

individual to self-expression, self-determination and self-indulgence?

Progress continues to be made in the whole area of theology. In general the effect has been twofold. First, from about the end of the nineteenth century, establishment theology laid itself open to the influence of higher critical theories and very quickly abandoned its former allegiance to Scripture. So debased has it become that it is prepared to tolerate views such as those expressed by the late Bishop of Woolwich when he jettisoned the idea of God as a real supernatu-

ral being and for it substituted what he termed "an experience at one and the same time of ultimacy and intimacy". On the other hand, popular theology sought to find a way of accommodating evolutionary theory into some sort of modified view of the truth of Scripture; this always entailed seeing the early chapters of Genesis at best as allegorical or symbolic, and at the worst as irrelevant.

In all these ways the God of the Bible is discredited and man is exalted. All is far from well.
(Concluded)

New Testament references to angels

David Green

THIS ARTICLE examines some of the passages in the New Testament where the Greek word *aggelos*, pronounced *angelos*, occurs. Although this word is mainly translated 'angel',¹ it does not always refer to God's heavenly ministers. Whether a passage refers to an angelic being or a human must be decided from context.

Aggelos is derived from *aggellō*, which means 'to deliver a message', and is connected with *agō*, 'to lead' or 'to bring'. Consequently the basic meaning of *aggelos* is 'messenger', 'envoy', 'one who is sent', whether by God or by man.² However, lexicons mention certain implied meanings, such as pastor, guardian and representative.

An angel will hold a position of authority derived from the one whom he serves or represents. For example, the angel of God's presence (Isa. 63:9) acted with great power and authority: "Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him and obey his voice; do not provoke him, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in him" (Ex. 23:20,21).*

Quotations from the Old Testament

The first two chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews contain quotations from the Old Testament concerning angels. It is interesting to note that in these passages, which are set out below, the plural of *aggelos* is used to translate both *elohim* (mighty ones) and *malakim* (messengers).

"But when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him'. And of the angels He says:

'Who makes His angels [*malakim*, Psalm 104:4] spirits and His ministers a flame of fire'" (1:6,7);

"You made him a little lower than the angels [*elohim*, Psalm 8:5]; You crowned him with glory and honour" (2:7).

The words quoted in Hebrews 1:6 are not to be found in the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament, though a very similar passage occurs in Psalm 97:7, which reads: "worship Him, all ye gods [*elohim*]" (AV). The actual quotation appears to be from the Septuagint version of Deuteronomy 32:43, where the following additional words occur at the beginning of the verse: "Rejoice, ye heavens, with Him, and let all the angels of God worship Him".

Ministering spirits

The angels are God's ministers, carrying out His will, and part of their remit is to look after His sons and daughters. The writer to the Hebrews picks up this aspect of their work in 1:14: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?". The verb translated "to minister" in this passage implies aid and service, and the NIV translates it "to serve".

No doubt Jesus had this aspect of the work of angels in mind when he referred to the angels of

1. According to *Young's Concordance*, angel 181, messenger 7.

2. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

* All quotations from the NKJV, unless stated otherwise.

his little ones: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father Which is in heaven" (Mt. 18:10, AV).

We shall judge angels

Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, wrote: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?" (6:2,3). These words about judging angels have puzzled many. Angels do not sin, for they do God's will perfectly in heaven, and consequently there is no reason for them to be judged. In any case, the saints in the Kingdom age, having been made like unto the angels, would not be in a position of having authority over them.

The answer to this problem is implicit in the passage, because judging angels (v. 3) is parallel to judging the world (v. 2). In the world to come the saints will be given authority by Jesus to be rulers, and as such will be in the position to judge mortal leaders (Heb. 2:5; Rev. 2:26,27). The Greek word translated 'world' here is *cosmos*, meaning the human arrangement of the things on this earth. This human society consists of the ordinary population and the people who are the leaders, here described as angels.

Another passage in the same epistle fits in well with this interpretation. In this verse the Apostle Paul speaks about being made a spectacle to the world, which he defines as angels and men: "For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men" (4:9).

Seen by angels

What kind of angels are meant by Paul when he writes that Christ was "seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory" (1 Tim. 3:16)? In all probability "seen by angels" refers to the witness of the apostles to Christ's resurrection: "But God raised him from the dead. He was *seen* for many days by those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his *witnesses* to the people" (Acts 13:30,31). The apostles had been ordained to be witnesses of Christ's resurrection (1:22), and that was an important teaching for the first-century ecclesias.

