

The Angel of YHVH (No. 24)

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This paper develops the identity of the Angel of YHVH or Yahovah in the Old Testament. The result has some disturbing implications for the teachings of modern Christianity, including those of Herbert W Armstrong and those of Jehovah's Witnesses. This work develops the identity of the Angel of YHVH or Yahovah in the Old Testament. The result has some disturbing implications for the teachings of modern Christianity, including those of Herbert W Armstrong and those of Jehovah's Witnesses.

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1. Introduction

When I first came into the Church (Worldwide Church of God) I was presented with a series of teachings about the nature of God and Christ with various claims being made about each. Among these teachings were the following points:

Yes, Jesus is also "Jehovah," ... today it is commonly assumed to be *Yahveh*, or *Yahweh*. *The meaning*, in English, is "THE ETERNAL," or "THE EVER-LIVING," or the "SELF-EXISTENT." It is commonly supposed that *Yahveh*, or as commonly called, "Jehovah," or, as in the Authorized Version, "The LORD," of the Old Testament was God the Father of Jesus Christ. *This is a flagrant error! Yahveh* was the God of Israel, the only One of the Godhead known to ancient Israel. (Herbert Armstrong, *Is Jesus God?* Reprint Article, Ambassador College, 1955).

Jesus came to reveal the existence and character of the Father. The Father's existence was not generally known to mankind until the Word appeared in flesh. (Paul Kroll, *Who Was Jesus?* Worldwide Church of God, 1988, p. 18).

The Personage called the Word was the one who ultimately - more than 1900 years ago - was born Jesus Christ. The name "Word," is translated from the original Greek text, and means, literally, just what is translated into English - "Spokesman." But He was not the Son of God "in the beginning." Yet the Scriptures reveal that He has always existed, and always will - "from eternity to eternity." He was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life ..." (Heb. 7:3) (Herbert Armstrong, *The Incredible Human Potential*, Worldwide Church of God, 1988, p. 36).

From eternity the Father and the WORD who became Jesus Christ had co-existed. They had created angels ... Were there, prior to this, more than just the TWO - God and the Word in the GOD FAMILY? God reveals no more. Was the "Word" the Son of God, and was God his Father *at that time*? They are nowhere referred to as that. To have been the Son of God at that prehistoric time, God would of necessity have existed *prior to* the Son's birth. The Son, had that been the case, would have *come into* existence at the time of such birth. But the "Logos" - the Word - had, like God, eternally self-existed. (Herbert Armstrong, *The Incredible Human Potential*, Worldwide Church of God, 1988, p. 65).

So, there were several concepts taught. These were that there were *two* God Beings which had always existed; that these were named "God" and "the Word" later becoming known as the "Father" and the "Son" after Christ had appeared on earth (see the discussion in Appendix 1 for evidence that the Fatherhood of God and Sonship of Christ were known prior to Christ's coming in flesh); that Christ was the God of ancient Israel, being known as YHVH; that no one really even knew the other God Being, God the Father (as he was "later" called), existed *until* Christ appeared on earth and revealed his existence; that Christ was Melchisedek, and thus lived on earth at the time of Abraham, but was without father, mother, descent, and so forth (see the discussion in Appendix 2 for proof that Christ was not Melchisedek).

Of course the Bible teaches that there is only one God. Now to say that Jesus Christ or the Logos was one God Being and that God the Father was a second God Being meant that there were 1+1=2 God Beings or 2 Gods -- not One God. To explain this seeming contradiction it was said that *Elohim* was a *uni-plural noun* and that God and the Word were one Elohim or that they were "one God" in the sense that the word *God* in this context meant *God Family*. Further, the term *God* was explained to have several meanings: it could refer to either member of the "one God Family" as a distinct personage, or it could refer to all the members of the "God Family" as a composite structure, or it could refer to God the Father when speaking of "God and the Word".

Well, like many people who come into the Church I read these things and more or less accepted them. They were after all presented with a variety of supporting Scriptures, and everyone else seemed to believe these things and they were readily taught by the ministry.

1.1 Difficulties with these teachings

However, these explanations also raised many questions in my mind. For a start, I was never totally comfortable with the explanation of how 2 God Beings = 1 God. It was quite obvious from a number of passages in the New Testament that when the "one God" of the Bible was spoken about, it was in reference to God the Father:

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee, since thou hast given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him. And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (Jn. 17:1-3, RSV).

Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1Cor. 8:6, RSV).

[There is] one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Eph. 4:6, RSV).

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (1Tim. 2:5, RSV).

Neither was I happy with the explanation of how Christ came to reveal the Father and that the Father's existence was more or less unknown until Christ was manifested in the flesh. This seemed to contradict numerous passages in the New Testament where it was *taken for granted* that God the Father was the God of the Old Testament, the God of Israel, and that He sent his servant, Jesus, to us. For example:

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know - this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. (Acts 2:22-24, RSV).

The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. (Acts 3:13, RSV).

Now consider. If God the Father was unknown to Israel prior to Christ coming as a man then these statements wouldn't make sense because they appeal to the God of Israel as the one who validated Christ's ministry. One would instead expect Peter to have said something like, "Jesus was the God of our Fathers come in flesh and he revealed to us that there exists another higher God in heaven who is the Most High God over all."

In fact, if you think about it, the entire New Testament is built on the understanding that God the Father was the God of Israel and Jesus came as his Messiah and Servant as was prophesied. If it was really correct that God the Father was *unknown* prior to Christ's coming that would have been a stunning revelation to the Jews and early Christians. One would expect to find this point explained over and over again in the New Testament. However, that is not what we find. Rather, God the Father's existence is taken for granted.

It was the identity and role of Jesus Christ which caused such turmoil among the Jews and which needed to be explained. Jesus was the Son of God - the Son of the God of the Old Testament (Lk. 1:30-35). He was the *Chosen* of God (Lk. 9:35; 23:35) -- the *Servant* of God (Mat. 12:18). God who in former times spoke through His prophets, in these last days spoke through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2). Without a doubt God the Father was known about in the Old Testament.

Certainly Jesus said that:

And the Father himself, who sent me, has testified of me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form (Jn. 5:37 NKJV)

but this is *not* the equivalent of saying that *no one knew about the existence* of the Father in the Old Testament. It simply means that no one, at any time, had ever heard His voice or seen His form. How this could be the case will be explained below.

A third problem I had with the teachings I listed earlier is that I could see quite plainly that the term YHVH was not used exclusively for Christ in the Old Testament. Yes, there are passages in which YHVH is used referring to the one who became Christ and I will deal with such passages in this paper. But there are *many, many* other passages where YHVH is used in such a way that it could obviously only be referring to God the Father. For example:

The LORD [YHVH] your God [Elohim] will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren - him you shall heed (Deut. 18:15, RSV).

[Note: There are a number of terms in Hebrew translated as *God* in our English Bibles. The most significant of these are:

- 1) *Eloah* - this is in the singular and is used of *one* true God; in Arabic it is *Allah* and is used in Islam for the one true God;
- 2) *Elohim* - this is a plural form of *Eloah* and is used of all beings in the spirit realm, including the one true God, Eloah, and good and bad angels;
- 3) *Elohi* - a singular form of *Elohim* and used of a specific Elohim, most notably the Mal'ak which represented Eloah to Israel;
- 4) *El* - A singular word for God, and used of both *Eloah* and his Mal'ak in different contexts.

See discussion in Section 12 for more details.]

Here Moses declares that YHVH will raise up a prophet for Israel to obey. That prophet was Christ as Acts 7:37 makes clear. Now Christ didn't raise himself up - the passages we read from Acts 2 and 3 make it clear that *God* raised up Christ. So clearly YHVH is used in reference to God the Father, and this was something proclaimed by Moses to *all* of Israel.

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD [YHVH] and his anointed, saying, ... (Ps. 2:2, RSV).

I will tell of the decree of the LORD [YHVH]: He said to me, "You are my son, today I have begotten you." (Ps. 2:7, RSV).

Here we read of YHVH and His Anointed. In verse 7, we read of YHVH and His begotten Son. Obviously YHVH in this Psalm must be referring to God the Father. A similar explanation must fit Psalm 110:1 where we read:

A Psalm of David. The LORD [YHVH] says to my lord [Adonai]: "Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool." (RSV).

In the many "Servant" prophecies of Christ in Isaiah (beginning with chapter 42 and onwards), YHVH sends His Servant. For example:

The Lord GOD [Adonai YHVH] has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. (Isa. 50:5-6, RSV).

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD [YHVH] been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God [Elohim], and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we

are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD [YHVH] has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isa. 53:1-6, RSV).

The Spirit of the Lord GOD [Adonai YHVH] is upon me, because the LORD [YHVH] has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; (Isa. 61:1, RSV).

Clearly, in the preceding passages, YHVH *must* refer to God the Father. One last passage to note is Zechariah 13:7 where we read:

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me," says the LORD of hosts [YHVH Sabaoth]

"Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones." (RSV).

This is the "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" prophecy to which Christ referred and which he applied to himself as the Good Shepherd (Mat. 26:31). Yet this prophecy is spoken by YHVH of Hosts about His shepherd, the man who is YHVH's "fellow" (KJV). Once again YHVH must be God the Father and not Christ.

So, to return to what I was saying at the beginning, I read and heard the teachings of the Church when I came in and I accepted them because they were, after all, the teachings of the Church. And yet I could also see various problems with these doctrines. The funny thing is, *I thought the problem was with me*. I thought, "Well, because I can see these contradictions but the ministry does not see them, then there must be something missing in my understanding". It never occurred to me until many years later that the Church might have got it wrong. But it had, and for the rest of this paper I will cover the correct biblical teaching on this subject.

1.2 Foundational Principles for Understanding

In order to understand what the Bible teaches us about God and how and through whom he chooses to interact with us, we have to fix several foundational points in mind.

Firstly, *there is only one true God*. There is only one personage who, by virtue of what He intrinsically is, can rightfully be called the *one true God*. Jesus identified this personage as his Father and said that eternal life is dependent on understanding this and being able to distinguish between this Being and Jesus Christ whom He sent (Jn. 17:3). He alone has *intrinsic* immortality (1Tim. 6:16). He alone is *intrinsically* holy (Rev. 15:4).

[Note: In the term *God, the Father* or *God the Father*, the words *the Father* are grammatically in *apposition* with *God*. An apposition is *the placing of a word or expression beside another so that the second explains and has the same grammatical construction as the first*. It is akin to saying *Mary, my cousin, came to visit*. The term *the Father* is another way of saying *God*. That is, *God is the Father*, and the *Father is God*. It is not as though *God the Father* is a single descriptive title for a "hypostasis of God". Rather, *the Father* is the *one God*, and the one God is *the Father*.]

A second foundational point is to understand that *no man at any time has ever seen or heard the voice of the one true God*:

Who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. (1Tim. 6:16, RSV).

No one has ever seen God; the only Son [original Greek reads *onlyborn God*], who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known. (Jn. 1:18, RSV).

No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. (1Jn. 4:12, RSV).

And the Father himself, who sent me, has testified of me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form (Jn. 5:37 NKJV)

Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father. (Jn. 6:46, RSV).

Instead of dealing with humanity in the first person, God interacted with humans through one or more mediators or messengers. And this brings us to the third foundational point we need to bear in mind. *God revealed himself to peoples of Semitic background and culture*, not Greek background and culture. In the West we tend to think in terms of Greek ideas and concepts. The Semitic peoples had a totally different way of looking at things. Unless we learn to appreciate their way of thinking we will become terribly confused when we read the Bible. The concepts of Trinitarianism and Binitarianism have arisen, in part, because of a failure on the part of the Greek and Western mindset to understand the Hebrew mindset and, hence, the language of the Bible.

1.3 Definition of the term Angel

This last point is especially true when we come to look at the concepts of names and titles applied to messengers in Hebrew culture. The Hebrew term for *messenger* in the Old Testament is the noun *mal'ak*. This term appears 213 times altogether in the Old Testament. It is derived from an unused root meaning to *dispatch as a deputy*. It is this word *mal'ak* which is translated as *angel* in our English Bibles. Because of our backgrounds, whenever we read the word *angel* in the Bible, a set of preconceived ideas come to mind. The word *angel* is a "loaded word" if you like, whereas all it really means is *messenger*.

In the Greek New Testament, a similar arrangement holds. The word for *messenger* in the Greek is *aggelos* {ang'-el-os} from which, in fact, we get the English word *angel*. But once again all it means is *messenger*. (*Aggelos* is derived from *angelo* meaning to *deliver a message*. It is used of both humans and angels. In Rev. 21:17, after the Millennium, the terms *man* and *angel* become synonymous).

In the Old Testament, *mal'ak* denoted those sent over a great distance by an individual - for example Genesis 32:3 where Jacob sent messengers to Esau. (Note that in Gen, 32:1-2 the *mal'ak* of God (*Elohim*) meets Jacob. Thus, in verses 1-2 *mal'ak* is used to refer to supernatural messengers sent by God and in verse 3 used to refer to human messengers sent by Jacob).

One or more *mal'ak* could also be sent by a community (Num. 21:21) in order to communicate a message. As a representative of a king, the *mal'ak* might have performed the function of a diplomat (cf. 1Kings 20:1-2). The *mal'ak* or messenger occupied an important place in Semitic culture. Honour to the messenger signified honour to the sender, and the opposite was also true (cf. Jn. 5:23).

God sent various types of messengers. Firstly, there were prophetic human messengers (2Chron. 36:15-16). Secondly, there were also supernatural messengers of God sent with a particular message or function (Gen.19:1; Ps. 91:11). In the case of these latter messengers the term *mal'ak* is usually translated *angel* for the benefit of the English reader so that he or she might understand that a supernatural messenger from heaven was intended in the original Hebrew. However, the point we are making is that *angel* simply means *messenger* and we should try and avoid "loading" the word *angel* with unnecessary preconceived ideas.

