

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTIONS # 20 & 12.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #20. *What was the providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created?*

A. The providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created, was the placing him in paradise, appointing him to dress it, giving him liberty to eat of the fruit of the earth;¹ putting the creatures under his dominion,² and ordaining marriage for his help;³ affording him communion with himself;⁴ instituting the Sabbath;⁵ entering into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience,⁶ of which the tree of life was a pledge;⁷ and forbidding to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.⁸

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #12. *What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the estate wherein he was created?*

A. When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.⁹

Question 1—*What was the providence of God in his state of innocence?*

Answer—When God created man, in a state of innocence, it was providence that ordered his lot in this world by:

First, fixing the place of his abode, Acts 17:26. This place was a very large and delightful garden of God's own planting, Gen. 2:8. Whereby this garden is also called the garden of God, Ezek. 28:13; and, also, the garden of the LORD, Isa. 51:3. גַּן [*gan*], garden, refers to an enclosure subject to cultivation, or ordering, *cf.* Song 4:12. As such, it represented that orderly meeting place appointed for man to commune with God, *cf.* Lam. 2:6. In the LXX, this word is translated παράδεισον [*paradeison*], paradise, which signifies this delightful garden, as well as signifying heaven, 2 Cor. 12:4. The name of this garden, Eden, is from a word which means pleasures, Ps. 36:8; or, delights, 2 Sam. 1:24. From which, we may conclude that the earthly paradise in which man was placed, was a kind of type of the heavenly blessedness, which, had he retained his integrity, he would have been possessed of, and which they, who are saved by Christ, shall be brought to, Luke

¹ Gen. 2:8, 15, 16.

² Gen. 1:28.

³ Gen. 2:18.

⁴ Gen. 1:26-29; 3:8.

⁵ Gen. 2:3.

⁶ Gal. 3:12; Rom. 10:5.

⁷ Gen. 2:9.

⁸ Gen. 2:17.

⁹ Gal. 3:12; Gen. 2:17.

23:43; Rev. 2:7. This garden was not some allegorical place but an actual location, occupying geographical territory, Gen. 2:10-14. Nor was this an enclosure that encompassed the whole of the earth, but a place which one might be placed in, Gen. 2:8; or cast out of it, Gen. 3:24.

Second, appointing his secular employment in that place of his abode, Gen. 2:15. It involved both a dressing, or working, *cf.* Ex. 5:18; and a keeping, or watching over, *cf.* Gen. 4:9. So far from secular employments being a hindrance to communion with God, in Eden, they were subservient to that very end, Ps. 128:2. Wherein we may see that the inconveniences which now accompany them are consequences entailed by the curse of sin, Gen. 3:19.

Third, making provision for the subsistence of the man in the garden through an abundance of fruit, Gen. 2:16. The provision and expedience of the eating of flesh of beasts was a later direction given of God, Gen. 9:3.

Question 2—*Into what relations did the providence of God place man in the beginning?*

Answer—First, God set man in relation to creation by giving man a dominion over all the creatures in this world, Gen. 1:28. This argues in man not only a superiority of nature to them, but a propriety in them, and a liberty to use them, to the glory of God and his own advantage, Ps. 8:6. Yet, in this pristine condition, no creature had been corrupted or a necessary occasion to sin, nor did man have in his nature an inclination to abuse it, *cf.* Rom. 8:20, 21.

Second, God set man in relation to himself by ordaining marriage for man's help, Gen. 2:18. Which help was not only in what concerns the conveniences of this life, but as a means of promoting his spiritual welfare, through the nearness of relation, 1 Pet. 3:7. Its design also included the increase of man without recourse to polygamy or any sinful expedient, Mal. 2:15. The institution in paradise forms a standing precedent which respects all mankind, *cf.* Matt. 19:3-6.

Third, God set man in relation with the divinity by affording him a communion with Himself, Gen. 1:26-29. This original state supposes friendship rather than estrangement, separation or alienation, *cf.* Gen. 3:8.

Fourth, God set man in relation to the use of time, so that a portion of time might be sanctified unto sacred employments alone, Gen. 2:3. This Sabbath, or rest, being an appointment designed as a weekly reminder of man's heavenly destiny, *cf.* Heb. 4:9, 10.

Question 3—*What special act of providence is to be observed in this beginning?*

*Answer—*Besides the ordinary features of providence, which were to pertain to man at all times under the sun, there was a certain feature which pertained to the first man, Adam, as the head and representative of all mankind, commonly called the "Covenant of Works," *cf.* Gal. 3:12. In this covenant, there was a promise of life, upon condition of personal, perfect and perpetual obedience, *cf.* Rom. 10:5. This promised life consists not only in temporal but spiritual life, *cf.* Matt. 19:17. This promise of life, by way of covenant, was pledged by the setting, in the midst of the garden, a tree of life, Gen. 2:9. The condition of this covenant being found in an absolute obedience to the will of the lawgiver, God, forbidding the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil upon the pain of death, Gen. 2:17.