as being essential to the revelation of salvation and so must leave the use of the conception of angels to religious tact."

Part of this statement is correct. Can you identify which part?

The first part: We are brought into communion with the grace of God not by believing in angels or their existence and service, but by believing in Christ the Crucified. Therefore angels must not be classified as a fundamental article of doctrine.

But what does one find when one becomes a Christian and reads/studies the Bible regarding the place and activity of angels?

He will find in Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, the doctrine of the Angels, side by side with the central article of Christ, the Savior of sinners. It certainly requires inconsistency to accept the doctrine of

The idea of modern theologians that the denial of the Christian doctrine of the angels can easily be harmonized with the "christian experiences of salvation" is due largely to their wrong conception of the Christian experience of salvation. All who deny the vicarious satisfaction of Christ cannot understand the Scriptural teaching in spirit and truth.

This then, being established, the following outline of the study of the Doctrine of Angels will be used:

- I) The Existence of Angels and the Time of Their Creation
- II) The Name "Angel"
- III) The Nature and the Properties of the Angels
- IV) Number and Ranks of the Angels
- V) Good and Evil Angels
- VI) The Good Angels and Their Activity
- VII) The Evil Angels, Their Activities, and Their Eternal Punishment

I The Existence of Angels and the Time of Their Creation

From Genesis to Revelation Scripture bears witness to the existence of angels. On the basis of this testimony of Scripture, and not on the basis of reasons of probability, we believe that there are angels.

On the basis of Scripture, the Christian Church has a doctrine of Angels.

When were they created? John 1:1-3 (read) *They were not created before the universe, because before the universe there was only God.*

Genesis 2:2-3 *They were not created after the universe, because after the creation of the universe God "rested from all work."*

So what conclusion must we make? *Angels were created within the hexaemeron (six days of creation. On which day we do not know.*

Luther on this point says: "Not one word is found in all the Scriptures concerning their creation, their battle, or their fall, except that one word of Christ, John 8:44It is wonderful that Moses is wholly silent on things of such great interest." Yet another confessor says: "On which day the angels were created is a question more subtle than useful."

II

The Name "Angel"

"Angel" is an official title; it does not describe the essence of the angels. What does this title designate?

This title designates an ambassador or messenger

This is also true of others:

Mal. 2:7 *Priest's are called messengers.*

Mal. 3:1; Matt 11:10 *John the Baaptist is called angel (messenger)*

Christ Himself bears that name. John 3:17, 34; 6:40; Gal. 4:4-6.

Whenever the Old Testament uses the term "angel of the Lord" in the context of Jehovah or divine worship or divine works, that angel must be understood to be the Son of God.

III The Nature and the Properties of Angels

That angels are spirits, that is, immaterial beings.

Luke 24:39 *This passage forbids us to ascribe even an etherial boey. 'A Spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye have seen Me.' It is the opposite.*

Ephesians 6:12 *The same applied to evil angels.*

The idea of some Church Fathers and also of recent theologians who clothe the angels with some kind of ethereal body, a refined material fabric and so on, has no basis in Scripture. What, then, about occasions such as Genesis 18 and 19?

The human bodies in which angels appeared on occasion were only assumed forms by which the invisible angels were temporarily visible. Eating of food was real but not necessary for nourishment.

Look up John 4:24. What does this say about God? *God is spirit*

Look up Heb. 1:14. What does this say about angels? *Angels are spirit.*

What is the difference between these two spirits? *The difference is between God the Creator and the angels created as finite spirits, finite creatures.*

THE PROPERTIES OF ANGELS: *Scripture ascribes to angels both intlllect and will.*

The Good Angels know : Eph 3:10 the wisdom of God

And Heb. 1:14 gladly minister to the heirs of salvation.

Gen. 3 and Matt. 4 show us something of Evil Angels as well. What is that? they also possess intelligence and will.

We must remember here that only God has omniscience and prescience. Angels do not know all things and particularly they have of themselves no knowledge of future things.

1 Kings 8:39 They also do not know the thought of men which is a prerogative of God.

"On the hidden thoughts of men the angels can form only a conjectural opinion, based on the signs and effects."