Now, of all the *mal'ak* sent by God, by far the most significant and relevant to this paper is the one who was designated by the phrases *Mal'ak YHVH*, or "the Angel of the LORD" in our English Bibles, and *Mal'ak Elohim*, that is, "the Angel of God." [This is often more correctly translated as "the Angel of the Gods" but this issue is not dealt with in this paper.] These phrases are always used in the singular. They refer to the special Angel [or Messenger] who bore the *Presence* of God. Because he carried the *authority* of God and represented God, he was frequently called YHVH. This is another concept acceptable to the Semitic mind but generally foreign to our way of thinking. A Hebrew thinker was able to call a messenger representing God by the name *God* while also recognising that the messenger was only a messenger, and not God in first person.

For example, Israel called their human judges *elohim* because they represented *The Elohim* or The God (i.e. God the Father), but that didn't mean that the judges were actually God in person:

If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges [*elohim*], to see whether he has put his hand unto his neighbours goods. (Ex. 22:8, KJV).

Thou shalt not revile the gods [*elohim*], nor curse the ruler of thy people. (Ex. 22:28, KJV).

The gods mentioned here are the judges of Israel. When a person appeared before a judge in a Hebrew court they literally addressed the judge as *God* because the judge represented God and carried His authority. (It is not uncommon in our courts to refer to the judge as *Your Worship*. Quite possibly the practise is related to the early Semitic equivalent). And so it was that the *Mal'ak* of YHVH carried the name of YHVH and was actually referred to as YHVH because he carried the authority of YHVH. [There is also the related issue that *YHVH* means *He who causes to be* in the third person and is used by those subordinate to YHVH of Hosts since He literally causes them to be (i.e. to exist). See the footnotes to the *New Oxford Annotated Bible RSV*, p. 70]. Further, the *Mal'ak* of YHVH was also called *Elohim* because he represented the one true God who was the *Elohim* of heaven.

Note: Some might object to this delegation of the names of God on the grounds of Isaiah 44:5 and elsewhere. However these passages are dealing with the one *true* God being unique and without equal. The concept of lesser beings carrying the authority and, hence, the name of God is clearly supported in the New Testament in Revelation 3:12.

As will become clear, the Bible indicates the Angel or *Mal'ak* of YHVH to be Christ manifesting himself in visible form.

2. Hagar and the Angel

2.1 You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees

The Angel of YHVH is first mentioned in the story of the maidservant Hagar fleeing from her mistress Sarai, in Genesis 16. As Hagar wanders in the wilderness, the Angel meets her. Significantly, the Angel promises that *he* will bless and multiply her descendants. Hence the Angel is given power and authority by God to extend blessings to humanity. At the conclusion of this encounter, the Angel is called "the YHVH who spoke to her" - [the *Interlinear Bible* translates this as "And she called the name of Jehovah, the One speaking to her, You, a God of vision!" The phrase *the One speaking to her* indicates that there are multiple beings which carry the title *YHVH*. It was that particular YHVH who spoke to her, who saw her wandering in the wilderness and went to her aid] - and she calls him, "You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees" (v. 13). Yet the Angel also refers to YHVH in the third person. Thus, in this example we begin to see how the Angel of YHVH carries the title YHVH but also speaks on the behalf of his YHVH who he represents.

The Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, maid of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her." The Angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will so greatly multiply your descendants that they cannot be numbered for multitude." And the Angel of the LORD said to her, "Behold, you are with child, and shall bear a son; you shall call his name Ishmael; because the LORD has given heed to your affliction. He shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen." So she called the name of the LORD [*YHVH*] who spoke to her, "Thou art a God [El] of seeing"; for she said, "Have I really seen God [Lit. *have I really looked on the One seeing me*] and remained alive after seeing him?" (Gen. 16:7-13, RSV).

Significantly, Christ identifies *himself* as the One *who searches the hearts and sees the intents of the mind* in the New Testament. In Revelation 2:18,25 we read:

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: "The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze". (RSV)

And I will strike her children dead. And all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve. (RSV).

2.2 The Angel of God

When Hagar flees the second time, the Angel speaks to her again, and repeats his promise to make her son a great nation. Here we read for the first time the Angel's second title, *the Angel of God*. It is significant that the terms *God [Elohim]* and *Angel of God [Elohim]* are used interchangeably just as *YHVH* and *Angel of YHVH* are used interchangeably. *God [Elohim]* *hears* and the *Angel speaks*. The Angel says he will bless Ishmael, but he also says he is speaking on behalf of God [Elohim]. This points out that there is a hierarchy in the Elohim. The Angel carries the title *Elohim* and speaks on behalf of the *Elohim* he represents.

And God [*Elohim*] heard the voice of the lad; and the Angel of God [*Elohim*] called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not; for God [*Elohim*] has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him fast with your hand; for I will make him a great nation." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink, And God was with the lad, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. (Gen. 21:17-20, RSV).

3. Abraham and the Angel

3.1 YHVH as a distributed title

In the example of Hagar and the Angel we saw that the Angel of YHVH was called YHVH because he carried the *authority* of YHVH and spoke on His behalf. This concept of YHVH being a *distributed title* (i.e. a title applying to many beings, not just YHVH of Hosts who is the one true God) appears in numerous places. (For a discussion of titles in the NT, see Appendix 3). For example, YHVH directly appeared to Abraham.

Then the LORD [*YHVH*] appeared to Abram, and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. (Gen. 12:7, RSV).

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD [*YHVH*] appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty [*El Shadday*]; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." Then Abram fell on his face; and God [*Elohim*] said to him, ... (Gen. 17:1-3, RSV).

This YHVH could not be the one true God for no man has ever seen God or heard His voice (cf. NT passages referred to previously). Yet he speaks as *God Almighty*. The Hebrew term for *Almighty* is *Shadday* and means *Most Powerful*. There can be only one Being who is the Most Powerful and that is God, the Father, who is greater than all, including Christ:

You heard me say to you, "I go away, and I will come to you." If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; **for the Father is greater than I.** (Jn. 14:28, RSV).

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and **the head of Christ is God.** (1Cor. 11:3, RSV).

In the New Testament the term *Almighty* is reserved exclusively for God the Father. The Lord God Almighty is our Father, and Jesus Christ is our brother:

And I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. (2Cor. 6:18, RSV).

For he who sanctifies [Christ] and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, "I will proclaim thy name [The Father's name] to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee." (Heb. 2:11-12, RSV).

In Revelation the Lord God Almighty, God the Father, is distinguished from his Christ; He is the object of a song of praise of the Lamb; Christ treads out the winepress of His wrath (i.e. executes judgment for his Father); and both the Almighty and the Lamb form the Temple in the New Heavens and New Earth:

And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and *the song of the Lamb*, saying, "Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages!" (Rev. 15:3, RSV).

From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. (Rev. 19:15, RSV). [cf. Jn. 5:27 - *and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man.*]

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. (Rev. 21:22, RSV).

Since *no man* has ever seen the one *true* God (cf. verses cited in Section 1.2) [this is well recognised by commentators. See the quotation from the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* in Appendix 4], and God the Father is God Almighty, and the Scripture cannot be broken (Jn. 10:35), we are forced to conclude that the YHVH who spoke to Abraham and the Patriarchs was *another* YHVH apart from God Almighty (the Father), *but one who spoke on behalf of* God Almighty, or *El Shadday*. That is, Abraham dealt with an Elohim who spoke directly on behalf of God, and because he carried the authority of God he also carried his name *YHVH* as a title. Christ explained that he only spoke on behalf of God:

So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me." (Jn. 8:28, RSV).

For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me. (Jn. 12:49-50, RSV).

This concept of YHVH as a distributed title becomes even more apparent in Genesis 18 when three beings appear to Abraham, all being termed *YHVH*:

He [Abraham] lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, "My lord, if I have found favour in your sight, do not pass by your servant." (Gen. 18:2-3, RSV).

In the *original* Hebrew text the word rendered here as "lord" was in fact *YHVH*. Abraham addressed all three "men" as *YHVH*. However, when the Hebrew text was being fixed by the *Sopherim* who were the official revisers under Ezra and Nehemiah, they altered this word and 133 other occurrences of *YHVH* to read *Adonai* or *Lord*. (Their alterations were recorded in the margins of the text.) Allegedly, the reason for making these alterations was out of reverence for the Divine Name *YHVH*, but it seems more probable the real reason was that the *Sopherim* were concerned about *YHVH* being applied to other entities apart from YHVH

Most High. Similar alterations apply in verses 27,30,32. (A complete list of these alterations is found in Appendix 32 of the *Companion Bible*).

In verses 16-22, one of the men, now termed *YHVH*, chooses to stay on with Abraham while the other two leave for Sodom. Yet this *YHVH* refers to *YHVH* in the third person as blessing Abraham, hence further indicating a multiple number of *YHVH*:

Then the men set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to set them on their way. The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him? No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him." Then the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry which has come to me; and if not, I will know." So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham still stood before the LORD. (Gen. 18:16-22, RSV).

This *YHVH*, representing *YHVH* in heaven came down to see if the outcry against Sodom was true. In Chapter 19 the two "men", now termed *angels (mal'ak)*, go to Sodom. In verse 18, Lot addresses them as *YHVH*:

And Lot said to them, "Oh, no, my lords [another of the 134 alterations by the Sopherim, originally *YHVH*]; (Gen. 19:18, RSV).

The angels tell Lot *YHVH* has sent them to destroy Sodom:

For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD [*YHVH*], and the LORD [*YHVH*] has sent us to destroy it. (Gen. 19:13, RSV).

In verse 24 the angels, termed *YHVH*, rain fire down from *YHVH in heaven*:

Then the LORD [*YHVH*] rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD [*YHVH*] out of heaven; (Gen. 19:24, RSV).

Thus, we see the term *YHVH* applied without distinction to no less than *four* Beings in these accounts: the three "men" (evidently Christ and two accompanying angels) and God in heaven. Clearly, *YHVH* is a *distributed title* applied to those who represent God the Father to humans.

3.2 The Angel prevents the slaying of Isaac

The next mention of the Angel is in the incident of Abraham being asked to slay Isaac. In this case the Angel intervenes to prevent Isaac's death:

But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God [*Elohim*], seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place The LORD will provide; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided." And the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice." (Gen. 22:11-18, RSV).

The Angel here speaks both as an entity in his own right ("for now I know ...") and for *YHVH*, God of heaven ("By myself I have sworn, says *YHVH* ...").

It is interesting to note that in commending Abraham the Angel said, "for *now I know* that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." From this we learn that the Angel was the *Elohim* who instructed Abraham to slay his son in verses 1-2, and that the Angel did not know what Abraham would do but discovered it through observing Abraham's actions. Thus, the Angel does not have absolute foreknowledge or prescience. This is exactly the case with Christ. There are some things that Christ does not know and which must be revealed to him by his God and Father who does have absolute prescience:

[Note - This is yet another proof that Christ is not the one true God. The one true God, God the Father, *declares the end from the beginning* (Isa. 46:9-10). It is *His* purpose and mystery which is being unfolded on earth (Eph. 1:9-10; 3:9). Christ receives knowledge of these things by *revelation* from the Father (Rev. 1:1).]

But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Mk. 13:32, RSV).

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, (Rev. 1:1, RSV).

3.3 The Angel and Isaac's wife

Later, when Abraham sent his servant to fetch a wife for Isaac, he promised the servant that *YHVH's* Angel would be with the servant to bless his journey. From his comments, Abraham understood the distinction between *YHVH* the God of heaven, and the Angel or *Mal'ak* who was this *YHVH's* Messenger and through whom *YHVH* dealt with him. The servant acknowledged the Angel's lead as being equivalent to *YHVH's* lead. Thus, the Angel truly represented God:

The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and swore to me, "To your descendants I will give this land," he will send his Angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.

But he said to me, "The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his Angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my kindred and from my father's house;"

Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. (Gen. 24:7,40,48, RSV).

In the New Testament Christ fulfils a similar role of leading, protecting, blessing and representing God to us:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Mat. 28:18-20, RSV).

4. Jacob and the Angel

In this section, three profound qualities of the Angel of YHVH are revealed:

As the Messenger of God (Most High), the presence of the Angel is equivalent to the presence of God. To see the Angel is the equivalent of seeing God (Most High).

The Angel is God's agent of redemption.

The Angel is equated to the God [*Elohim*] who led, talked with, blessed, and fed Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham.

4.1 The God of the House of God

When he fled from the face of Esau to his Uncle Laban in Haran, Jacob experienced a powerful dream near the city of Luz. In his dream, he saw YHVH stand above a ladder ascending to heaven and bless him. YHVH promised to be with Jacob, to keep him, not to leave him, and to bring him back to his homeland. Jacob vowed a vow to YHVH, accepting YHVH as his God:

And he came to a certain place, and stayed there that night, ... Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the LORD [*YHVH*] stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants; ... Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you." Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I did not know it." ... He called the name of that place Bethel [*House of God*]; ... Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "... the LORD shall be my God," (Gen. 28:11-21, RSV).

Having seen a Being who names himself *YHVH* in a dream, years later Jacob experiences another dream in which the Angel of God speaks to him and says, "I am the God of Bethel," and "you made a vow to me." Thus, again the Angel is connected with the title *YHVH*. It is noteworthy that the text refers to the Angel as *Mal'ak HaElohim*. The preposition *ha* means *the*. That is, the Angel is identified as *the Angel of The God*. Thus, although termed *Elohim*, the Angel is the *Mal'ak* or Messenger of a higher *Elohim*, who is *The Elohim*, that is, *The God*. It is also significant that the Angel calls himself *the El Bethel* or *God of the House of God*:

Then the Angel of God [*Mal'ak HaElohim*] said to me in the dream, "Jacob," and I said, "Here I am!" And he said, "... I am the God of Bethel [*El Bethel*], where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go forth from this land, and return to the land of your birth." (Gen. 31:11-13, RSV).

In the New Testament, Christ is referred to as *God* being anointed by *his God* (who is the Father). He is also the Son and High Priest over his Father's house:

Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness beyond thy comrades." (Heb. 1:9, RSV).

But Christ was faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope. (Heb. 3:6, RSV).

And since we have a great priest over the house of God, (Heb. 10:21, RSV).

