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The "Angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament.

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The doctrine of the "Angel of Jehovah" (*malak Jehovah*, also called *malak ha Elohim*) is one of the most important and, in a way, also most difficult points in the Old Testament, on which, moreover, even from the time of the early Church, there have been two diametrical views.

The first class of commentators and dogmaticians holds that the *malak* is a mere created angel, in whom Jehovah is and of whom God makes use as the instrument and organ of His self-manifestation. This view was held by the ancient synagog, not only as a matter of course, but also as a matter of policy. In a way, it is not surprising, either, that the *Clementine Homilies* understood the term in this manner. The same idea is held by Augustine, by Jerome, and by Gregory the Great, and defended outright by Theodore and Theodoret. It has found the general approval of the Catholic theologians under the influence of their view of the adoration of angels. It is accepted by the Socinians, Arminians, and Rationalists, from their opposition to the Church doctrine of the Trinity. Individual teachers who have held out for the idea that the Angel of Jehovah is a created being are Grotius, Calixtus, and others, in post-Reformation times, and Steudel, Hofmann, Baumgarten, Kurtz, Tholuck, and even, though not so decidedly, Delitzsch, in the last century.

The second view is that the Angel of Jehovah is a self-representation of Jehovah, the second person of the Godhead, as He manifested Himself at various times in the Old Testament. This view was held by most of the Greek Fathers, by Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Eusebius. The Lutheran theologians, as one might expect, were decidedly in favor of this ex-

planation, and in modern times it has found further staunch defenders in Hengstenberg, Keil, Lange, Nitzsch, Beck, Haevernick, Ebrard, Wordsworth, Candlish, and others.

It is our aim to show herewith that the second view only is tenable on the basis of the clear words of the Bible. Let us examine the chief passages which come into consideration in their chronological order, to remove, from the start, every semblance of a systematic compilation on the basis of a preconceived notion.

The first passage is Gen. 16, 7—13, in the story of Hagar in the wilderness. It is related there that the Angel of Jehovah found her at a spring of water and promptly proceeded to question her regarding her presence in that place. It is plainly stated that the Angel, without a special divine command, on His own initiative, bade Hagar return to her mistress, that He not only promised her a son, but also a posterity which could not be numbered for multitude. So emphatically did the essence of God appear at this time that the text distinctly states: "And she called the name of Jehovah who spoke with her, Thou, God, seest me!" Thus the Angel of Jehovah is plainly identified with Jehovah Himself.

Two chapters later the story of the visit of three men to Abraham is told, Gen. 18, 2. 17. 20—33. Of these three, two are unmistakably distinguished as ordinary angels, chap. 19, 1, while the third is just as clearly shown to be and spoken of as Jehovah. But in the next chapter, 19, 24, a distinction is clearly made between Jehovah who directed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Jehovah in heaven. "And Jehovah caused to rain upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of the heavens." In the entire passage a distinction is clearly observed between ordinary created angels and the One who, though in the form of an angel, yet possessed and made use of divine authority.

In the second appearance to Hagar, after her expulsion with Ishmael, we read that the Angel of God (*malak Elohim*) called down from heaven, bidding her not to fear, since *God* had heard the voice of the boy. But immediately afterward, without change of scene, we are told: "And God opened her eyes." Again a clear case of identifying God with the Angel of God.

In the story of Isaac's sacrifice every phrase of the Angel's call to Abraham is significant. It was the Angel of Jehovah who was speaking, chap. 22, 11. 12. And yet He says: "For now I know that thou fearest God, and not hast thou spared thy son, thine only

one, *for My sake.*" A mere angel could not have spoken so boldly and assumed such divine authority without being called to order.

The last vestige of doubt is removed in the story of Jacob in Mesopotamia. Gen. 31, 11—13. For there Jacob tells his wives: "The Angel of God said to me in a dream, . . . I am the God of Bethel." During Jacob's return trip he wrestled with an angel, "the Angel," as the prophet has it, Hos. 12, 5; yet he himself states: "I have seen God face to face." The same patriarch again identifies God and this singular Angel, when he says, in his blessing of Joseph: "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk . . ., the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." Gen. 48, 16. Although he has a different name, it is the same subject which he uses for the verb.

In the story of the burning bush, Ex. 3, 2 ff., it is distinctly said that the Angel of Jehovah appeared to Moses in the bush. But immediately afterward we are told: "And Jehovah saw that he turned to see, and called to him God from the midst of the burning bush." The conclusion of the identity of Jehovah and the Angel of Jehovah is inevitable. — Of the Angel of God, who went before the army of Israel, Ex. 14, 12, it is unmistakably said that He was the Lord Himself, preceding them in a pillar of a cloud by day, and by night in a pillar of fire, Ex. 13, 21. Cf. also Ex. 23, 20—23; 32, 34. That this Angel of Jehovah was Jehovah Himself, and that Moses very properly addressed his appeal directly to Jehovah, Ex. 33, 15, 16, appears from Is. 63, 9, where we read: "The Angel of His Presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." — The Angel of Jehovah, who stood in Balaam's way when he went to obey the summons of the Moabite king, Num. 22, 22—35, was Jehovah Himself, for He, in His own right and authority, gives the command: "Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak," v. 35, a word which Balaam himself ascribes to God, v. 38.

The same fact, however, of the identity of the Angel of Jehovah and Jehovah Himself appears after the time of Moses as well. Omitting, for the purposes of the present discussion, Josh. 5, 13—15, although its similarity to the call of Moses is very marked, we call attention to Judg. 2, 1—4, where the Angel of Jehovah addresses the children of Israel, ascribing to Himself the making of the covenant as well as other promises which could only have been made by God. In the story of Gideon also, Judg. 6, 11, 13, 16,

it is stated first that the Angel of Jehovah came to Gideon. Immediately afterward, however, Gideon addresses Him as Lord, and the text relates that Jehovah answered. Another, even more notable instance, is that of the appearance to Manoah, Judg. 13, 3—23. It is plainly stated there of the Angel of the Lord, not only that He bore the name "Wonder," Is. 9, 6, but also that Manoah identified the Angel of Jehovah with God Himself, v. 22.

This does not by any means exhaust the list of Old Testament passages, which could rather be augmented by a considerable additional number from the later historical books and from the prophets. But the list, with its brief annotations is surely large enough to convince every unprejudiced Bible scholar of the fact that the Angel of Jehovah in the Old Testament was not a mere created angel, but is to be identified with Jehovah and, therefore, in a way, with God Himself, since the second person of the Godhead is united with the Father in one indissoluble essence. He is properly called, not only Jehovah, but also God, Gen. 32, 29—31; Hos. 12, 4, 5, and divine attributes, divine works, and divine worship are ascribed to Him. And it may be added that the Angel of Jehovah is none other than the *Logos*, who is with God from eternity, being made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, John 1, 1—14. (Cp. Lange-Schaff, *Genesis*, 386—391; Keil, *Genesis*, 134 to 139; Hoenecke, *Dogmatik*, 2, 157—162; *Syn. Ber., Westl. Distr.*, 1909, 14—24.)
