

thought ; and all new thoughts have their origin in some change of external relations. A man who, like Paul, represented the latest culture alike of the East and of the West, who had in him the distinctive elements both of the Gentile and of the Jew, was not likely to modify these elements without the constraint of some outward pressure ; and the fact that he has modified them, the fact that he has even displaced them by a thought which is their contrary, must furnish a decisive evidence that he stood in the presence of a real historical change.

G. MATHESON.

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### CHRIST AND THE ANGELS.

#### HEBREWS ii. 1-9.

THIS passage commences with a practical exhortation to hold fast the word of salvation first spoken by the Lord, and communicated to the writer and his first readers by teachers who belonged to the circle of the personal disciples of Jesus. The admonition rests on the contrast between Christ and the Angels, already indicated in Chapter i. ; but the precise form in which that contrast is practically used, calls for an additional argument (Verses 5-9), which is drawn from Psalm viii. The use made of this Psalm is the key to the whole passage, and must form the starting point of our exegesis.

The Author, in the usual manner of Rabbinical interpretation, fixes on an apparent paradox in the Old Testament text, and makes the solution thereof the key to the teaching of the Psalm. This paradox lies in the antithesis between the two statements : "Thou hast made him for a little time lower than the angels," and, "Thou hast put all things under his feet." The last statement it is urged (Verse 8) must be taken absolutely, including the angels, as well

as lower beings. We have therefore the doctrine of a temporary subordination of man to the angels, followed by his permanent elevation over them—a solution of the paradox which the writer seems to have facilitated by taking *βραχὺ τι* of the Septuagint in the temporal sense, “lower for a little time.” This, indeed, to a Greek reader would probably have appeared a more natural interpretation than that of the English Version. Taking with us this hint, let us proceed to discuss the position of the passage in the context.

The Epistle began with a statement of the superiority of the last-day Revelation through the Son to all former Revelations. The superiority of the Son is worked out in contrast to the angels. He is superior to them essentially; but what is specially urged is, that He is raised above them officially in his mediatorial kingship, which stands contrasted with their purely ministerial functions. The distinction between the natural preeminence of the preexistent Son and his conferred Messianic dignity is most clearly brought out in the phrase of Chapter i. Verse 4. “He is become superior to the angels.” But why so much of Christ and the angels. The reason is that the writer, like Paul (Gal. iii. 19) and Stephen (Acts vii. 38, 53), assumes that the Mosaic Revelation of law was conveyed to man by angels (Verse 2). In the New Testament passages just cited this opinion appears to be referred to as one generally admitted. In fact we find it even in the Rabbinical books; and that the doctrine was quite popular and universal, is plain from the circumstance that Josephus (*Antiquities*, Book xv. ch. 5, § 3) represents Herod as exciting the Jews to battle, by a speech in which he says that they have learned the holiest of laws from God through angels. In such a speech one does not introduce doubtful points of theology.

It is frequently assumed that this doctrine is not to be found in the Old Testament, and that reference to the

angels as appearing on Sinai is distinctly made for the first time in the Septuagint of Deuteronomy xxxiii. 2: "On his right hand his angels with Him." But, in reality, the presence of angels at the Theophany of Sinai is plainly taught in Psalm lxviii. 17. For the myriad chariots of God, which, according to this Psalm, accompany his manifestation alike on Sion and on Sinai, are the angelic host (2 Kings vi. 17). And it is a general idea of the Old Testament that in great theophanies God appears surrounded by a heavenly host, either chariots and horses (Hab. iii. 8; Isa. lxvi. 15), or, without a metaphor, "holy ones" (Zech. xiv. 5), "mighty ones" (Joel iii. 11). To our Apostle, who has already cited Psalm civ. to prove that angels appear in the form of winds and flames, the significance of the fire and tempest of Sinai, to which he recurs in Chapter xii. Verse 18, could not be ambiguous.