THE POWER OF ANGELS:

Ps. 103:20 excel in strength 2 Thess. 1:7 mighty angels.

Matt. 12:29 the devil is described as "the strongest man."

Ps. 91:11-13 It is a power far transcending human power. The good angels, our guardians, are stronger than we, whom they guard.

Luke 11:21-22 The evil angels are stronger than men; unbelievers are securely held by the devil.

Eph. 6:10-17 the power of the believer can withstand the attacks of Satan only in the Power of God.

However, the power of angels is not unlimited, but is rather at all times subordinate to the power of God.

In this connection the question has been raised whether the devils can perform miracles.

This is the distinction: Ps. 72:18 the devils cannot perform real miracles. i.e., they cannot create new things, raise the dead, etc., for Scripture ascribes this alone to God. As the passage says, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things."

But under God's sufferance and according to His decree the devils can do things which to men appear as miracles.

2 Thess. 2:9 Men lack an all-embracing understanding of the realm of spirits and particularly of the might and ability of the spirits. Scripture expressly states that Antichrist will secure a following among men by "the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders."

And that this occurs according to God's decree is stated in the words that follow:

"For this cause [because they received not the love of the truth] God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thess 2:11-12

So there is a difference between the wonderful (*miracula*) and the amazing (*mirabilia seu mire* (or mirage)).

The story that angels can and did contract marriages with human beings, which is retold by some modern theologians, is pure fiction. They base this fable on Genesis 6:2. But look at what the Scripture says of angels in Matt. 22:30.

"They neither marry nor are given in marriage."

The angels are illocal: that is to say that while they may be at a definite place as in Acts 12:7, they are as immaterial beings, independent of space; they occupy no space — they can be in the space occupied by another body.

They are not, of course, omnipresent, for at any particular time they are only at some one place. They are, as the dogmatists express it, somewhere, which "somewhere" can be determined. A case in point is the human soul. The immaterial soul fills no space, and still we can say where it is.

Acts 20:10 In a living person it is not outside his body but "in him."

IV Number and Ranks of the Angels

The number of angels is very large.

Dan. 7:10 "Thousand thousands . . . and ten thousand times ten thousand"

Luke 2:13 "Multitude of the heavenly hosts . . ."

Heb. 12:22 we cannot calculate the number. "an innumerable company of angels"

That there are orders or classes among the angels is clear from different appellations given them in Scripture.

Gen. 3:24 Cherubim Is. 6:2 Seraphim

Col. 1:16 different categories 1 Thess. 4:16 archangel

Matt. 25:41 among the evil angels also, "The devil and his angels."

Luke 11:15, 18, 19 "Beelzebub, the chief of the devils."

But we are unable to determine the number of the ranks and their precise difference, since Scripture does not give us sufficient information.

V Good and Evil Angels

Originally all angels were positively good. not simply morally indifferent or even with a tendency toward evil.

Gen. 1:31 Since they were created in the six days they were declared "very good."

The existence of two classes of angel, good and evil, is due to the fact that some of the angels did not remain in the original state (*status originalis*).

John 8:44 in this passage the fall is presupposed as self-evident.

Good Angels: These are those who wehn the rest fell remained good and were by the gracious action of God confirmed in the good meaning: they can no longer sin and fall away.

Let others declare this state of an inability to sin (*non posse peccare*) to be a "fiction"; our faith is greatly strengthened by it. How so?

God would not have appointed the angels to minister to us, the heirs of salvation, if the angels were not perfectly safe ministers and protectors.

Evil Angels: Are those who by their defection from God became evil and can nevermore become good.

The opinion has been voiced in practically every age that also the devils might be converted and saved from eternal damnation. What does the Bible say about this?

Matt. 8:29 The devils themselves recognize that not conversion but damnation is theirs.

Matt 25:41 The fire prepared for the devil and his angels is "the everlasting fire."

We cannot determine the exact time when some of the angels fell. What do we know?

Gen. 3:1-14 We know the fall of angels occurred before the fall of man.