In the passage that follows, the God [*El*] of Bethel reappears in order to bless and instruct Jacob. From the preceding passages and Jacob's later comments in Genesis 48:15-16, it is evident that the God of Bethel must have been the Angel of YHVH. The parallels between his activities here and his earlier appearances to Hagar and Abraham are obvious:

Then God [*Elohim*] said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God [*El*], who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother." And Jacob said to his household ... "Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar to God [*El*], who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." ... So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel) ... And he built an altar there and called the place *El Bethel* [Heb. *God of the House of God*], because there God appeared [Heb. *Elohim (Gods) were revealed* - this is in the plural and has been understood by RABBINICAL commentators to be referring to the angels - that is, the reference is to the Angel of *Elohim* who spoke as *YHVH* and the other angels seen ascending and descending upon the ladder; these all are *elohim*] to him when he fled from the face of his brother. ... And God [*Elohim*] appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. ... Also God [*Elohim*] said to him: "I am God Almighty [*El Shaddai*]. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land." Then God [*Elohim*] went up from him in the place where he talked with him. (Gen. 35:1-13 NKJV)

Again, as with Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 28:3) the Angel speaks as *El Shadday*, thus indicating it is *El Shadday's* *Mal'ak* or Messenger who is speaking.

4.2 The Face of God

On returning to meet Esau, "a man" meets Jacob and wrestles with him to day-break. Jacob equates this experience as being that of seeing God [*Elohim*] "face to face," and names the place, "Face of God." Clearly, this "man" bore the presence of God in himself.

Then Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when he saw that he did not prevail against him, he touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, "Let me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me!" So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." And he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you struggled with God [*Elohim*] and with men, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, saying, "Tell me your name, I pray." And he said, "Why is it that you ask about my name?" And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel [Heb. *Face of God*]: "For I have seen God [*Elohim*] face to face, and my life is preserved." (Gen. 32:24-30 NKJV)

Centuries later, the prophet Hosea was inspired to recall this incident. Jacob is said to have struggled with God [*Elohim*]. In the next verse this God or Elohim is equated to the Angel.

He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and in his strength he struggled with God [*Elohim*]. Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favour from him. He found him in Bethel, and there he spoke to us - That is, the Lord God of Hosts. The Lord is his memorial. (Hos. 12:3-5 NKJV)

In Hosea 12:5 the term *the Lord God of Hosts* is not the usual *YHVH Sabaoth*. Rather, the Hebrew reads *YHVH, Elohim HaSabaot* or *YHVH, God of the Hosts*. So the Angel is referred to as *YHVH, [the] God of the Hosts*. This parallels Christ as the Captain of Heaven's Armies in Joshua 5:15. (See also Mat. 24:30-31; 1Thes. 4:16; Jude 14; Rev. 19:13-14.)

Before leaving this section we need to also note that Christ represents the "face of God" to us:

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (Jn. 14:9, RSV).

For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2Cor. 4:6, RSV).

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; (Col. 1:15, RSV).

4.3 The Angel of Redemption

The last reference to the Angel in Genesis is when Jacob blesses Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Here Jacob explicitly calls the God [*Elohim*] of his fathers and the God [*Elohim*] who fed him all his life long till that day, "the Angel who redeemed me." The connection to Christ is obvious (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5). In later usage, "the Angel who Redeems," became to be called, "the Angel of Redemption." Of further interest is that the term *fed* (as in *the God who has fed*) means *shepherded*. Clearly, the Angel of Redemption is also the Shepherd of Israel. This plainly connects him with Christ as the *Good Shepherd* (Jn. 10:14).

And he blessed Joseph, and said: "God [*Elohim*], before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed [*shepherded*] me all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys" (Gen. 48:15-16 NKJV)

Earlier Abraham told his servant that he walked before *YHVH*, and in the same passage distinguished *YHVH* from his Angel (Gen. 24:40). In Genesis 48:15-16 Jacob says that his (grand-)father Abraham walked before the Elohim who was the Angel or *Mal'ak*. This is not a contradiction. The *Mal'ak* of *YHVH* was the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (that is, the Elohim anointed by his Elohim, who is God Most High to be their Lord and Protector and Redeemer), but he was not the object of their worship. Rather God Almighty or *El Shadday*, was the one they worshipped. They approached him through his *Mal'ak* whom he had appointed over them. This parallels the New Testament concepts of Christians following both God and Christ and approaching God through Christ:

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; (Eph. 5:1, KJV).

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. (Jn. 12:26, KJV).

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (Jn. 14:13, KJV).

5. Moses and the Angel

5.1 The Address of Stephen

The Church of God from the first century has accepted that the One who spoke from the burning bush, the One who spoke the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, the One who led Israel through the wilderness, the One who conversed with Moses in first person, was Christ before his human birth. For example, Paul wrote:

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. (1Cor. 10:1-4, RSV).

However, the Bible is explicit that it was the Angel of *YHVH* who did all these things and more. The early Church understood that Christ was the *Mal'ak* or Angel of God: (See discussion in Appendix 5 for more details).

And though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an Angel of God, as Christ Jesus. (Gal. 4:14, RSV).

Clear evidence of the understanding of Christ's role as the Angel of *YHVH* in the early Church is found in Stephen's address in Acts 7. Very important are verses 30-38. In verse 30 Moses sees the Angel and he hears the voice of the Lord. In verse 35, Moses is sent to be a deliverer with the helping hand or aid of the Angel. In verse 38, it is explicitly stated that it was the Angel of God who gave the Law to Israel through Moses. Stephen's comments lay the foundation for further examining the Old Testament record of Moses' dealings with the Angel of *YHVH*:

"And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. When Moses saw it, he marvelled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying, 'I am the God of your fathers - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and dared not look. "Then the Lord said to him, "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I have certainly seen the oppression of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt." This Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. ... This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us." (Acts 7:30-38, NKJV)

Here is verse 38 from several modern English translations and a paraphrase.

This is he who in the assembly in the wilderness (desert) was the go-between for the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai and our forefathers, and he received living oracles (words that still live) to be handed down to us. (The Amplified Bible)

This was the man who at the assembly in the desert intervened between the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai and our fathers; he received living Words to be given to us. (Moffatt)

In that church in the desert this was the man who was the mediator between the Angel who used to talk with him on Mount Sinai and our fathers. This was the man who received words, living words, which were to be given to you. (Phillip's)

For in the wilderness, Moses was the go-between - the mediator between the people of Israel and the Angel who gave them the Law of God - the Living Word - on Mount Sinai. (The Living Bible)

5.2 The Angel in the Bush

Moses first encounters the Angel when he appears in the burning bush. As Moses turns aside to see we are told that YHVH sees and speaks. Furthermore, the speaker identifies himself as the God [*Elohi* - a singular form of *Elohim*] of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was the Angel of Redemption as we saw in Genesis 48:15-16. Lastly, the Angel sends Moses back to Egypt and promises to aid him in his efforts.

Remembering too that Stephen said that God sent Moses to deliver Israel with the helping hand of the Angel who appeared to him, it is therefore evident from this account that the terms *Angel of YHVH*, *YHVH*, and *Elohim*, are used interchangeably to describe the one and the same entity.

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. ... Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, ..." So when the LORD [*YHVH*] saw that he turned aside to look, God [*Elohim*] called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." Moreover he said, "I am the God of your father - the God [*Elohi*] of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God [*Elohim*].

"Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh ... I will certainly be with you. ..." (Ex. 3:1-6,10-12, NKJV)

It is interesting to note in passing that the Angel who spoke for his Elohim, namely God the Father, and carried the title *Elohim* as one of delegated authority, *also* had the authority to in turn designate others - in this case Moses - to be *Elohim* and carry the title as a sign of delegated authority. Thus, Moses was a Mal'ak for the Angel and an Elohim to his brother Aaron. Aaron was in turn a Mal'ak for his Elohim, Moses.

He [Aaron] shall speak for you to the people; and he shall be a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God [Lit. *an Elohim*]. (Ex. 4:16, RSV).

5.3 The Angel in the Cloud

In the following passages we are told that YHVH was present in the cloud as he led Israel. We are also told that it was an Angel who led Israel and that the movement of the cloud was connected to the Angel's movements. Once again the Angel of YHVH is identified with YHVH.

And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. (Ex. 13:21, NKJV)

And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them.

Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the LORD looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and he troubled the army of the Egyptians. (Ex. 14:19,24, NKJV)

Paul wrote that it was Christ who led Israel through the Sea (1Cor. 10:1-4 quoted before). Therefore, the Angel of YHVH is identified *unmistakably* as Christ.

5.4 The Angel as the Giver of the Law

In Section 5.1, Acts 7:38 was cited, showing that Moses was the mediator between the Angel and Israel, receiving the Law from the Angel. A simple comparison of Acts 7:38 with the following passages shows yet again that the Angel is equated with YHVH. [The concept of the Law of God being ordained and delivered by the Angels of God - that is, passed as Law by the Council of the Gods and delivered by his Mal'aks - is not dealt with in this paper, but is noted in passing from a couple of New Testament passages:

You who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it. (Acts 7:53, RSV).

Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained by angels through an intermediary. (Gal. 3:19, RSV).]

Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God [*Elohim*] of Israel. And there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heaven in its clarity. But upon the nobles of the children of Israel he did not lay his hand. So they saw God [*Elohim*], and they ate and drank. Then the LORD [*YHVH*] said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them." So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain. ... Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain. Now the glory of the LORD [*YHVH*] rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ... So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. ... (Ex. 24:9-18, NKJV)

[And the LORD said to Moses] 'But as for you, stand here by me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I am giving them to possess.' (Deut. 5:31, NKJV)

In this passage we also note that the Elders of Israel *saw the Elohim of Israel* who was identified earlier as the Angel of Redemption.

5.5 The Angel as the Presence of God

Earlier we saw Jacob call the Angel with whom he wrestled, *the Face of God*. By this he meant that God was "present" or "made visible" in the person of the Angel. In time this concept was developed more fully and the Angel came to be known as *the Angel of his (or the) Presence* (i.e. *The Messenger of God's Presence*). The Angel (who was Christ from above) was in effect functioning as *Emmanuel* or *God with Us* long before his birth as a human.

In these passages YHVH and the Angel of His Presence are distinguished from one another. This can be understood if we recognise that the existence of God the Father as the *El Shadday* or *YHVH of Hosts*, was known to Israel. They worshipped YHVH of Hosts but understood that he dealt with them and was present with them in the person of his Messenger or Angel, whom by virtue of representing YHVH of Hosts and sharing his divine nature, they also called YHVH.

For he said, "Surely they are my people, children who will not lie." So he became their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his Presence saved them; in his love and pity he redeemed them; and he bore them and carried them all the days of old. (Isa. 63:8-9, NKJV)

"And because he loved your fathers, therefore he chose their descendants after them; and he brought you out of Egypt with his Presence, with his mighty power." (Deut. 4:37 NKJV)

'When we cried out to the LORD [*YHVH*], he heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; ...' (Num. 20:16 NKJV)

Earlier we saw the example of the Mal'ak appear and speak to Abraham and Jacob as if he were *El Shadday* or *God Almighty* in the first person. In Exodus, as the Angel deals with Moses and Israel another example of this "transparency" of the Angel of YHVH as he speaks on behalf of YHVH of Hosts occurs. In this incident the "transparency" is so "clear" that his identity is lost and the illusion is created that it is YHVH of Hosts speaking in the first person.

In Exodus 33 we read that YHVH will send his Angel before Israel, but that he (YHVH) will not go with them in their midst. YHVH of Hosts (who remained in heaven) did not in first person lead Israel out of Egypt nor did he accompany Israel into the Promised Land. It was the Angel of YHVH who did these things. But in this example, the Angel so transparently communicates the words of YHVH of Hosts, we are left with the impression that it is YHVH of Hosts in first person who talks with Moses.

This situation apparently confuses Moses (remember that the Hebrew for Angel is Mal'ak and simply means messenger), not recognising it is the very Angel of YHVH with whom he is conversing who will accompany Israel. Perhaps Moses thought another Mal'ak would be assigned to go with Israel. At any rate, after pleading, YHVH of Hosts (still speaking through the Angel) reassures Moses that He will be fully present with Israel. This can only be if the Angel to go with Israel is the Angel of God's Presence.

"And I will send my Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff necked people."

Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, you say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in my sight.' Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in your sight, show me now your way, that I may know you and that I may find grace in your sight. And consider that this nation is your people." And he said, "My Presence [Heb. *panim* meaning *face* or *person*] will go with you, and I will give you rest." Then he said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that your people and I have found grace in your sight, except you go with us? So we shall be separate, your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth." Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in my sight, and I know you by name." (Ex. 33:2-3,12-17, NKJV)

The following passages repeat the promise that the Angel of YHVH will go before Israel. Note that he has the authority to forgive sin (but will not if provoked), and that God's name is in him. This means that the nature, authority and character of God are in the Angel. There are numerous parallels to Christ in this concept.

"Behold, I send an Angel before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared. Give heed to him and hearken to his voice, do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him.

But if you hearken attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. When my Angel goes before you, and brings you in to the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I blot them out," (Ex. 23:20-23, RSV).

"But now go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you; behold, my Angel shall go before you. ..." (Ex. 32:34, RSV).

6. The Angel of the Covenant

Not only was the Angel of YHVH *the Angel of Redemption* and *the Angel of the Presence*, but he was also understood to be the one who made the Covenant with Israel at Sinai.

In Malachi 3:1 it is prophesied that the *Angel (or Messenger) of the Covenant* whom Israel was seeking would come to his Temple. We know that Messenger was Christ (see Mat. 11:10, Mk. 1:2, Lk. 1:76; 7:27). Yet who did Malachi and his audience understand to be the Angel of the Covenant? They knew him as the Angel who addressed Israel in Judges 2:1-4 saying that he made the Covenant with Israel. [Though it is not addressed here, both the Old and New Covenants are made between YHVH of Hosts or God the Father and Israel (whether physical or spiritual). Christ as the Mal'ak of God is the *Mediator* of these Covenants and thus it was on behalf of God the Father or YHVH of Hosts that he spoke to Israel at Bochim.] Again Christ is indicated to be the Angel of YHVH.