The angels that sinned

Bible students find the suggestion that some of God's heavenly angels have rebelled and sinned against Him in past ages incompatible with the teachings of Scripture. The Bible teaches us that the angels are immortal beings who always do God's will perfectly in heaven (Mt. 6:10; Lk. 20:36).

The two problem passages are as follows:

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude v. 6, AV);

"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment . . ." (2 Pet. 2:4, AV).

The context of these passages provides the clue to their correct understanding. The reference is to people who "reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries" (Jude v. 8; cf. 2 Pet. 2:10). Jude goes on to specify Old Testament examples that he has in mind: "Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah" (v. 11).

The example that fits the case of angels (leaders) sinning is the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram against Moses and Aaron. These leaders in Israel were not happy with "their first estate [positions of authority, NIV]" and sought to displace Moses and Aaron, to whom they said: "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?" (Num. 16:3). In this way they spoke evil of God's appointed dignitaries. These human angels were punished by the earth swallowing them so that they went down alive into the pit (vv. 30-33).

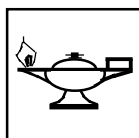
The angels of the seven churches of Asia

The Apostle John saw in vision "one like the Son of Man" holding seven stars in his right hand, which represented the angels of the seven ecclesias of Asia (Rev. 1:13,16,20). Stars in Scripture symbolise people in positions of leadership and responsibility (for example, Daniel 12:3). The stars being held in the right hand implies that these people exert power and authority.

In the epistles to the seven churches both commendations and criticisms are directed to the seven angels in the singular ('thee', 'thy' and

'thou' in the AV) because they were responsible for the members of their individual ecclesias. From this we must conclude that the angels were the Divinely appointed elders and leaders of those ecclesias, overseers responsible for the

spiritual wellbeing of the flock over whom they exercised authority. "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God" (Acts 20:28).



Encounter

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The Law given through Moses

3. The hard human heart*

Islip Collyer

WHEN THE Lord Jesus declared that the Mosaic law of divorce was a concession to the hardness of the human heart (Mt. 19:8; Mk. 10:5), scribes and Pharisees were no doubt shocked and enraged. They could not make any reasonable complaint, or accuse the Master of repudiating Scripture, as Jesus, with his comprehensive grasp of Divine revelation, was able to refer them to that which was written in their Law. Whatever Jews or modern sceptics may make of it, there stands the remarkable fact that the Christian ideal of marriage, instead of being the result of a gradual evolution of advancing thought, was quite clearly stated at the beginning.

The lives of the patriarchs are in harmony with this fact. Abraham only took a concubine in advanced age at the suggestion of his wife and with the urgent desire to have a child in harmony with Divine promise. Isaac and Rebekah, although for a time menaced with the fear of childlessness, sustained the original ideal of a lifelong monogamy. Jacob, with less excuse, fell into the ways which were evidently becoming conventional among surrounding nations.

In patriarchal experience we never read of divorce. The banishment of Hagar cannot for a moment be regarded in this light, for that was a Divinely ordered ejection of the woman and her son, and it was "very grievous" to Abraham (Gen. 21:11).

With the advance of time, and especially when there was a weakening of religious thought, it is easy to see that there would be a drift away from

the original ideal. It is easy, too, to realise how easily the Chosen People would follow Gentile customs. With warfare taking a heavy toll of male life, and with its inevitable unsettling of family ties, such results as we have seen in our own time of war would naturally occur with the people of Israel: more hasty marriages and more discovery of complete incompatibility. The point of the Mosaic charge was that there must be no promiscuous playing 'fast and loose' in this vital matter. If a marriage was dissolved there must be a bill of divorcement.

NO doubt some Christians have felt perplexed in this matter. They have felt that if the Christian law was the one stated at the beginning—and this is a fact beyond dispute—it seems difficult to understand why a later law given by God should make any concession to man's hardness of heart. A little reflection will surely clear away all difficulty. This matter furnishes an excellent illustration of the distinctive and unusual blending of the ideal and the practical pointed out in the first article in this series, where we noted that the Law was designed, not only to present the will of God as to human conduct, but also to provide a workable legal code for the guidance of a nation.

In English law the two objects are in the main kept separate; in the Mosaic economy they were blended. In England the ideal is in Christian

* First published March 1947.