John 8:44 "He was a murderer from the beginning"

As to the particular sin by which the defection of these angels from God took place, we cannot offer more than a surmise. The majority assume that pride was the original sin. This deduction is made in three points:

1) 1 Tim. 3:6 From this we deduce that pride was the condemnation of Satan.

2) From the temptation in which Satan undertook to instill the sin of pride into our first parents, . . . equality with God.. "Ye shall be," he said, "as God."

3) From his perpetual endeavor to transfer the glory of God to himself.

This opinion is approved also by Luther and others. Still others join to pride the sin of envy.

VI

The Good Angels and Their Activity

As we have said above, the good angels are confirmed in the good and are in the state of bliss. their bliss consists in the beatific vision of God.

Matt 18:10 During their ministrations on earth they always behold the face of God.

With the vision of God is intimately united the most fervent love of God; Whoever beholds God cannot but love Him as the highest good.

And so the will of the good angels coincides constantly and perfectly with the will of God; the sole object of their entire activity is the accomplishment of the good.

1 Tim 5:21 We can speak of the election of Angels though we do not know this in any detail for definition.

What we do know from Scripture is:

1) Heb. 2:16 Good angels were not elected because of the merits of Christ since they never became sinners and thus they stand righteous on their own. (in addition, they were not born of the seed of Seth.)

2) 2 Pet. 2:4 that evil angels were not rejected because of an absolute decree, but solely because of their apostasy

There is no Scriptural basis for extending Christ's work of redemption also to the angels, as some churches on both sides of the theological spectrum do. (See the study on Christ; "To Whom and for Whom Did Christ Render Satisfaction?")

The functions of good angels are:

Is. 6:3; Luke 2:13 to praise God

Ps. 103:20-21; 104:4; Heb. 1:14 and to be ministers in the world and in the church, not as though God stood in need of their service, but because it pleased God to have it so.

Also and in particular:

Matt. 18:10 Go sends the angels to serve the children.

Ps. 91:11-12 and to serve the believers in their work and calling

Luke 16:22 and to minister to the dying

Does every Christian have his particular guardian angel?

Matt 18:10; Acts 12:15 The theologians are not ready to give a definite answer to this question as these passages are not conclusive. That not only one but many good angels are given to the individual believers for their protection is clearly stated in Scripture. But as to a certain angel it is uncertain.

But Scripture teaches very clearly that the angels are deeply interested in all that occurs in the Church.

Luke 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:12 They admire and adore the mystery of Redemption.

Luke 15:10 and they rejoice over every repenting sinner.

Deut 33:2; Gal. 3:19 Angels are present at the giving of the Law on Mr. Sinai

Luke 1:26; 2:11; 24:5ff.; Acts 1:10ff They proclaim the conception, birth, resurrection and return of Christ

Matt 13:41f.; 24:31 They will attend Christ at Judgment Day

1 Cor. 11:10 they are also present at the public worship of Christians.

Gen 24:7; Matt 18:10; Dan 10:13 Here their activity in promoting the welfare of th family and preserving glaw and order in the State is described.

While many people regard the doctrine of angels as "superfluous," how should we regard this doctrine?

1 Cor. 11:10; 1 Tim. 5:21 we should rejoice and take comfort in their service and carefully avoid grieving them.

But what must we not do? Rev. 22:8-9 Render them religious service, pray to them, worship them etc., for they are and remain creatures. In fact, they protest against these things.

VII

The Evil Angels, Their Activities and Their Eternal Punishment

Why did God not provide a Savior for the fallen angels as He did for fallen man?

this lies hidden in the "unsearchable judgments" of God. However, a probable reason is that the devil fell without seduction and man was seduced.

Of what must we be very careful with such speculation? We must not impugn the free compassion that induced God to provide salvation for mankind.

Another question that is aired is what is meant by the devil's intelligence.

Gen. 3:1ff.; 2 Cor. 11:3 On the one hand Scripture credits him with great cunning

and, on the other hand, tells of his great stupidity in promoting the death of Christ, by which he was cast out of his kingdom.

John 12:31 Christ expressly stated that His death would have that effect.