Now the Angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you into the land which I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my command. What is this you have done? So now I say, I will not drive them out before you; but they shall become adversaries to you, and their gods shall be a snare to you." When the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the people of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept. (Judg. 2:1-4, RSV).

Behold, I am sending My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord whom you are seeking shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Angel of the Covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He comes, says Jehovah of hosts. (Mal. 3:1, A Literal Translation)

7. Balaam and the Angel

We see the Angel of YHVH deal with Balaam in Numbers 22-23. Again the Angel's actions and instructions ("speak only the word I speak to you") are equated with YHWH's. Here *Elohim* is clearly the Angel of YHVH while he carries the name and authority of YHVH.

Then God's [*Elohim*] anger was aroused because he [Balaam] went, and the Angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him. Now the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, ... And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" ... Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face. ... And the Angel of the LORD said to him, Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before me." Then the Angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak." So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak.

And Balaam said to Balak, "Look, I have come to you! Now, have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God [*Elohim*] puts in my mouth, that I must speak." ... Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever he shows me I will tell you." ... And God [*Elohim*] met Balaam, ... Then the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak." ... Then the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, "Go back to Balak, and thus you shall speak." (Num. 22:22 to 23:16, NKJV)

8. Joshua and the Angel

The Angel also appeared to Joshua in the guise of the Commander of YHVH's army, being referred to as *YHVH*.

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man stood before him with his drawn sword in his hand; and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No; but as commander of the army of the LORD [*YHVH*] I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and worshiped, and said to him, "What does my lord bid his servant?" And the commander of the LORD's [*YHVH*] army said to Joshua, "Put off your shoes from your feet; for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so. Now Jericho was shut up from within and from without because of the people of Israel; none went out, and none came in. And the LORD [*YHVH*] said to Joshua, "See, I have given into your hand Jericho, with its king and mighty men of valor." (Josh. 5:13 to 6:2, RSV).

Note that the ground where the *Commander* stands is holy (cf. Ex. 3) and just as the term *YHVH* is applied to the *Angel of YHVH*, so *YHVH* is applied to the *Commander* of YHVH's army. Thus, this Being carried the authority and presence of YHVH in himself just as the Angel of YHVH did. Given Hosea 12:5 referred to earlier where the Angel is called *YHVH*, *Elohim of the Host* and also the New Testament passages where Christ is portrayed as the Captain of heaven's armies (e.g. Rev 19:11-13), it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Being who appeared to Joshua was the Angel of YHVH, namely, Christ.

9. The Angel and the Judges

The Angel of YHVH appears a number of times in Judges. Earlier we saw his appearance to Israel where he declared himself as the *Mal'ak* who made the Covenant at Sinai with Israel. Now we examine his involvement with Israel's judges.

9.1 Gideon and the Angel

The first account is his appearance to Gideon. Here the terms *Angel of YHVH* and *YHVH* are freely interchanged while describing the same personage. It is interesting to observe that Gideon initially calls the Angel of YHVH his *adoni*, a form of *lord* or *master* used of men. When Gideon begins to perceive the true identity of the Angel, he addresses him (in the standard Hebrew text) as *Adonai*. This was the formal divine name used when speaking of YHVH, because "YHVH" was considered too sacred to pronounce. However, as with the passages in Genesis noted earlier, the original word in verse 15 was *YHVH*, and was changed to *Adonai* by the Sopherim as they did the 133 other texts, presumably to conceal the fact that the title *YHVH* had been applied to an Angel.

Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD [*YHVH*] is with you, you mighty man of valour!" And Gideon said to him, "O my lord [Heb. *adoni*, used of man], if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

Then the LORD turned to him [clearly this is the Angel who turned] and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have not I sent you?" So he said to him, "O my Lord [Heb. *Adonai*, this was originally *YHVH* but was one of the 134 places changed from *YHVH* to *Adonai* by the Sopherim], how can I save Israel? ..." And the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." Then he said to him, "If now I have found favour in your sight, then show me a sign that it is you who talk with me. Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to you and bring out my offering and set it before you." And he said, "I will wait until you come back."

Then Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread ... and he brought them out to him under the terebinth tree and presented them. The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

Now Gideon perceived that he was the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD [Heb. *Adonai YHVH*]! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face." Then the LORD said to him, "Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die." So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Shalom [Lit. *He Causes Peace*]. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. (Judg. 6:11-24. NKJV).

The title *The-LORD-Shalom* meaning *He Causes Peace* is significant as it is very close to the title given to Messiah, namely *Prince of Peace* (Isa. 9:6).

9.2 The Parents of Samson and the Angel

Some time later the Angel of YHVH appeared again, this time to the parents of Samson. In this account several points are relevant. Samson's father Manoah initially doubts the identity of the Angel. He asks the Angel his name. The Angel replies that his name is *wonderful*, a term in the Hebrew closely related to one of the titles of Christ given in Isaiah 9:6.

When Manoah realises the Angel's identity, he equates him with God or *Elohim* ("we have seen God!"). Manoah is alarmed when he realises that he has seen the *Elohim* of Israel, the *Angel of HaElohim* (or Angel of The God) face to face since this *Elohim* told Moses that "no man can see my face and live" (Ex. 33:20). The capacity or incapacity to observe this *Elohim*'s face must be dependent upon the degree of power or glory he chooses to display. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and Gideon all saw the Angel face to face, and did not die (though both Jacob and Gideon were alarmed at seeing him). Since Manoah and his wife did not suffer harm, the Angel must have appeared in a non-glorified state, thus permitting the observation of his person.

Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son." ... So the woman came and told her husband saying, "A man of God [*HaElohim*] came to me, and his countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God [*HaElohim*], very awesome; but I did not ask him where he was from, and he did not tell me his name."...

Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, and said, "O my Lord [Heb. *Adonai*, again originally *YHVH*, but one of the 134 places *YHVH* was changed to *Adonai* by the Sopherim], please let the man of God whom you sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born." And God [*HaElohim*] listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God [*HaElohim*] came to the woman again as she was sifting in the field; but Manoah her husband was not with her. Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband ... So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he said, "Are you the man who spoke to this woman?" And he said, "I am."...

Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain you and we will prepare a young goat for you." And the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Though you detain me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the LORD." (For Manoah did not know he was the Angel of the LORD.) Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "What is your name, that when your words come to pass we may honour you?" And the Angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful [Heb. *pele*, related to *pele*, meaning *wonderful*, and used of Christ in Isa. 9:6]?"

So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LORD. And he did a wonderful thing while Manoah and his wife looked on: as the flame went up towards heaven from the altar, it happened that the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground. When the Angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that he was the Angel of the LORD. And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God [Heb. *Elohim*; Manoah knew he had seen an *Elohim* (not *Eloah* whom no man has seen)]!" Then his wife said to him, "If the LORD had desired to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would he have shown us all these things, nor would he have told us such things as these at this time." (Judg. 13:2-23, NKJV)

10. The Angel in the days of the Kings

10.1 David and the Angel

In Samuel the story of Saul and David and of how David fled to the Philistines to escape Saul is recorded. The response of the Philistine Lords stopped David from fighting against Israel. 1 Samuel 29 records how the Philistines gathered all their armies to Aphek and David went up with Achish whom he had served faithfully. The Philistines became angry at his presence and demanded that he withdraw. Achish had argued for his loyalty but was ordered to dispatch David and his men which he did. In the discussion, Achish praises David's goodness and likens him to *an angel of Elohim*. Thus the understanding of the *Mal'ak of Elohim* was known amongst the Gentile nations:

And Achish made answer to David, "I know that you are as blameless in my sight as an angel of God; nevertheless the commanders of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to the battle.'" (1Sam. 29:9, RSV).

In 2 Samuel 14, the story of the widow of Tekoah whose sons fought is given. One slew the other and his life was to be forfeited. Thus her family's inheritance would perish. She appeals to the king and he is likened to a Messenger or Angel of Elohim in verse 17:

"And your handmaid thought, 'The word of my lord the king will set me at rest'; for my lord the king is like the angel of God to discern good and evil. The LORD your God be with you!" (2Sam. 14:17, RSV).

The *Angel of YHVH* is also described in 2Samuel 24:16 f. He appears near the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. David saw that the Angel was destroying the people and so he repented of his sin (of numbering the people) and appealed to YHVH who stopped the destruction. David was commanded through Gad to raise up an altar to *YHVH*.

And when the Angel stretched forth his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented of the evil, and said to the Angel who was working destruction among the people, "It is enough; now stay your hand." And the Angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the Angel who was smiting the people, and said, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand, I pray thee, be against me and against my father's house." And Gad came that day to David, and said to him, "Go up, rear an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." So David went up at Gad's word, as the LORD commanded. (2Sam. 24:16-19, RSV).

In verse 19 the instructions from Gad to David are said to be the instructions of YHVH. However, in the parallel account in 1Chronicles 21:12-30 it is the Angel who tells Gad what to say:

And David lifted his eyes and saw the Angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.

And David said to God, "Was it not I who gave command to number the people? It is I who have sinned and done very wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be against me and against my father's house; but let not the plague be upon thy people."

Then the Angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David that David should go up and rear an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. (1Chron. 21:16-18, RSV).

Thus the YHVH in the account in Samuel in fact expands to reveal that we are dealing with two YHWHs, the *Angel of YHVH* termed *YHVH* and the *YHVH* for whom the sacrifice is to be made. This second YHVH to whom the sacrifice was made must be *YHVH of Hosts*, or *God Almighty*. The object of worship was YHVH as the Supreme YHVH or *YHVH of Hosts* and not the YHVH termed the *Angel of YHVH*.

We also note that in verse 16 the Angel is presented as *standing between earth and heaven*. That is, he is portrayed as *mediator* between men and God. This parallels the role of Christ in the New Testament:

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (1Tim. 2:5, RSV).

10.2 Elijah and the Angel

After Elijah had killed the priests of Baal (1Kings 19), the news was given to Jezebel by Ahab and Jezebel swore to kill Elijah, whereupon Elijah got up and fled for his life. The Angel of YHVH found him and gave him strength to continue on.

And he lay down and slept beneath a certain broom tree; and behold an angel touched him and said to him, Get up, Eat! And he looked, and behold, at his head was cake on burning stones, and a jar of water, and he ate and drank, and turned and lay down. And the Angel of Jehovah returned a second time, and touched him, and said, Get up, eat, for the way is too great for you. And he rose up and ate and drank, and went in the power of that food forty days and forty nights, to the mount of God [*HaElohim*], Horeb. And he came to the cave and lodged there and behold the word of Jehovah [*YHVH*] came to him, and said to him, What are you doing here Elijah? And he said I have been very zealous for Jehovah the God of Hosts, for the sons of Israel have forsaken your covenant; they have thrown down your altars, and they have killed your prophets with the sword, and I am left alone and they seek to take my life. And he said, Go out and stand on the mountain before Jehovah [*YHVH*].

And, behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind [t]earing the mountains and breaking the rocks in bits before Jehovah! Jehovah was not in the wind ... and after the fire came a still small voice. (1Kings 19:5-12, The Interlinear Bible)
The Angel of YHVH appeared and assisted Elijah and Elijah equated the Angel with YHVH. He speaks to a YHVH in the cave, here termed the *Word of YHVH* of how he has been diligent for *YHVH of Hosts* thus distinguishing between the two. The YHVH in the cave tells him to go outside and stand before YHVH, who speaks to him as a still small voice and gives him instructions. Thus, this passage appears to present two YHWHs. Since no man has at anytime heard the voice of *YHVH of Hosts* or *Almighty God* we must be dealing with *The Angel of the Covenant* and a subordinate angel. The Judaic interpretation of the "voice of God" is that it was a Cherub speaking. Given this interpretation regarding the voice of God, we in fact have a *hierarchy* of YHVH spanning three levels.

The alternative explanation is that the same *Angel of YHVH* spoke outside of the cave as well as within. However, that would seem to make the whole exercise rather pointless. The purpose seems to be to demonstrate the structure, plan and authority of the Godhead.

The *Angel of YHVH* again speaks to Elijah in the account in 2 Kings 1:3-4 concerning the messengers of the king of Samaria which he had sent to Baalzebub (The Lord of the Flies), the God of Ekron, to inquire as to whether he would recover from his sickness. The Angel tells Elijah that the king will not survive because he had inquired of the God of Ekron. The Angel spoke conveying the authority of YHVH (i.e. "and therefore says YHVH"):

But the Angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron?' Now therefore thus says the LORD, 'You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone, but you shall surely die.'" So Elijah went. (2Kings. 1:3-4, RSV).

Similarly in verse 15 after fire had come down from heaven and consumed the guards sent to arrest Elijah, the Angel appeared and told Elijah to go with them. Again he speaks on behalf of *YHVH*:

Then the Angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So he arose and went down with him to the king, (2Kings. 1:15, RSV).

10.3 Isaiah and the Angel

When the Assyrian army under Sennacherib invaded Israel and Hezekiah prayed to *YHVH of Hosts* for deliverance, Isaiah was sent to Hezekiah by YHVH. Hezekiah was told that the zeal of *YHVH of Hosts* would deliver them (2Kings 19:31). YHVH stated that:

"Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there, or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it." (2Kings. 19:32, RSV).

That night the *Angel of YHVH* went out and destroyed 185,000 of the Assyrian army and Sennacherib returned home in humiliation only to be assassinated by his sons.

And that night the Angel of the LORD went forth, and slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went home, and dwelt at Nineveh. And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, slew him with the sword, and escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead. (2Kings. 19:35-37, RSV).

The same story is given in Isaiah 37:36 and 2 Chronicles 32:21. In the latter account it is recorded that YHVH (or Yahovah) sent an angel to destroy the Assyrians.

10.4 The Angel Protects Israel

Psalms 34:7 states that the *Angel of YHVH* camps around those who fear him:

The Angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. (Ps. 34:7, RSV).

