What Does The Hebrew Word
malʾāk Mean?

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Introduction

In part three of his *Systematic Theology* L. Berkhof deals with "The States of Christ" under two subheadings: I. The State of Humiliation, and II. The State of Exaltation.[1] This two-part arrangement of materials stands in stark contrast with Paul's own three-part outline in Phil 2:5-11, discussed elsewhere.[2] First, Paul says in vs. 6, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped." Second, in vss. 7-8, "but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!" And third, in vss. 9-11, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that 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 the Father." The two outlines are compared in table 1.

Table 1
The States of Christ: Two
Outlines Contrasted

	Three-Part Outline	Two-Part Outline
1	Being in very nature God	. . .
2	Made himself nothing	The State of Humiliation
3	God exalted him to the highest place	The State of Exaltation

Berkhof's views are certainly orthodox. There is no question about this. But his outline is incomplete. One has to turn back to part one, in the section on The Holy Trinity, to find a discussion of Christ's preexistence. On pp. 85-86, under "Old Testament proofs," the plurality of the word *ʾlōhîm* "God" is mentioned and then the author goes on to say:

> Still clearer indications of such personal distinctions are found in those passages which refer to the Angel of Jehovah, who is on the one hand identified with Jehovah, and on the other hand distinguished from Him, Gen. 16:7-13; 18:1-21; 19:1-28; Mal. 3:1; and also in passages in which the Word or Wisdom of God is personified, Ps. 33:4, 6; Prov. 8:12-31.[3]

In the present paper I discuss the meaning and uses of the Hebrew word *malʾāk*, commonly translated "angel," and the passages--alluded to by Berkhof--which talk about the "angel of the Lord."[4]

The claim made below is that, whereas the English word "angel" refers to the nature of the one to whom it applies,[5] the Hebrew word *malʾāk* does not. Thus, in English the word "angel"

consistently refers to a created being less powerful than God but more powerful than man--a being that is neither divine nor human. Hebrew *malʾāk*, on the other hand, refers not to the nature but to the function of the one described. It can apply equally well to inanimate forces of nature (Ps 104:4), to a human messenger (2 Kgs 14:8; 1 Chron 19:2), prophet (Hag 1:13), priest (Mal 2:7), or person with some other errand to perform (2 Kgs 7:15), to an angel (Job 4:18-19), or to a divine Being (Exod 3:2). When the word is understood a basis is provided for understanding a number of Old Testament passages and New Testament claims both by and concerning Christ that in isolation from each other must remain puzzling.

My position on the nature of Christ is essentially that of the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), where it is was affirmed in the face of heresies to the contrary that Christ is both fully God and fully man.[6] Before His taking on of human flesh in the incarnation that same Being was one with the Father and was fully divine in every way. He created others (John 1; Phil 2; Heb 1) rather than being created Himself. The angels of God would therefore have come into existence at His command and as such would have rightly owed Him their worship. There is no new Christology here, but only a discussion of the words used by biblical writers which must be taken into account by anyone who wishes to consider seriously the idea of an Old Testament Christology. The divine nature of the One those words are used to describe--before, during, and after His incarnation--is taken as a nonnegotiable starting point. It is the lexical material that is under review.

The word *malʾāk*, in its various forms, occurs 213 times in the Old Testament[7] with examples found in twenty-six of the thirty-nine books.[8] In one case the referent is inanimate, in ninety-nine cases clearly human. Sixty-one times it refers to an angel, and fifty-two times to a divine Being which I identify with the preexistent Christ. See table 2.

Table 2
Distribution of Referents

Inanimate 1

Human 99
Messenger 77
Prophet 6
Priest 1
Other 15

Angel 61

Divine Being 52

Inanimate Referent

Ps 104:4 is an especially interesting passage, quoted in Heb 1:7 as follows: "In speaking of the angels he says, 'He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire.'" But what the Psalmist himself wrote is probably best translated, as in NIV, with the opposite sense.

He makes winds his messengers [*malʾākāyw*], flames of fire his servants. (Ps 104:4)

The intent of this passage, later reinterpreted by the New Testament writer under inspiration, is that even the inanimate forces of nature can be used by God to do His bidding and cause His purposes to be brought about. The word *malʾāk* is used only once to describe an inanimate referent.

Human Referent

Below I divide the ninety-nine examples where *malʾāk* refers to a person into four categories: (1) messenger (x77), (2) prophet (x6), (3) priest (x1), and (4) one with a task to perform that differs from those listed in the first three categories (x15).

Messenger

With seventy-seven examples to draw on it will be impractical as well as unnecessary to quote all the texts where *malʾāk* refers to a human messenger.[9] Below I offer only one example from each book in which the word appears with the sense of "messenger" or "envoy."[10]

Gen 32:3(4)   Jacob sent messengers [*malʾākîm*] ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

Num 21:21(22) Israel sent messengers [*malʾākîm*] to say to Sihon king of the Amorites: "Let us pass through your country."

Deut 2:26   From the desert of Kedemoth I sent messengers [*malʾākîm*] to Sihon king of Heshbon offering peace and saying,

Judg 6:35   He set messengers [*ûmalʾākîm*] throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them.

1 Sam 25:14   One of the servants told Nabal's wife Abigail: "David sent messengers [*malʾākîm*] from the desert to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them."

2 Sam 3:14   Then David sent messengers [*malʾākîm*] to Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, demanding, "Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins."

