

## Concerning Angels

by Metropolitan ISAIAH

There has been much confusion in our day regarding angels. The imaginations, not to say fantasy, of those who write about angels or who produce movies in which angels appear, have far exceeded truth and reality. There is adequate information from Holy Scripture and the historic record of Holy Tradition to give to us the necessary information to be able to discern between reality and fiction.

Even before humanity existed on earth, God created His first intelligent creatures with discernment and free will who are called angels. He created them to be in service to Him and also for the service and protection of other intellectual creatures not yet created.

From Holy Scripture we understand that there are nine orders of angels, each order with specific responsibilities. They are Angels, Archangels, Cherubim, Seraphim, Authorities, Thrones, Dominions, Powers, and Principalities. The angels were created with a singular nature, not like humans with two--the spiritual and the physical. Angels are spirits from our perspective. However, they have the power to appear as physical entities. The angels, previous to our creation, went through the process of using their intellect and their free will, since they are created in God's image, to decide if they desired to live in ways that are pleasing and acceptable to God, as well as in harmony with the divine will. Obviously they also had the freedom to choose to live contrary to the divine will, which would consequently breach their bond with God.

The inference from Holy Scripture and other ancient sources inform us that the most powerful angel ever created by God was named Lucifer or Eosforos. He was also the most beautiful creature with a magnetic appearance. This is why he was named by God, Lucifer, meaning he who brings forth the morning light. His appearance was a dazzling brilliance and his beauty was awe-inspiring in the sight of all the other angels.

Knowing full well his powerful and captivating appearance, he envisioned himself even more powerful than he was. He saw himself as capable of controlling more things in creation than what God had given to him to watch over as a good steward. The Prophet Isaiah speaking of him writes, "How has Lucifer that rose in the morning fallen from heaven! He that sent orders to all the nations is crushed to the earth. But you said in your mind, I will go up to heaven; I will set my throne above the stars of heaven. I will sit on a high mount, upon the lofty mountains toward the north. I will go up above the clouds. I will be the same as the Most High. But now you shall descend to hades even to the foundations of the earth (14:12-15)."

It appears that after God had created the heavens and the earth He had planned to use His angels, who had beheld the wonders of His creation, while He was creating, to become overseers and guides of His future intellectual creatures. Could it be that God had assigned Lucifer to the earth shortly before Lucifer had had his dreams of grandeur? Could it be that once Lucifer had separated himself from God in his mind that it was then that he appeared to our progenitors in the form of a serpent and tempted them to do his bidding, rather than to be obedient to God?

It is difficult, if not impossible, to establish a time line as to when Lucifer fell and when he tempted our progenitors, since it is unknown when the angels were given the opportunity to choose between God and Lucifer. Truly Satan must have been overwhelming in his former magnificent appearance.

The presence of God's holy angels is seen throughout the Old Testament period. They not only protected God's people, but they heaped destruction upon those who were inimical to God. Sodom and Gomorrah are prime examples.

From the books of the New Testament we read of God's angels, including the Archangels Gabriel and Michael, in many places. We also read of demons, the former angels of God who chose to be with Lucifer, now become Satan. They are the spirit creatures who have harassed, obsessed, and possessed humans as well as animals down through the ages. The relics of ancient civilizations depict these hideous creatures in their surviving monuments.

Angels, as Holy Scripture records, were created to serve God and to oversee His creation. Yet, as we know, they were also created to serve man as guides and protectors, even though man was created much later than they. Even though angels are considered higher than man, man is composed of two natures, while angels are not. The Lord Jesus Christ speaking of children in general states that they have guardian angels to look after them (Matt. 18:10). Moreover in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read that the angels are ministering spirits sent by God to those who shall be the heirs of salvation (1:13,14).

From this we see that although angels were created before humanity, God had foreseen that even though we humans would be born in an imperfect state due to our progenitors, we would have the opportunity of reaching perfection. On the basis of our dual nature, soul and body, even though our bodies are subject to decay, we have within our souls the

opportunity of becoming eternal together with our resurrected bodies. In other words, by accepting what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us by coming into the world and receiving Him as Lord, Savior, and God, through repentance we are guaranteed salvation and eternal life. In our relationship with angels it is an incredible thing to contemplate on the fact that God created the angels as our helpers and guides, even though they were created before us. Even more astounding is what Saint Paul says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians regarding angels and us humans. He states that the day will come when God's people will judge angels (6:3). Obviously his inference concerns those angels who have fallen away from God's grace and who have inflicted abject suffering upon God's people here on earth.

Consequently angels, generally speaking, were created to interact with humanity. How they who are saved will co-exist with angels rests in God's wisdom, and He has already determined this. Since the people who will be saved will take on their resurrection bodies united once again with their souls and will thereafter be pure energy, as the resurrection body of Christ is, their appearance will be similar to the appearance of angels.

How and where will saved humanity live is touched upon by Saint Peter who says that this world will pass away by fire and that there will be a new heaven and a new earth (2Peter 3:10-13). In the Book of Revelation Saint John writes, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away (21:11).

From all of this, it certainly is obvious that humans do not become angels as many today would have us believe, but will remain humans forever. Moreover, angels are not little babies, "cherubs," as western Christian art has depicted them, nor are they feminine as almost all depictions in western society present them. This is pure fantasy. From Holy Scripture the angels who are named have masculine names, such as Michael and Gabriel. Only Orthodox Christianity depicts angels as appearing to be masculine, although they have no gender as humans now do. Even so, the time will come when we will be like the angels, neither marrying nor being given in marriage, but equal to the angels (Luke 20:34-36), as Christ the Lord teaches.

Every believer has a guardian angel, as Christ the Lord tells us. We therefore, should acknowledge his presence in our life even though he is not visible to our physical eyes. Moreover, our guardian angel is ready to help us when we call upon him. We should offer regular thanks to our guardian angel for his constant help and protection in this world which is filled with many snares. Truly, God in His great love for humanity has given to us powerful protectors in His angels and we, His children, are grateful for this wonderful blessing.