The concept we are dealing with is, therefore, a Being with a specific responsibility rather than *ad hoc* delegation. However, this is not to say that no other angels were delegated responsibilities with regards to Israel. In Luke 2:9 the term *angel of God* is applied to the angel (*messenger*) which announced the birth of Christ. Thus, other angels aside from the particular *Angel of the Covenant* who was Christ obviously dealt with Israel as YHVH of Hosts or Almighty God determined. Nevertheless it seems clear from the texts examined in earlier sections that the *Angel of the Covenant* was the *Angel of YHVH* or the *Elohim* and *YHVH* who protected Israel. In Psalm 35:5-6 the same concept is presented in that the *Angel of YHVH* is the driving wind against the enemy. He is the pursuer of Israel's enemies. He is a YHVH who is subordinate to YHVH of Hosts:

Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the Angel of the LORD [*YHVH*] driving them on! Let their way be dark and slippery, with the Angel of the LORD pursuing them! (Ps. 35:5-6, RSV).

11. Other References to the Angel

11.1 The Angel as a part of everyday life In Israel

From the passages quoted in previous sections it is apparent that the understanding of the *Angel of YHVH* or *Angel of Elohim* was a part of everyday life in Israel. He was the *Elohim* of Israel, anointed above his companions by his superior *Elohim* who was God, the Father, *YHVH of Hosts*, and *El Shadday*:

Your divine throne endures for ever and ever. Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity; you love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows; (Ps. 45:6-7, RSV).

David also understood him as his *Lord* or *Adonai*:

A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool." (Ps. 110:1, RSV).

Both these passages were used of Christ in the New Testament (Heb. 1:8-9; Mat. 22:42-45), the clear implication being that Israel understood the hierarchical relationship in the Godhead; that their *Elohim* and *YHVH* was in a subordinate relationship to his *Elohim* and *YHVH* who was the *Most High God*.

Solomon cautioned the people against disobedience against the *Angel of Elohim* when going to the House of God:

Go circumspectly when you visit the house of God. Better draw near in obedience than offer the sacrifice of fools, who sin without a thought. Do not be impulsive in speech, nor be guilty of hasty utterance in God's presence. God is in heaven and you are on earth so let your words be few ... Do not let your tongue lead you into sin, and then say before the Angel of God that it was unintentional, or God will be angry at your words, and all your achievements will be brought to nothing. (Eccl. 5:1-6, REB)

Notice how being in God's house before the Angel of God was to be in God's presence (because the Angel carried the authority of God) *even though* God is said to be in heaven.

11.2 The Angel in Daniel

The *Mal'ak of God* or *Angel of God* preserved the lives of the Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they were thrust into the fiery furnace for refusing to fall down and worship any other than the Most High God:

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He said to his counsellors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered the king, "True, O king." He answered, "But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods." (Dan. 3:24-25, RSV).

Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his Angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set at nought the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God." (Dan. 3:28, RSV).

The Angel also came and preserved Daniel's life when he was thrust into the lions den:

When he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish and said to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live for ever! My God sent his Angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong." (Dan. 6:20-22, RSV)

11.3 The Angel in Zechariah

Throughout Zechariah the Angel of *YHVH* is mentioned. He is frequently referred to as *YHVH* but always distinguished from *YHVH* of Hosts. We are introduced to him in Zechariah 1. In a vision at night Zechariah sees four horses with riders near some trees. He also sees both the Angel of *YHVH* (referred to as a Man on a red horse) and an interpreting angel (also referred to in 1:9,13-14; 2:3; 4:1,4-5; 5:5,10; 6:4-5). In verse 9 he asks the interpreting angel about the horses and their riders. The interpreting angel says he will explain and in verse 10 the Man among the trees answers the interpreting angel. In verse 11 this Man is identified as the Angel of *YHVH*; he speaks with the riders of the other horses and then calls upon *YHVH* of Hosts for an answer concerning Judah's captivity for 70 years.

I saw in the night, and behold, a Man riding upon a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen; and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. Then I said, "What are these, my lord?" The angel who talked with me said to me, "I will show you what they are." So the Man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, "These are they whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth." And they answered the Angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, "We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest." Then the Angel of the LORD said, "O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these seventy years?" (Zech. 1:8-12, RSV). (Note capitalisation introduced as per Amplified Bible.)

In verses 13-17 *YHVH* responds to the interpreting angel who speaks to Zechariah. The message is that *YHVH* of Hosts will again choose Jerusalem and his house will be built there. In verse 18 Zechariah sees four horns. He asks the interpreting angel for the meaning of these. In verse 19 the angel replies. In verses 20-21 the interpreting angel, now termed *YHVH* shows him four craftsmen who are going to deal with the horns (the powers which scattered Judah and Israel). This example shows that *mal'ak* other than the singular *Mal'ak* of *YHVH* also took the title *YHVH* because they represented *YHVH* and hence carried his name:

And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four horns! And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these?" And he answered me, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." Then the LORD [*YHVH*] showed me four smiths. And I said, "What are these coming to do?" He answered, "These are the horns which scattered Judah, so that no man raised his head; and these have come to terrify them, to cast down the horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter it." (Zech. 1:18-21, RSV).

In Chapter 2 Zechariah receives a message from another angel (possibly the Angel of *YHVH* - the text is unclear) about how *YHVH* is coming again to dwell in Jerusalem. This passage is quite remarkable as *YHVH* speaks saying that he has been sent by *YHVH* of Hosts, thus indicating a plurality of *YHWHs*, one subordinate to the other:

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come and I will dwell in the midst of you, says the LORD. And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of you, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. (Zech. 2:10-11, RSV).

In Zechariah 3:1-9 the Angel is portrayed as Judge. A court scene is presented where Joshua the High Priest stands before the Angel with Satan as the Accuser. The Angel, termed *YHVH* passes judgment calling on *YHVH* in the third person or *YHVH* of Hosts to rebuke Satan:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the LORD [YHVH] said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" Now Joshua was standing before the Angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the Angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with rich apparel." And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments; and the Angel of the LORD was standing by. And the Angel of the LORD enjoined Joshua, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men of good omen: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. For behold, upon the stone which I have set before Joshua, upon a single stone with seven facets, I will engrave its inscription, says the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day." (RSV).

In verse 3 the Angel (termed YHVH) does not rebuke Satan directly, but calls on YHVH, who must be *God Most High* to rebuke Satan. This parallels the account of Michael calling on the Lord (*Kurios* in the Greek, corresponding to *Adonai* or YHVH in Hebrew) to rebuke Satan as recorded in Jude 9:

But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." (RSV).

Notably, the Angel of YHVH is equated to God [*Elohim*] in Zechariah 12:8:

On that day the LORD will put a shield about the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD, at their head. (RSV).

This passage conveys several concepts. Firstly, the Angel of YHVH is at their head; that is, he goes before Judah (and Israel) in battle - this parallels Christ as the Captain of our salvation:

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (Heb. 2:10, KJV).

Secondly, we see that at Messiah's coming (for the passage is Messianic) the house of David shall be like *Elohim*, and *the Angel of YHVH*; that is, humans are to be counted in the ranks of the *Elohim* and angels of YHVH. Thirdly, this passage prophetically identifies the lineage the Angel of YHVH would adopt as Messiah, namely the house of David. Christ of course was of the house of David. In Micah's account of the coming of Messiah it is said that his origin is from old, from ancient days. He is said to stand in the strength of YHVH, of YHVH his *Elohim*. Thus, Messiah has a superior YHVH and *Elohim* who anoints him with authority:

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in travail has brought forth; then the rest of his brethren shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD [YHVH], in the majesty of the name of the LORD [YHVH] his God [*Elohim*]. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. (Mic. 5:2-4, RSV).

12. Summary

The Bible clearly and unambiguously teaches that there is *only one true God*. Jesus identified this Being as his Father (Jn. 17:1-3). He is known by numerous names and titles including *the Most High*, *El Shadday* or *Almighty God*, *YHVH of Hosts*, *YHVH*, *Eloah*, *Elohim*, *HaElohim*, and so forth. He alone is immortal and holy. He is the object of worship of the New Testament (Jn. 4:21-24) and was the object of the worship of Old Testament Israel (Ex. 20:2-3). As the Most High God, He was the God of Israel (e.g. Deut. 32:8; 2Sam. 22:14; Ps. 7:17; 9:2; 21:7; 46:4; 47:2; 50:14; 56:2; 57:2; 73:11; 77:10; 78:17,56; 83:18; 91:1,9; 92:1,8; 107:11). The Bible also teaches that the one true God is invisible, and no man, *at any time*, has ever seen Him or heard His voice, but that He has chosen to reveal Himself to humans through supernatural messengers termed *mal'ak* or *angels*. In Hebrew, the name for God in the singular is *Eloah*, and this term properly belongs only to the one true God. However, there is a derivative form of this word which is *Elohim*. This term *Elohim* is in the plural and embraces *all* the beings of the spirit realm, from the Most High God, to His messengers or angels, and even fallen angels. It has also included humans in specific instances. The term *Elohim* is applied to any who represent *Eloah*. Because they carry his authority they therefore carry this derivative form of his name. At times the one *Elohim* who is *Eloah* is differentiated in the Hebrew from other *Elohim* by the addition of the prefix *Ha* to *Elohim*, meaning *The God*.

A similar application is made for *YHVH of Hosts* which is another title of the one true God. Beings which represent YHVH of Hosts are frequently termed *YHVH* themselves for they carry His authority and hence His name. At times YHVH of Hosts is also referred to as *YHVH* without any additional distinctive term being added to this name.

Of greatest interest to us is the singular *Mal'ak of YHVH* or *Angel of YHVH* who most frequently dealt with humans and who was assigned the specific function of being Israel's *Elohim* (representing *Eloah* who was the object of Israel's worship). A careful comparison of the accounts of the appearances and dealings of this Mal'ak with the patriarchs and Israel indicate that he was none other than the one we know as Jesus Christ *prior* to his incarnation.

In the Old Testament, Christ as the Mal'ak of YHVH performed the same functions as he does in the New Testament. He acted as the revealer of *Eloah's* will. He shared in the divine nature of *Eloah*, and perfectly reflected *Eloah's* nature and character. As the mediator between God and man, to see him was to see *Eloah*; to hear him was to hear *Eloah*. The words he spoke were not his own, but *Eloah's*.

When men and women of the Old Testament thought of God, they thought of *Eloah* or *YHVH of Hosts*, recognising that He revealed Himself to them through His *Mal'ak* or Angel whom they also termed *Elohim*. When the Angel was present with them, YHVH of Hosts was present. The actions and words of the Angel were the actions and words of YHVH of Hosts. The could address him as their Adonai, Elohim, and YHVH, knowing that he had an Adonai, Elohim, and YHVH over him.

When we read of YHVH acting in the first person, we are reading of the Angel of YHVH perfectly implementing the will of YHVH of Hosts. When we read of YHVH distinguished from His Angel, we are being reminded that YHVH does work through a mediator as He deals with humanity.

Thus, there is coherency and unity between the Old and New Testaments. God the Father is the one true God of both collections of Scripture. Christ is His mediator, and agent of redemption, the one who reveals His will to humanity. Hence we can perceive more fully the implications of John's statement in John 1:18:

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son [Marshall's RSV Interlinear, *only begotten* (Gk. *monogenes* meaning *only-born*) God], who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared [him].

Appendix 1 -- Was Christ the Son of God before his human birth?

The notion stated near the beginning of this paper that God the Father was not the Father before Christ's incarnation, and that the pre-existent Christ was not the (or a) Son before his birth is without biblical support. God the Father's fatherhood in the New Testament is *predicated upon* His role as a father in the Old Testament. Numerous passages in the Old Testament indicate that the fatherhood of God was well understood by Israel *prior to* Christ's coming:

For thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; thou, O LORD, art our Father, our Redeemer from of old is thy name. (Isa. 63:16, RSV).

Yet, O LORD, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou art our potter; we are all the work of thy hand. (Isa. 64:8, RSV).

A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. You say, "How have we despised thy name?" (Mal. 1:6, RSV).

Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers? (Mal. 2:10, RSV).

The often quoted passage dealing with the relationship of Christians to God the Father in 2Corinthians 6:16-18:

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (RSV).

is a composite quote from Jeremiah 31:1,9 and Isaiah 43:6 and elsewhere dealing with the fatherhood of God:

"At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people." (Jer. 31:1, RSV).

With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born. (Jer. 31:9, RSV).

I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, (Isa. 43:6, RSV).

Further, not only was the fatherhood of God the Father known to Israel, the fact that he had *supernatural* sons was also well known:

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. (Job 1:6, RSV). (See also Job 2:1)

Here even Satan is counted as one of the sons of God. Some of the other passages dealing with the sons of God include:

When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:7, RSV).

A Psalm of David. Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings [Heb. *bene elim* - i.e. *sons of God*], ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. (Ps. 29:1, RSV).

For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings [Heb. *bene elim* - i.e. *sons of God*] is like the LORD, (Ps. 89:6, RSV).

All angels (remember *angel* comes from *mal'ak* and simply means *messenger*) are *sons of God* but additional evidence in the Bible indicates that they were a particular class of angels. In the New Testament the term *Kyrios* or *Lord* is used of the same class of angels to which Christ belongs (see Appendix 5). It appears that the term *sons of God* is used of the *general* class of angels. Humans in the resurrection will be ranked among the sons of God:

For they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. (Lk. 20:36, RSV).

The term *equal to angels* is from the Greek *isaggelos* which is a compound word derived from *isos* meaning *equal, in quantity or quality* and *aggelos* meaning *angel*. The meaning is that Christians in the resurrection will be ranked as sons of God -- this being one of the classes of the angels.

Not only was God, the Father, known as a father to ancient Israel, and not only was it known that He had numerous supernatural sons, it was also understood that He had a particular son who was referred to in the singular:

Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his Son's name? Surely you know! Every word of God [*Eloah*] proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. (Prov. 30:4-5, RSV).

This Son is referred to prophetically in other places:

I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Ps. 2:7-9, RSV).