From the thesis that the angels were present on Sinai, it is easy to pass to the further proposition that the revelation on Sinai was given by angelic agency. According to the principles of the Old Testament no theophany is a direct manifestation of Deity to the physical senses of man. God is in the theophany; but He is there veiled from the eye of sense. No man can see God and live (Exod. xxxiii. 20). What is actually seen and heard, even in the directest Old Testament display of the Godhead, is not God Himself, but some part of the glorious state that surrounds the impenetrable majesty of his Presence. In this sense the Old Testament theophany is often spoken of as the appearing of the "glory of Jehovah," and the glory is habitually described as a kind of fiery brightness. But, according to Psalm civ. 4, the fire of the theophany may also be regarded as a form of angelic manifestation. To say that God appeared on Sinai in fire, and to say that He appeared surrounded by the angelic host, is just to say the same thing in two different ways. The angels, therefore, are not a

mere accessory of the theophany; they are its form, the medium and vehicle of the Divine manifestation. It is true that the Pentateuch does not introduce the angels at Sinai, and that it sometimes uses language which seems to go beyond the limits of the principles now laid down. But, on the other hand, the theophany of the Burning Bush, where all that appeared to the senses was a fire and a voice proceeding from the midst of the bush (Exod. iii. 2, 4), is distinctly called an angelic apparition. And long before the Epistle to the Hebrews was written it was a recognized principle of exegesis, that the more anthropomorphic expressions of the Pentateuch must be understood in a sense compatible with the principle of Exodus xxxiii. 20. Hence, when we read in Exodus xxiv. 10, that the elders saw the God of Israel, the Septuagint softens the expression, and makes them see only the place where God had stood, while the Targums introduce the usual phrase of the "glory" of God. There could be no dispute, then, between the Apostle and his readers as to the mediate character of the Sinaitic Revelation, and no difficulty in understanding that the phenomena of the theophany were angelic.

But the Apostle goes further than this. In Verse 2 of our Chapter the angels are regarded, not simply as the mouthpiece of God, but as his authoritative agents, every act of disobedience to their word being followed by a just recompence of reward. It appears, then, that, just as Christ is the King as well as the Prophet of the perfect Dispensation, so the angels were the administrators and governors of the Old Covenant. And this gives to the Apostle's argument the much more important turn that, with the superiority over the angels conferred on Christ in his mediatorial exaltation (*κρείττων γενόμενος*), the angelic sway in the old Dispensation ceases, and all the limitations therein involved fall away: "For not to angels hath He subjected the world to come, of which we speak" (Verse 5);

and so those who adhere to the angelic ordinances, to the neglect of the salvation spoken by Christ, cannot escape condemnation for disobedience (Verse 3).

Let us consider what Old Testament basis the Author has for this conception of angelic authority under the Old Covenant. The passage directly before his mind was presumably Exodus xxiii. 20 *seq.*, where we learn that Israel was guided in the wilderness by an angel. This angel is the organ of a continued theophany (compare Exod. xxxii. 34 with xxxiii. 14). God's name is within him (b'qirbo) and he is invested with authority to punish the people's sins. This angel of God's presence appears also in Isaiah lxiii. 9, as the leader who gives victory to Israel. And similarly, in Joshua v. 14 *seq.*, an angel (as he is expressly called in the exegesis of the Synagogue) appears to Joshua, and claims the dignity of prince of the host of Jehovah. These are conceptions which afford sufficient ground for the doctrine of angelic authority in the Old Dispensation; and their weight has been overlooked mainly in consequence of the unscriptural identification of the "Angel of the Presence" with the *λόγος ἄσαρκος*, the preexistent Son, which is now universally given up by scholars, and was certainly not acknowledged by the New Testament writers (compare for example, Acts vii. 35, 38, 53). The only point apparently novel in our Author's position is that he always speaks of angels as a plurality, while in the Old Testament the revealing and guiding angel is usually one. But the discrepancy is not absolute. In Genesis xviii., for example, Jehovah appears to Abraham by means of three angels. It is an army of fiery chariots and horses that appears to Elisha, and so forth. In fact the very word *Mal'akh* = angel, is in form an abstract noun, meaning primarily an embassy rather than a single ambassador. The individuality of the angel employed on any particular mission is not emphasized; and unity and plurality run into one another in the case of

angels with a freedom similar to that which we find in St. Mark v. 9 in the case of the unclean spirit whose name was Legion—"because we are many."