It is also undeniable that the devil was not unfamiliar with the prophecies of the Old Testament from Gen. 3:15 on to Isaiah 53 and beyond: he must have known how the death of the Messiah would affect his rule.

A probable explanation of the folly of the devil is that his hatred of everything that is of God or divine is so great that it blinded his reason. He was so taken up with evil that his intellect failed to function.

John 3:19-20 Here is an analogy for such folly in the hatred of men for the Gospel, which has its seat principally in the love of evil and directs the mind, that is, deprives it of its capacity to act.

All opposition to the divine truth, including the opposition to the satisfactio vicaria and the inspiration of Scripture, can clearly be shown to be unreasonable.

The activities of the evil angels are, as we have just said, evil throughout. Scripture clearly describes them, for our information and warning, very clearly and in full detail.

Luke 13:11, 16 All endeavors of the wicked angels are aimed at harming the body.

Job 1:12f.; Mat. 8:31-32 his body and temporal possession.

1 Pet. 5:8 and particularly his soul

Eph. 2:1-2 The entire state of unbelief among heathen and external Christendom is a work for the devil.

Acts 26:18; Col 1:13 All who live outside of faith are doing the devil's will.

And the fact that men do not know this and even deny the existence of the devil, is likewise due to the operation of the devil. It is Scriptural to describe the status of all who do not believe that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sins as obsessio spiritualis. We may reserve this term for particular cases and persons using it to describe an intensified operation of the devil in individuals. What must we never forget?

Every unbeliever is completely in the power of Satan, until God's grace and power delivers him from the power of Satan and translates him into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col 1:13). This spiritual possession does not relieve man of personal responsibility (Matt 25:41), nor does it destroy the free will of man (taken as freedom from coercion), since the unbeliever of his own will rejects the Gospel and gladly does what is evil.

Bodily possession (*obsessio corporalis*) presents an entirely different case. Also children of God may suffer this affliction. (Mark 5:6, 18,19; Luke 8:28,28,29) By it the devil, under God's sufferance, takes possession of a man by personally dwelling in him, so that the demoniac, bereft of the use of reason and will, becomes the involuntary instrument of Satan. The human personality no longer functions; the devil or one of his demons in person becomes the acting subject. The demoniac is no longer responsible for his actions.

The activity of the evil angels against the Church is portrayed fully in Scripture.

Matt. 16:18 "the gates of Hell" are continually waging war against the Church and it is Christ alone who continually preserves the Church against the onslaught.

Behind everything that harms the Church are the evil spirits.

Luke 8:12 They bring about the inattention of the hearers of the Word

Mat 13:25 falsification of the divine doctrine, which Christ would have His Church maintain in purity.

1 Tim. 4:1ff. referred to as the doctrine of devils.

Persecution and oppression of the Church by the State and organizations within the State is a result of the activity of the evil angels.

As Satan unceasingly wages war on the Church, so he is also in arms against the divine order of the State and the family.

1 Chron. 21:1 persuades David to take a census on the nation (against God's direction)

1 Kings 22:21-22 Ahab to wage war against the Syrians

1 Tim. 1-2 It is the devil who forbids marriage

1 Cor. 7:5 tempts married people to infidelity

2 Thess. 2:11-12 God uses the evil angels to punish the godless

Job 1:7ff; 2 Cor. 12:7 also to try believers as with Job and Paul.

What is the punishment of the evil angels?

Matt 25:41 The punishment of the evil angels is eternal torment in the fire of hell.

The question as to the nature of this fire need not be answered. So also the question how fire can take effect upon spirits. Scripture teaches the fact!

Matt. 25:46. Upon denying eternal damnation what must one also deny to be entirely consistent?

He would have to also deny eternal life and then the entire Christian religion.

To conceive of the eternal fire as purifying or annihilating the wicked and the evil angels contradicts Scripture.

Finally, we should bear in mind that all that the Bible says of the evil angels and their eternal punishment serves the ends of divine compassion. Its purpose is to impress on men the necessity of repentance and of faith in Him who by His blood ransomed mankind not for hell, but for heaven.