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. (Hos. 11:1, RSV). (Applied to Christ in Mat. 2:15)

Psalm 2:7-9 is quoted in the New Testament in Acts 13:33 in relation to Christ's resurrection, the concept being that he was brought to birth in his resurrection to be God's King of the nations. This idea is echoed in Romans 1:4 where we read:

And designated [Gk. *horizo* meaning *ordained, appointed, marked out*] Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, (RSV).

Several interrelated concepts are involved in these passages just given. Christ was a Son of God before his human birth. As a human he was, additionally, the Son of God given that God had fathered him through Mary. However, in the resurrection he was set forth as the *Messianic* or *Kingly* Son of God who is to rule all nations.

Summary

Without a doubt Christ was the Son of God before his coming in flesh. Along with many other supernatural sons, including his *partners* (Heb. 1:9, Ps. 45:7), God was his Father. Further, the fatherhood of God in Ancient Israel was understood from numerous passages and it is upon these passages that the understanding of God's fatherhood of Christians in the New Testament is predicated.

To conclude, here is a discussion on the supernatural sons of God as presented in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1988 edition. The information is taken from the article "Sons of God (OT)", Volume IV, page 584:

SONS OF GOD (OT) [Heb. *bene (ha) elohim, bene elim*] Divine beings. Just as "sons of man" means human beings in Hebrew, so "sons of God" means divine beings, i.e., gods. In Canaanite religion and myth, the term "sons of God" or "sons of the gods" referred to the gods in general. They were the deities of the pantheon who convened to render decisions regarding the governance of the world. Ugaritic mythological texts, e.g., call this divine council the assembly of the sons of god" (or "of 'El," the chief god). The survival of this idea in Canaanite tradition is illustrated by a reference to "all the sons of the gods" in a Phoenician incantation of the 7th cent. BC found at Arslan Tash in northern Syria.

The same usage occurs, at least vestigially, in certain passages in the Hebrew Bible. Dt. 32:8 says that "When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of men, he fixed the bound of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God" (so RSV, NEB; the MT erroneously has "sons of Israel" [*bene yishra'el*], but the versions [e.g. LXX, Symm., Old Latin] and a scroll from Qumran support the reading "sons of God" [*bene elim*]). In other words, the Most High assigned one of the peoples of the world to each of the divine beings in the council. As v.9 indicates, Yahweh's portion was Israel. The original notion seems to have been that Yahweh, God of Israel, stood alongside the other national gods in a council presided over by the Most High. But those who included this old poem in Deuteronomy understood Yahweh and the Most High to be identical, as they are elsewhere in the Bible (e.g. Ps. 83:18 [MT 19]), and the sons of God to be subordinate, angelic beings. Thus Yahweh distributed the other nations to His angels, keeping Israel for himself (cf. Sir. 17:17).

[Clearly the author of this article does not understand the concepts of YHVH of Hosts, the Malak of YHVH and YHVH as a distributed title.]

The sons of god appear in other poetic passages, all of which have an archaic character. Job 38:7, e.g., identifies them with "the morning stars" and recalls that they shouted their acclamation at Yahweh's creation of the earth. Ps. 29:1 calls upon the "sons of God" (Heb. *bene elim*; RSV "heavenly beings") to praise Yahweh. Ps. 82:1 describes Yahweh as rising in the midst of the gods - i.e., "in the divine council" (lit. "council of 'El") - to pass judgment on the other gods. Verses 6f. say, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like men." Ps. 89:6 (MT 7) is an assertion of Yahweh's incomparability: "Who among the heavenly beings [*bene elim*] is like the Lord ..." (cf. Ex. 15:11). Again, the original intent of these passages may have been to present Yahweh as one deity (albeit the greatest and the only just deity) alongside others in the divine council. But the passages were preserved because they can be understood in the light of the general biblical idea of a council of subordinate divine beings ("messengers" or angels") ruled by Yahweh (on Ps. 82 see esp. G. E. Wright, *OT Against its Environment* [SBT, 1/2; 1950], pp. 30-41).

The prologue to Job reflects this more usual biblical notion of subordinate divine beings. Job 1:6 and 2:1 refer to "a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord." In this case the sons of God are angelic beings who carry out Yahweh's will on earth and report to Him in His heavenly council. The relatively independent figure of "the adversary" (*hassatan*, RSV "Satan") in this context anticipates later developments in the Judeo-Christian tradition according to which SATAN or Lucifer and his fellow angels were viewed as having sufficient autonomy to rebel against God.

For "sons of God" in Gen. 6:2,4 see NEPHILIM.

See also CHILDREN OF GOD 1. P. K. McCARTER, JR.

Appendix 2 -- Christ and Melchisedek

Many people have speculated about the identity of Melchisedek, the priest of the Most High God who met Abraham when he returned from the battle of the kings. The Essenes believed that Melchisedek was a heavenly being and identified him as both the arch-angel Michael and as Messiah. In more recent times, commentators both within and without the various Churches of God have frequently taken a similar view, identifying Melchisedek as Christ (prior to his incarnation as Jesus in the first century). Some have used the description of Melchisedek in Hebrews 7 not only to connect him to Christ but also as support for the co-eternality of Christ with God; that is, as support for a Ditheistic or Binitarian model of the Godhead.

The identification of Melchisedek with Christ stems from the following verses:

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. (vv. 2-3, KJV)

And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. (v. 8, KJV)

For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek. (v. 17, KJV)

The argument is constructed from several points:

Melchisedek is said to be "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life."

Further it is "witnessed that he lives". Thus it is claimed that since only an eternal being could be without father and mother, without descent and beginning of days and end of life, Melchisedek must in fact be God, as one of a Ditheistic Godhead.

Melchisedek is said to be "made like unto the Son of God". That is, he was not originally the Son of God but *made into* the Son of God when he was incarnated as Jesus Christ.

Melchisedek is said to "abideth a priest continually" and yet Christ is also a "priest for ever". Since there can be only one High Priest before God, Melchisedek and Christ must be one and the same being or person.

Unfortunately, this argument is superficial in the extreme. Not only does it misapply the intent of the passages, it also is flatly contradicted by other verses within the same chapter. For example, verse 11 and verse 15 clearly state that Christ arose as *another* priest *after the order and likeness* of Melchisedek:

Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchisedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? (v. 11, RSV)

This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchisedek, (v. 15, RSV)

A careful study of this chapter is necessary in order to understand what the author of Hebrews intended. The overall purpose of the chapter is to explain that for Christians, the Levitical priesthood had come to an end. In Christ, Christians are made into a nation of kings and priests:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1Pet. 2:9, RSV).

And made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Rev. 1:6, RSV).

Whereas the priesthood in Israel was based on lineage (a priest needed to be a Levite and a descendent of Aaron) and physical characteristics (only men could be priests and they had to be without physical defect or blemish, Lev. 21:21), the new spiritual priesthood knows neither lineage, sex nor physical perfection (Gal. 3:26-28). It is a priesthood based on *grace* (God's free gift), and *merit* (faith demonstrated by willing obedience).

In order to explain this transition of the priesthood from the Levitical pattern to the spiritual pattern under Christ, the writer draws on the example of Melchisedek in the Old Testament to *type* the new priesthood of Christ (in which Christians may share). Melchisedek he explains, was the priest of God long before Levi or Aaron was born (vv. 1-2,9-10). The writer then notes of Melchisedek that:

He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life (v. 3, RSV)

The concept here is not that Melchisedek did not have a literal father or mother or genealogy, but rather there is no record of his parents and lineage. Melchisedek is simply introduced to us in Genesis 14:18-20 as the priest of God Most High. Aspirants to the Levitical priesthood had to be able to demonstrate their parentage and lineage. In Nehemiah 7:64, when the priesthood was being re-formed after the Babylonian captivity, the priests had to be able to demonstrate their pedigrees; those who were unable were set aside from the priesthood:

These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean; (Neh. 7:64, RSV).

Christ, the Son of God, most definitely does have a father and a mother and genealogy. These things are given in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38. So the comparison is not to literal parents and literal descent. Rather, like Melchisedek, Christ cannot demonstrate a lineage back to Aaron and Levi:

For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchisedek, who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent ... (vv. 14-16, RSV)

The phrases *neither beginning of days nor end of life* are a reference to the restriction of years placed upon those which would serve in the Levitical priesthood. From Numbers 4:47 we see that ordinary priests were to begin their service at 30 years and end it at 50 years. In the case of the High Priest, his tenure of service ended at his death. Melchisedek, on the other hand, is simply presented to us in the capacity of priest of the Most High. The Bible is silent as to when he began his service and how it ended. In this Melchisedek is a fitting type of Christ (and those who participate in his priesthood). There are no "age restrictions" on Christ's capacity to serve as High Priest, and neither will it come to an end now that he has been resurrected to eternal life.

Hebrews 7:3 continues with:

but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever. (RSV)

There are two points to note about this passage. Firstly, the word translated *resembling* in the RSV, or *made like* in the KJV is from the Greek *aphomoiomenos*. The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon shows that it has the meanings of *to cause a model to*

pass off into an image or shape like it; to express itself in it, to copy; to produce a facsimile; and to be made like, render similar. It always signifies two things (be they people, or objects), one resembling the other in either a figurative or literal sense. So, Melchisedek and Christ *must* be distinct and separate entities. They cannot be the same being simply by the function of the Greek verb employed to describe the comparison which is made between them.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 3, p. 313, article "Melchisedek" says: Some have thought that Melchisedek was a Christophany [i.e. a manifestation of Christ] rather than a historical character and thus understood vv. 2b-3 literally rather than typologically. A major objection to such an interpretation is the statement that Melchisedek resembled (Gk. *aphomoiomenos*) the Son of God (v. 3). The verb *aphomoiōo* always assumes two distinct and separate identities, one which is a copy of the other. Thus Melchisedek and the Son of God are represented as two separate persons, the first of which resembled the second.

The second point concerns *he continues a priest forever*. Superficially one might conclude Melchisedek is still alive and still occupying the office of priest to the Most High. This is not what is intended. The author of Hebrews was clearly a Jew (tradition says that he was Paul) and familiar with the Temple service and rabbinical discussion. In rabbinical logic and argumentation, statements could be made which effectively were "arguments from silence". If the Bible didn't say anything specifically about a person, place or incident, various conclusions could be drawn for the sake of the argument or discourse being presented. In this case, the writer of Hebrews is in effect saying, "since the Bible is silent about the death of Melchisedek we can figuratively say that he is alive and continues in the office of priest to God Most High, and in this he is a fitting type of the High Priesthood of the Son of God." *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* comments:

The argument of He. 7 is similar to the rabbinic argument from silence, which assumed that nothing exists unless Scripture mentions it. (Vol 3, p. 313, article *Melchisedek*).

Conybeare and Howson, in their *The Life and Epistles of Paul* note in reference to Hebrews 7:4 that:

Here, as in the previous 'without father' and 'without mother,' the *silence* of Scripture is interpreted allegorically. Scripture mentions neither the father nor mother, neither the birth nor death of Melchisedec.

The later comment in verse 8 of:

And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. (RSV)

is made in the same vein. By using this form of "argument from silence" the writer can appropriately point to Melchisedek as a fitting type of Christ who does hold his priesthood forever:

The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. (vv. 23-26, RSV).

Lastly, it is worth noting that Melchisedek is termed a *man* and that he has a descent, but not counted from Levi:

But this man who has not their genealogy received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. (Heb. 7:6, RSV).

A few points from philosophy

Just as an aside from the biblical texts, there would be serious philosophical problems if Melchisedek was really Christ. Melchisedek lived in Salem and was its priest-king. If he were Christ in an earlier incarnation we would have to ask:

- * When was he born? Who was his mother? When and how did he die?
- * Was he a sacrifice for sin then? If so, then how? If not, then why not?
- * Why is so little detail given on what would have been a most significant event (Christ's living among men in flesh in the days of Abraham)?
- * If he did live among men, then what was the purpose of his second appearing in the first century?
- * How could Christ be a priest *after the order of* Melchisedek if he was Melchisedek and, in effect, established the Melchisedek priesthood? Aaron was not high priest after the order of Aaron, he *was* the source of the Aaronic priesthood.
- * How could Christ be *made, exalted, and appointed* (Heb. 5:5) to high priest if he were already high priest before his incarnation? Did he lose that status? If so, why, and where does the Bible explain this?

Conclusion

Clearly, from Bible statements, from the original Greek, from rabbinical forms of argument, and from philosophy and logic, the notion that Melchisedek was Christ before his incarnation in the first century *must* be rejected. Melchisedek was a priest of the Most High God who lived in the days of Abraham as the priest-king of Salem. Very little is known about him other than he obviously was not a descendent of Levi or Aaron and was appointed to the office of priest by God and not by legal requirements. As such, he is a fitting type for the new spiritual priesthood of Christ and his spiritual brethren whom he has redeemed to be a nation of kings and priests to his God and Father:

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth." (Rev. 5:9-10, RSV).

Appendix 3 -- The Exaltation of Messiah and his Titles

In the New Testament, Christ is accorded numerous titles: e.g. *Son of Man; Son of God; The Chosen [One], The Prophet; King of Kings and Lord of Lords; Faithful and True; The Way, The Truth and The Life; Saviour; Redeemer; The Christ; Master; Firstborn; Emmanuel; Lord; Alpha and Omega; The First and the Last; The Good Shepherd;* and so forth. Because some of these

titles overlap with titles ascribed to Almighty God, many have misconstrued the intent and believed that Christ is somehow God as God is God, being part of a Trinitarian, Binitarian or Ditheistic Godhead.

This is not the case. These titles given to Christ all convey the concept of *delegated authority*, even as the Mal'ak of YHVH was termed *YHVH*, and *Elohim* because he represented *YHVH of Hosts* and *Eloah*. We now examine the theme of Christ's exaltation and thus his acquisition of titles.

In Hebrews 1:4-6 we read:

Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. (Heb. 1:4-6, KJV)

Christ, *by inheritance*, has obtained a more excellent name than the (rest of the) angels. If the functions of language mean anything, then this shows us that at one time Christ did not have this more excellent name. Further, he was *made better than* (that is, exalted above) the angels. The concept is expanded upon in verse 9:

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. (Heb. 1:9, KJV).