It is right to observe that neither the function of angels as ministers of Revelation nor their office as administrators of the Mosaic Covenant has, in the Old Testament, any dogmatic importance. The whole office of the angels flows simply from the incapacity of man, who is flesh, to come into direct contact with God, who is Spirit. The angels, therefore, stand between God and man, simply as ministers of his command. Positive independent importance they have none. What they do is done by God. When they speak they do not, like the prophets, use their own name, and say, "Thus hath God shewed me," but their words are spoken in the person of God. Their agency expresses only the negative side—the limitations of the Old Covenant, its character as a dispensation of the flesh. In many or even most passages there is nothing said of them which enables us positively to affirm that they are regarded as possessing personal identity. Satan appears in Job with a will of his own, but it is doubtful whether anywhere in the Old Testament as much is said of a good angel.

But just because they are figures that indicate the limitation of the Old Testament, they become important to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, whose object is to contrast the defects of the Old Covenant with the perfection of the New. The abolition of the old limitations naturally presents itself as the emancipation of man from subordination to the angels; and even the Old Testament is made to furnish a proof that that subordination is inconsistent with the ultimate destiny of man to sovereignty over all the creatures.

This proof our Author found in Psalm viii. That the expression, "Thou hast made him lower than the angels" (*ἡλάττωσας αὐτὸν*) is not taken by the Apostle to denote

an inferiority of nature appears plain from the whole use of the correlatives *κρείττων* and *ἐλάττων* in our Epistle. Already in Chapter i. we have seen that Christ *becomes* (not is by essence) *κρείττων τῶν ἀγγέλων*, superior to the angels. No less certainly is it an official, not an intrinsic, relation that is designed in the words of Chapter vii. 7, *τὸ ἐλάττων ὑπὸ τοῦ κρείττονος εὐλογεῖται*: "The less is blessed of the greater." And so here the words mean nothing else than a subjection of man to the angels which cannot be permanent, because it is not consistent with the universal sovereignty which is man's creation destiny.<sup>1</sup>

"But now we do not yet see all things put under man." True! But for all that the powers of the new world (Chap. vi. 5) are at work, and the old Dispensation has passed away. For we see Him who for a little time was made less than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honour on account of the suffering of death which He underwent, that, by the grace of God, He might taste death for every man.

Wherein was Jesus set under the angels? Not simply in that He became man; for his manhood is as truly the ground of his exaltation as of his humiliation. It is to man as man that the Psalm ascribes the coronet of glory and honour—the exaltation over all creatures into which Jesus has entered. With Jesus, as with man in general, the inferiority to the angels is one of dispensation, not of nature. To be subordinated to the angelic dispensation is the same thing as to be "made under the law." Jesus shared man's humiliation, to win, not for Himself only, but for men his brethren, the destined glory. God brings many sons to glory along with Him, inasmuch as He that sanctifieth and

<sup>1</sup> Here again it is not unprofitable to compare Jewish teaching. According to Philo all mortal things were subjected to man at the creation, but the heavenly beings were exempted. Yet it is a Rabbinical idea, expressed in the Midrash Rabba on Genesis ii. 19, that Adam was superior to the angels in wisdom.

they that are sanctified are all of one piece (Verse 11). Thus the blessings of the Psalm do, in the world to come, fall to man; but they are earned for him by the man Christ Jesus who, tasting death for all (Verse 9), delivers us from the fear of death and so from bondage (Verse 15). And this blessing of deliverance from the bondage of the Old Covenant belongs even now to Christians, who have already tasted the powers of the world to come (Chap. vi. 5), who are regarded (in Chap. xiii. 14) as dissociated from the earthly theocracy and living in view of that which is to come. "The world to come" is in fact the equivalent of the Kingdom of God in the Gospel—already present among men, though hitherto it is an object of faith not of sight.