Christ was exalted above his fellows, variously translated comrades, companions, partners, etc. Thus, Christ has partners but was exalted to a status above them so that they now do homage to him:

And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship [*proskuneo*] him. (Heb. 1:6, KJV).

(See discussion in Appendix 6 for an explanation of *proskuneo*.) The argument here is *not* that Christ was never an angel (or *elohim*) - he clearly was from what is covered in the main text of this paper. What is being explained is that God never appointed an angel (or *elohim*) to be Messiah, but rather required one who *divested* himself of his authority and power to become a man of the house of David and who died as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity, and who was then resurrected, to be appointed Messiah. That is, to adequately perform the functions and roles of Messiah as both Priest and King, Messiah needed to experience the *human condition*. (cf. Heb. 2:15-18).

Christ, through his willing self-abasement to become a man and die a horrible death, *qualified* to be the Messiah of humanity. He was then resurrected to glory (which is what the phrase "Thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee" signifies - cf. Ps. 2:7-8; Acts 13:33). In this way he was made *so much better* than the rest of the *Elohim*. The intention of the author in this chapter is to point to the exaltation of Christ. The purpose is not to claim that Christ was never a part of the *Elohim*, for he clearly was and clearly had partners over whom he was exalted.

The same theme is encountered in Philippians 2:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (vv. 5-11, RSV).

Christ was in the form of God prior to his incarnation - as were all the *elohim* of God -- but he did not grasp at equality with God. The term *grasp* in the Greek is *harpagmos* and means *the act of seizing, robbery, a thing seized or to be seized, booty, to deem anything a prize*. It derives from *harpazo* which means *to seize, carry off by force*. The word is in the active voice and the intention is that Christ did not attempt to seize at equality with God. He did not try to make himself equal with by force. Paul is contrasting the mind of Christ with the attitudes and actions of Lucifer who did try to exalt himself to the position of Most High:

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.'" (Isa. 14:12-14, RSV).

Because of Christ's willing self-abasement, God has now exalted him to the position of "Vice Regent" (cf. Rev. 3:21). He acts on behalf of God who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1Tim. 6:16) and thus carries this name and title:

From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords. (Rev. 19:15-16, RSV).

This is Christ's new name:

He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and **my own new name**. (Rev. 3:12, RSV).

If Christ were God as God is God in a Trinitarian, Binitarian or Ditheistic Godhead then this concept of Christ's exaltation and acquirement of a new name and other titles *by inheritance* becomes incomprehensible. We would have to ask, did Christ at some time not have these names? If so, how then could he be God? If he did have them, how then could he acquire what he already had by inheritance. How could he be exalted above his partners if he was already above his partners? He acquired these names by faithful obedience. How can this be understood if he were already Almighty God and had these names by virtue of being God?

Clearly, the concept of Christ's exaltation and his inheriting the names of the offices and functions he performs render the Trinitarian, Binitarian and Ditheistic paradigms absurd.

Appendix 4 -- Commentaries on the Angel of YHVH

Many commentators have noted the appearance of the Angel of YHVH and his close relationship to YHVH. These are the comments by the editors of *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* - article *angel*, page 5:

Third, and most significant, are the phrases *mal'ak Yahweh*, "The angel of the Lord," and *mal'ak elohim*, "the angel of God" [or "the Angel of the Gods"]. The phrase is always used in the singular. It denotes an angel who had mainly a saving and protective function: "For mine angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off" (Exod. 23:23). He might also bring about destruction: "And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces" (1Chron. 21:16).

The relation between the Lord and the "angel of the Lord" is often so close that it is difficult to separate the two (Gen. 16:7ff; 21:17ff; 22:11ff; 31:11ff; Exod. 3:2ff; Judg. 6:11ff; 13:21f). This identification has led some interpreters to conclude that the "angel of the Lord" was the preincarnate Christ.

In Aquila's translation, *Elohim* was translated as *the Gods* as Augustine notes.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, is very cautious in its appraisal, most probably because the commentators are operating from an erroneous trinitarian position. If Christ were truly the Angel of YHVH then the trinitarian paradigm is rendered absurd. Regardless, in the article *Angel*, on page 125 of Volume 1, we read:

C. Angel of the Theophany. This angel is spoken of as "the angel of the Lord," and the "the angel of the presence [or face] of the Lord." The following passages contain references to this angel:

[cites omitted as covered in previous sections]

A study of these passages shows that while the angel and Yahweh are at times distinguished from each other, they are with equal frequency, and in the same passages, merged into each other. How is this to be explained? It is obvious that these apparitions cannot be the Almighty Himself, whom no man has seen, or can see. In seeking the explanation, special attention should be paid to two of the passages cited above. In Ex. 23:20ff, God promises to send an angel before his people to lead them to the Promised Land; they are commanded to obey him and not to provoke him, "For he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him." Thus the angel can forgive sin, which only God can do, because God's name, i.e., His character and thus His authority, are in the angel. Further, in the passage Ex. 32:34-33:17 Moses intercedes for the people after their first breach of the covenant; God responds by promising, "Behold, my angel shall go up before you"; and immediately after God says, "I will not go up among you." In answer to further pleading, God says, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Here a clear distinction is made between an ordinary angel and the angel who carries with him God's presence. The conclusion may be summed up in the words of A. B. Davidson in his *OT Theology* (1904): "In particular providences one may trace the presence of Jehovah in influence and operation; in ordinary angelic appearances one may discover Jehovah present on some side of His being, in some attribute of His character; in the angel of the Lord He is fully present as the covenant God of His people, to redeem them."

The question still remains, Who is the theophanic angel? To this many answers have been given, of which the following may be mentioned: (1) This angel is simply an angel with a special commission; (2) he may be a momentary descent of God into visibility; (3) he may be the Logos, a kind of temporary preincarnation of the second person of the Trinity. Each has its difficulties, but the last is certainly the most tempting to the mind. Yet it must be remembered that at best these are only conjectures that touch on a great mystery. It is certain that from the beginning God used angels in human form, with human voices, in order to communicate with man; and the appearances of the angel of the Lord, with his special redemptive relation to God's people, show the working of that divine mode of self-revelation which culminated in the coming of the Saviour, and are thus a foreshadowing of, and a preparation for, the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Further than this it is not safe to go.

However, the translators of The Amplified Bible, also Trinitarians, are far more open in admitting the identity of the Angel of YHVH. Here is a selection of their comments included:

"The Angel of the Lord" or "of God," or "of His presence" is readily identified with the Lord God (Gen. 16:11,13; 22:11,12; 31:11,13; Exod. 3:1-6 and other passages). But it is obvious that the "Angel of the Lord" is a distinct person Himself from God the Father (Gen 24:7; Exod. 23:20; Zech. 1:12,13 and other passages). Nor does the "Angel of the Lord" appear again after Christ came in human form. He must of necessity be One of the "three-in-one" Godhead. The "Angel of the Lord" is the visible Lord God of the Old Testament, as Jesus Christ is of the New Testament. Thus His deity is clearly portrayed in the Old Testament. *The Cambridge Bible* observes, "There is a fascinating forecast of the coming Messiah, breaking through the dimness with amazing consistency, at intervals from Genesis to Malachi. Abraham, Moses, the slave girl Hagar, the impoverished farmer Gideon, even the humble parents of Samson, had seen and talked with Him centuries before the herald angels proclaimed His birth in Bethlehem." (footnote to Gen. 16:7)

This is God Himself (as Jacob eventually realizes in Gen. 32:30) in the form of an angel. (footnote to Gen. 32:29)

[Jacob] died at 147, having said, "The redeeming Angel [that is, the Angel the Redeemer] ... has redeemed me continually from every evil" (Gen. 48:16). (footnote to Gen. 47:9)

The "Angel of the Lord" is here identified as Christ Himself. (footnote to Gen. 48:16)

In this report of Moses and the burning bush, "the Angel of the Lord" is identified as the Lord Himself. See especially Exod. 3:4,6. See also the footnote on Gen. 16:7. (footnote to Exod. 3:2)

See footnote on Gen. 16:7; here the "Angel of God" is associated with the cloud (Exod. 13:21). (footnote to Exod. 14:19)

That the Angel of the Lord is an uncreated angel distinguished from other angels, and in many places identified with the Lord God, is undeniable. On the other hand there are passages in which He seems to be distinguished from God the Father. The simplest way of reconciling these two classes is to adopt the old view that this Angel is Christ, the second person of the Godhead, even at that early period appearing as the Revealer of the Father (Johan P. Lange, *A Commentary*). See also the footnote on Gen 16:7. (footnote to Zech. 1:11)

The last footnote asserts that it is possible to distinguish between created and uncreated angels. There is no biblical basis for this position. It is, clearly, simply an assertion made to support belief in the Trinity.

Lastly, it is worth noting the comments of Vincent in his *Word Studies in the New Testament* about the use of the term *logos*:

The word [logos] here points directly to Gen. 1, where the act of creation is effected by God speaking (compare Ps. xxxiii. 6). The idea of God, who is in his own nature hidden, revealing himself in creation, is the root of the Logos-idea, in contrast with all materialistic or pantheistic conceptions of creation. This idea develops itself in the Old Testament on three lines. ...

(3) *The Angel of Jehovah*. The messenger of God who serves as His agent in the world of sense, and is sometimes distinguished from Jehovah and sometimes identical with him ...

After the Babylonian captivity the Jewish doctors combined into one view the theophanies, prophetic revelations and manifestations of Jehovah generally, and united them in one single conception, that of a permanent agent of Jehovah in the sensible world, whom they designated by the name *Memra (word) of Jehovah*. The learned Jews introduced the idea into the Targums, or Aramaean paraphrases of the Old Testament, which were publicly read in the synagogues, substituting the name *the word of Jehovah* for that of Jehovah, each time God manifested himself. Thus in Gen. xxxix. 21 [39:21], they paraphrase, "The Memra was with Joseph in prison." In Ps. cx. [110] Jehovah addresses the first verse to the Memra. The Memra is the angel that destroyed the first-born of Egypt, and it was the Memra that led the Israelites in the cloudy pillar. (pp. 26-28)

When John wrote about the *Logos* in the prologue of his gospel (Jn. 1:1-18) he was using a Greek term used to translate *Memra*, which was understood as a Theophany (that is, a manifestation of God) necessarily carrying the name of God and hence His authority. Rendering *Logos* by the English term *Word* as is commonly found in English Bibles, is an unfortunate simplification of this concept. To call Christ the *Logos* of God was the equivalent (in Greek terms) of identifying him as the *Memra* of God or *Angel of YHVH*.

Appendix 5 -- Early Church views on Angels and Christ

The early Church did not develop in a vacuum. The earliest Christians came out of backgrounds and cultural expectations which necessarily gave them a particular *worldview* of the Hebrew Scriptures and their significance. We can gain some idea of what this worldview was like by comparing the New Testament with other literature of the day, such as the *Apocalypse of Enoch*. In this book, the term *Son of Man* is used to describe a heavenly being subordinate to God, and in fact, one of the angels:

I saw there him who had the head of one of great age, and his head as white as wool [i.e. *God*]; with him was another, whose countenance was full of grace, as one of the holy angels (Enoch 46:1)

Likewise, in Enoch 60:10 the "Chosen One" (who is also the "Son of Man" - Enoch 46:3) is reckoned among:

"the whole army of heaven, all the holy ones in the height, the host of God, the Cherubim, Seraphim and Ophanim, all angels of the lordship (*kyrioteton*) and other powers, who are on the land and over the water."

Christ was of course referred to as the *Chosen [One] of God* (Lk. 9:35; 23:35). Christ is also portrayed as the Prince of Angels (Mk. 8:38; Mat. 13:41f; Mk. 1:13; Lk. 22:43; 1Thes. 4:16) in the same manner that Jewish speculation held the Messiah-Son of Man to be a heavenly being, chosen by God to execute a special mission, and placed over the celestial world of angels.

Of special interest is the title *Lord* or *Kyrios* in the Greek. In numerous places in the New Testament this title is applied to Christ. Many have considered that this title applied to Christ was simply a transference of the Old Testament Septuagint name for God to Christ (The *Septuagint* is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament prepared in the third century BC. The name means *seventy* and is a reference to the tradition which says that 70 scholars worked together to produce it).

What this ignores is that late Judaism and early Christianity used the Greek term *kyrioi* to designate angels. The apocalyptic (*Apocalyptic literature* is that literature which was produced between 200 BC and 100 AD telling stories of the interaction of God or angels with humanity but which was never received into the official canon of the Bible as "inspired" works) and pseudepigraphical (*Pseudepigraphical literature* are those writings ascribed to authors who did not and could not have written them (e.g. Enoch, Abraham, Moses)) literature of this time and before contains many references to angels designated as *Kyrioi* or *Lords*. (See 4 Ezra 4:3,5,22,38,41; 5:33-35,38,56; 6:11,33; 7:3,10,75,132. Also see the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Ascensio Jesaiae*, the *Apocalypse of Sophonias*, and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.)

One clear New Testament example of this is Acts 10:3-13 f. Here Cornelius addresses the angel which appears to him as *Kyrie*, just as Peter addresses the anonymous voice which speaks to him as *Kyrie* or *Lord*. Another very relevant example is Acts 9:5. Paul does not recognise who is it that is speaking to him, but he understands him to be a divine messenger from God, and so addresses him by the title commonly applied to the angels as *Kyrie*. Later the heavenly being identifies himself as the glorified Jesus. However, this example provides clear evidence that in the days of the early Church the title *Kyrios* had become a designation for angels. In fact, it was actually applied to a particular class of angels in the heavenly hierarchy.

This becomes apparent when other passages are examined. *Kyriotes* (the plural form of *Kyrios*) is found in Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16; Jude 8; 2Peter 2:10 and in each case is used to designate a particular rank of angels. Since the term is used of

Christ as well as angels, we may deduce that the class of angels designated by this term was in fact the Council of the Elohim which included Christ and the 24 Elders who were his partners. Jude 8 is particularly interesting. In the RSV it reads:

Yet in like manner these men in their dreamings defile the flesh, reject authority, and revile the glorious ones. The word *authority* is *kyriotes* and is referring to the high ranking class of angels. The term *glorious ones* is also referring to angelic beings. Moffatt renders this passage as:

Despite it all, these visionaries pollute their flesh, scorn the Powers celestial, and scoff at angelic Glories. The concept is that the evil men spoken of despise the Council of God.

The same understanding is applied in 1Corinthians 8:5-6, and 1Timothy 2:5. In the first passage Paul refers to the many gods (*theoi*) and many lords (*kyrioi*). He is not referring to idols as some have assumed, but consistent with the thinking of the day is referring to the many beings in the angelic realm. He dismisses idols as nothing but goes on to acknowledge the existence of many gods and lords. He is in effect saying, "Well there are many divine beings designated *God* and *Lord*, but to us who are Christians there is but *one God*, the Father, and *one Lord*, Jesus Christ". God is over all these 'gods' and Christ is Lord over all these 'lords' for God has exalted him to the position of *Lord of Lords*.

Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "no idol in the world really exists," and that "there is no God but one." Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven and earth - as in fact there are many gods and many lords - yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1Cor. 8:4-6, NRSV).

In Timothy, Paul is contrasting the practise of certain Jewish sects, which held that there were multiple mediators between God and man, with Christian understanding: there is but one God and he has designated one Mediator between himself and humanity, the *man* Jesus Christ:

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (1Tim. 2:5, RSV).

Lastly we need again to note the address of Stephen in Acts 7 where he designated the Angel (Messenger) which appeared to Moses as *Kyrios* or *Lord*. Stephen said:

Now when forty years had passed, an Angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to look, the voice of the Lord [*Kyrioi*] came, "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob." And Moses trembled and did not dare to look. And the Lord [*Kyrios*] said to him, "Take off the shoes from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." (Acts 7:30-33, RSV).

There can be little doubt that the early Christians understood that there was one *true* God who presided over a Council of Gods and Lords (pictured in Rev. 4-5) and that Christ had been exalted to a position of authority over these Gods and Lords as God's "Vice Regent".

And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; (Eph. 1:1 9-21, RSV).

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Mat. 28:1 8, RSV).

He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. (Rev. 3:21, RSV).

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to into it. Then one of the elders said to me, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth; and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints; and they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth." Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Rev. 5:2-12, RSV).

The understanding of angels in early Christianity is a big subject. People who would like to do some background reading are encouraged to consult Martin Werner's *The Formation of Christian Dogma*, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1957.

Appendix 6 -- Worship in the New Testament

In many places in the New Testament, Jesus is distinguished from God. Jesus himself denied being God (Mk. 10:17-18). He claimed that his Father was the "only true God" (Jn. 17:1-3). He called this Being "my God" (Mat. 27:46; Jn. 20:17). The New Testament in many other places refers to God as the God of Jesus Christ (2Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3,17; Col. 1:3; Heb. 1:9; 1Pet. 1:3; Rev. 1:6; 3:12; etc.). Christ sings the praises of his God (Heb. 2:12; Rev. 15:3). He comes under the authority of God and acts at his behest (1Cor. 11:3; 15:24-28). God (without any qualification of the term) is said to be invisible, never seen or heard by

humans, and alone is immortal (1Tim. 6:16; Jn. 1:18; 1Jn. 4:12; Jn. 5:37; 6:46). Jesus' own eternal life was given to him by God (Jn. 5:26) and is dependent upon his continuing obedience to God. (Jn. 12:49-50).

If the words of the Bible are to have any meaning, then we *must conclude* that Jesus is not the *one true God*. That is, he is not God in the sense that God is God. God the Father is his God, which means that the Father is the object of Christ's worship and He is the source of Christ's existence. Christ was *made God* in the sense that he is a generated Being who possesses the divine nature of God, one in whom God dwells through the Holy Spirit, and one who acts for God in the capacity and functions of God. He is a Son of God in *exactly* the same way as the rest of the heavenly Host are Sons of God and in *exactly* the same way that humans will become Sons of God in the resurrection.

However, in spite of the clear witness of dozens of passages of Scripture, many people still become confused when reading the New Testament because they can see a number of passages where Jesus is worshipped and/or called "God". Since only God can be worshipped they conclude that Christ must be God - as a part of a Trinitarian, Binitarian or Ditheistic Godhead. That Christ is called God in the New Testament (Heb. 1:8-9; Jn. 20:28) is simply a continuation of the Old Testament concept of referring to the Mal'ak of YHVH as God (Elohim) and YHVH.

That he is "worshipped" (Mat. 2:2,8,11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; etc.) signifies that he is the representative of God. The problem lies partly in the differences between the Hebrew and Western mindsets, and partly in the intention of the Greek of the New Testament. There are a number of Greek words translated as *worship* in the New Testament. The most significant of these and the term relevant to this study is the word *proskuneo*. The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon shows that it has the meanings:

- 1) to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence
- 2) among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence
- 3) in the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication
- 3a) used of homage shown to men and beings of superior rank
- 3a1) to the Jewish high priests
- 3a2) to God
- 3a3) to Christ
- 3a4) to heavenly beings
- 3a5) to demons

When we use the term *worship* we tend to apply it in the sense of reverence to a singular Deity who is worthy of our total admiration, adoration, affection, love, service, and to whom we pray and before whom we kneel. However, in Semitic or Oriental culture to prostrate oneself before another was a sign of respect and homage. Prostration did not have the same meanings associated with it as when we use the term *worship* today. This becomes apparent when we compare some of the New Testament passages where the term appears.

In the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant in Matthew 18:21-35 we read:

The servant therefore fell down, and **worshipped** [*proskuneo*] him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. (v. 26, KJV).

So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' (v. 26, RSV).

The servant prostrates himself before his lord and master to receive forgiveness of his debt. The concept is not that the servant is worshipping his lord as we would understand the term today, but that he was prostrating himself in humility and supplication. In the same manner, people would prostrate themselves before the High Priest (as contemporaneous records show) because he represented God. People would prostrate themselves before the nobles, kings, and prophets of God (cf. Gen. 50:18; 1Sam. 25:23; 2Sam. 18:18; 19:18; 2Kings 1:13; Esth. 8:3; etc.). And so it is in this sense that the disciples and others prostrated themselves before Christ. It was not that they thought that he was Almighty God there in person. Rather, he was God's prophet and messenger, the anticipated Messiah who was to claim the throne of his father David.

Another example of the use of *proskuneo* is in relation to the promises given to the Philadelphia Church in Revelation 3:

Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship [*proskuneo*] before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. (v. 9, KJV).

Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie - behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you. (v. 9, RSV).

This passage, unfortunately, has been misconstrued by some to make the claim that Christians in the resurrection will be God as God is God - absolute, transcendent, and on the same plane of omnipotence and omniscience as God the Father. This is *not* the intention of the passage.

In verses 11-12, Christians are told that they will bear and carry the names of Christ, Christ's God, and New Jerusalem. This means they will carry the authority of Christ and his God and God's government which will be centered in New Jerusalem. They will go forth to the nations and others carrying these names and, therefore (in keeping with Oriental and Semitic thinking), will have former persecutors fall down in prostration before them. They will not be the object of singular worship or prayer in the stricter Western sense of the term, even as Christ himself is not the object of prayer. (We pray to God his Father, but through Christ's name or authority.)

One last passage to consider is Revelation 22:8-9:

And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. (KJV).

This passage has been used by some, in conjunction with Revelation 3:9 and other verses, to show that Christians will be exalted to the position of God, above angels. Again the intent is misconstrued. The angel who was showing John the various visions appears, in fact, to have been Christ. Remember, the term *angel* simply means *messenger*. In the original Greek text there are no punctuation marks. Translators add quotation and punctuation marks to help make the translated text more readable. However, they also can introduce biases when doing this. In the RSV the impression is created from verses 6-7,9-16 that an angel speaking on behalf of Christ is talking with John. However, this may in fact be a misconception created by the translators when they added the punctuation marks.

The Interlinear Bible makes no distinctions between the angel and Christ:

And he said to me, These words are faithful and true. And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to His slaves what must happen quickly. Behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is the one keeping the words of the prophecy of this Scroll. ...

And he said to me, Do not seal the words of this Scroll, because the time is near. ... And, behold, I am coming quickly, and MY reward is with Me, to give to each as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last. (vv. 6-7,10,12-13).

Verse 16 appears to create the impression that Jesus sent an angel to John:

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. (KJV).

However, the term *you* in this passage is in the plural and not a reference to John, but rather to the Churches. It is entirely possible that the intent of this passage is that:

I Jesus have sent my messenger [meaning John] to testify to you [servants of God] these things in the churches. ...

In which case, Christ was the Angel or Messenger of God to John and John was the Angel or Messenger of Jesus to the Churches. This seems the most likely meaning of the passages from other parts of the Book, but has been misconstrued and mistranslated by Trinitarians who cannot conceive of Christ as any less than Almighty God himself.

Regardless, *even if* the angel which spoke with John was not Christ, it shows us something interesting about the term *proskuneo*. John was in his 90s and had lived a long life as a strict monotheist. He knew that to worship (in the modern sense) any other but God would be sinning and be to place another God before the one true God. However, the fact that John instinctively chose to prostrate or *proskuneo* himself before the angel indicates to us that to John's way of thinking and understanding, *proskuneo* was *not* the equivalent of worship in the modern sense. In falling before the angel, John was not making him the object of his prayer and devotion. That angel told John not to do this because he was John's fellow servant (as are Christ and all the holy angels).

Appendix 7 -- Belsham's Reply

The Unitarian position on the nature of God has long been recognised both without and within the Churches of God. The following article was quoted in *The Unitarian Defendant*, No. 6, 1822. It eloquently argues the position that if Christ *had been* the one true eternal God, this would have been an absolutely staggering revelation to the disciples and would have filled the pages of the New Testament. In late Judaism and early Christianity the thought of God himself appearing to men was *unthinkable**. It was only with Christ as an intermediary being that the idea of his incarnation and dwelling among men was conceivable.

* Note: This has been recognised by *many*, historians. Werner in *The Formation of Christian Dogma*, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1957, notes on pages 127-128 that:

This idea of a transformation [of the pre-existent Christ to a man on earth by birth] necessarily presupposed a view of Christ as a high angelic being. The absoluteness of the divine nature would in the strict sense have rendered a transformation of this order impossible from late Jewish and Primitive Christian point of view. In God there was no 'changing': this was expressly stated in the New Testament itself (Jas. i,17). Had the Heavenly Christ been like God in nature, then, within these terms of thought, an appearance of Christ on earth could have been no more envisaged than that of God, the Father, himself. But the possibility of such a transformation was truly the peculiar property of the angels, and indeed a necessary one, because *they* represented the realm of intermediate beings. As such it was their task to mediate between the definitively transcendent and absolute God, whom none had seen or could see (1 Tim. vi,16), and the world.

From *Belsham's Reply to Mosey's Bampton Lectures*, published at London, 1819:

It would have been utterly impossible that our Lord's contemporaries, his Apostles, his companions and disciples, or that the historians of his life, and miracles, and sufferings, should have written and spoken of him, have conversed with him, and behaved to him with all the familiarity which they always manifested, if they believed that Christ was in truth the very and eternal God. Let us for a moment place ourselves in their situation; and we shall feel at once, that the instant the amazing truth was communicated to them, their faculties would be absorbed in terror and astonishment;- no more free conversation, no more asking of questions: no more attempts to impose upon him or to rebuke him: the greatest awe and distance would instantaneously take place, and all the endearing and familiar relations of master, instructor, companion and friend, would be absorbed in the overwhelming apprehension of their Maker and their God.

And what would be the style and manner of those who, under these impressions, should: sit down to write the narrative of his life and his miracles, his discourses and his sufferings? Would three out of four of his historians completely forget the awful fact of his divine nature, and not drop a single hint of it from the beginning to the end of their histories? Would the rest of the sacred writers have insisted upon this circumstance only incidentally and obscurely? Would the most direct evidence of the

divinity of Christ have been found chiefly in passages at least suspicious, if not notoriously spurious? Would the great discovery have been left to be spelled out from a text here and another there, which if put together by a profound scholar, and especially be one who was critically versed in the niceties of the Greek article, might to men, whose minds are fond of mystery, be made to convey some such dark and hidden meaning? Would it be necessary, in order to establish the astonishing doctrine of the proper deity of Christ, to collect twenty or thirty texts, which, some being rightly, and some wrongly translated, might appear to countenance it: and to repeat those texts over and over, so that ignorant and inattentive persons might imagine that they recurred in every page of the New Testament?

If Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John, and Paul, and Peter, believed "that our Lord Jesus Christ is the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father," could they not have expressed the doctrine in language as plain as that of the learned Lecturer, or any other framer or supporter of creeds and articles whatever? And could they not with equal facility have lavished the charges of falsehood, impiety and blasphemy, against the impugners of the faith?

I am confident that it is impossible for any person, who reflects calmly and seriously upon the subject, to doubt, that if the doctrine of their Lord's equality with God were true, and made known to the Apostles and first believers, their minds would have been so deeply and so powerfully impressed with the subject, that they would be able to think, and speak, and write of nothing else, and that this great and wonderful doctrine would be blazoned from one end of the New Testament to the other: it would flame in every chapter, it would shine in every page, it would dazzle in every line.

That it does not so; that not only pages and chapters, but even whole books of the New Testament, yea, that professed histories of our Lord's life and character, and of the progress and success of his doctrine, of what he was and what he taught, and of what his disciples said and taught of him, should have passed over this great discovery in silence as deep and as total as the silence of the grave, is a demonstration as clear as light to every human being whose understanding is not veiled by the grossest prejudice, that these writers had never heard of the divinity of Christ, that it never entered into their conception that the Master whom they revered and loved, was the very and eternal God whom they adored and worshipped.

All arguments and criticisms, however ingenious, however learned, however recondite, which can be produced in reply to considerations and facts like these, are as chaff before the whirlwind; and like Samson's cords, they fall asunder, as a thread of tow touched by the fire.

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