The conception of subjection to angels as the expression of the imperfect and servile state of God's people under the law is not familiar to us, and has not entered into current systems of theology. But it is by no means without Biblical parallels. Thus, in Galatians iv. St. Paul develops the doctrine that Jesus was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. This is the same doctrine which our Epistle sets forth with the one exception that, where St. Paul says "made under the law," our Apostle says "made less than the angels." But look a little more closely at St. Paul's argument. In whose hands is the law under which the church in its pupillary state was kept (Gal. iii. 23; iv. 3)? The answer is found in Chapter iii. 19. The law was instituted through angels. Now, if this is so, must not St. Paul conceive of the angels as wielding authority over the infant heir, who is kept under the law as under tutors and stewards. He can hardly fail to do so; and, accordingly, we find that, with the expression "under the law," St. Paul uses as interchangeable another expression, "enslaved under the elements of the world" (Gal. iv. 3, comp. Verse 9). What are these elements



(στοιχεῖα)? The most plausible sense of the ambiguous word *στοιχεῖα* is that offered by Ritschl, who makes them "elemental powers." This rendering becomes probable by comparison with Colossians ii. 8, in which the *στοιχεῖα* appear to be not the elementary observances of the Mosaic dispensation, but the foundation of these observances—to be for the Old Testament what Christ is for the New. So again in Colossians ii. 20, the man who has died with Christ from the "elements of the world" no longer lives in the "world"; an argument which implies that these elements are not mere worldly rudiments of religion, but the elements that make up the *κόσμος* as such. St. Paul's doctrine, then, appears to be that subjection to legal ordinances and ceremonies rests on a bondage to elemental cosmic forces, as contrasted with the purely spiritual service of sons of God. The Old Covenant was administered by the fear of temporal judgments and the hope of temporal blessings. The saints of the Old Testament could not realize their spiritual calling save under earthly limitations and in the form of earthly rewards. The message of God to them came in fire and thunder, in whirlwind and tempest, in grand elemental displays that caused terror and enforced obedience by other than purely moral power. But, as we have seen, it is the doctrine of Psalm civ. that these winds and fires are angels. The spiritual forces sent forth by Jehovah clothe themselves in these phenomena. For example, the angels of the Law-giving are to be identified with the fire, lightning, and storm cloud of Sinai. We have seen how the Epistle to the Hebrews uses the doctrine to shew the mutable nature of the angels in contrast to the immutable perfection of the Son (Chapter i. 7). No doubt the same thought was associated in St. Paul's mind with the "cosmical elements." The subjection of the Old Dispensation to physical forces is but another form of its subjection to the angels of the Law. This view is confirmed, not only by the way in which Colos-

sians ii. 18, represents the worship of angels as an aberration—probably of Essene origin—connected with the service of the cosmic elements; but even more strikingly by Colossians ii. 15, which philologically appears to admit no other sense than that God divested Himself of the angelic authorities and powers, and made an open display of triumph over them in Christ. These angelic powers which God strips off like a garment can be no other than the angels who in the Old Covenant came between God and his people, but in the new Dispensation are superseded when Christ bursts the fetters of their law, triumphs over their terrors, and ascends to the seat of mediatorial sovereignty in victorious exaltation over all creatures, even over the angels to whom for a little time He was made subject.

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### THE CORINTHIAN SADDUCEES.

#### 1 CORINTHIANS XV.

IN a former paper I have endeavoured to reproduce certain opinions put forward by some church members at Corinth, opinions which called from the great Apostle of the Gentiles his famous Chapter on the Resurrection. I shall now attempt to reproduce the arguments with which he meets these opinions. If I can shew that these arguments really overturn the opinions delineated in my earlier paper, I shall do something to support the general truthfulness of that delineation.

Before openly challenging the enemy, St. Paul marshals some of his forces in battle array. He appeals to the fact that his readers have already accepted his teaching, and that, unless their faith is useless, they are day by day receiving salvation through the word he preached to them. Among