1 Kgs 20:2   He sent messengers [*malʾākîm*] into the city to Ahab king of Israel, saying, "This is what Ben-Hadad says:"

2 Kgs 1:16   He told the king, "This is what the Lord says: Is it because there is no God in Israel for you to consult that you have sent messengers [*malʾākîm*] to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?"

1 Chron 19:2   David thought, "I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me." So David sent a delegation [*malʾākîm*] to express his sympathy to Hanun concerning his father.

2 Chron 18:12 The messenger [*wᵉhammalʾāk*] who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, as one man the other prophets are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably."

Neh 6:3   so I sent messengers [*malʾākîm*] to them with this reply: "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?"

Job 1:14   a messenger [*ûmalʾāk*] came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby,

Prov 13:17   A wicked messenger [*malʾāk*] falls into trouble, but a trustworthy envoy [*wᵉsîr*] brings healing.

Eccl 5:6(5)   Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the (temple) messenger [*hammalʾāk*], "My vow was a mistake."

Isa 33:7   Look, their brave men cry aloud in the streets; the envoys of peace [*malʾᵃkê šālôm*] weep bitterly.

Jer 27:3   "Then send word to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon through the envoys [*malʾākîm*] who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah."

Ezek 17:15   But the king rebelled against him by sending his envoys [*malʾākāyw*] to Egypt to get horses and a large army

Nah 2:13(14)   "I am against you," declares the Lord Almighty. "I will burn up your chariots in smoke, and the sword will devour your young lions. I will leave you no prey on the earth. The voices of your messengers [*malʾākê̦ykēh*][11] will no longer be heard."

Prophet

There are six cases where *malʾāk* refers to a prophet.[12] Due to the small sample size all of the available instances are quoted below.

2 Chron 36:15 The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers [*malʾākāyw*] again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place.

2Chron36:16 But they mocked God's messengers [*bᵉmalʾᵃkê hāʾᵉlōhîm*], despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

Hag 1:13   Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger [*malʾāk YHWH*], gave this message of the Lord to the people "I am with you," declares the Lord.

Isa 42:19   "Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger [*kᵉmalʾākî*] I send?"

Isa 44:26   "who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers [maʾākāyw], who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited,' of the towns of Judah, 'I will restore them,'"

Mal 3:1   "See, I will send my messenger [maʾākî], who will prepare the way before me."

Mal 3:1 should be taken together with Mal 4:5, which says: "'See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.'" In Matt 11:14 Christ identifies the messenger who went before Him at His first coming as John the Baptist.[13]

Priest

The only passage where maʾāk is used with reference to a priest is Mal 2:7.

"For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction--because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty [maʾāk YHWH-ṣᵉbāʾôt]." (Mal 2:7)

It is the common priest who is here spoken of as a "messenger" of the Lord. The same description would of course apply to the high priest as well, but if he were singled out for attention here it might be assumed that he was the only one referred to and this is not the case. All priests were to be repositories of learning on Yahweh's behalf. It is appropriate to translate maʾāk as "messenger" here only to the degree that attention is focused on an exchange of information. In fact more is involved. I think a more appropriate gloss for maʾāk in this passage would be "representative": ". . . he is the representative of the Lord Almighty." The priest's purpose for informing people about the will of God was always to help them come into closer relationship with God. "Every high priest--and in the present context every common priest--is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, . . ." (Heb 5:1). He was God's messenger in a sense as he shared his knowledge of the law with the people, but more than this he was God's representative before the people. And as he presented their sacrifices he was the people's representative before God.

Other uses

There are sixteen cases where maʾāk refers to someone who is not a priest, or a prophet, or a messenger in the sense of one who carries information to one person on another's behalf.[14] Such additional uses fall within a number of different categories.

Official. In Prov 17:11 NIV translates the word maʾāk as "official."[15]

An evil man is bent only on rebellion; a merciless official [ûmaʾāk] will be sent against him. (Prov 17:11)

Even though he is not said to bear information, the individual in question is "sent against" one person by way of carrying out another's wishes. This idea of taking action through a second party could be seen as a point of broad similarity with those cases where maʾāk means "messenger." A messenger does not carry information for himself. On the one hand we have vicarious action, on the other vicarious speech.

Messengers without messages. In the account of the stoning of Achan the wrongdoer is identified by lot from the tribe to the clan to the family to the man himself. When Achan is finally identified and confesses that stolen goods are hidden in his tent Joshua sends some men to get those articles and bring them back to the assembled crowd in order to confirm Achan's story.

So Joshua sent messengers [*malʾākîm*], and they ran to the tent, and there it was hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. (Josh 7:22)

The men Joshua sent are called *malʾākîm* because he sends them out with a task to accomplish for him. There is no information to convey to the people in Achan's tent (no one is there at the time), nor is information the only item brought back to Joshua. The fact that the men in question are sent by Joshua to do something he wants done--to act on his behalf--is sufficient justification for using the word *malʾākîm* to describe their role in doing it.

Men under orders. A second example of *malʾāk* used in the above sense is found in 1 Sam 19. There Saul sends out a contingent of armed men to capture David and put him to death.

Saul sent men [*malʾākîm*] to David's house to watch it and to kill him in the morning. (1 Sam 19:11)

The men sent to kill David are called *malʾākîm* but carry no message from the king. Their job is not to announce Saul's intentions but to implement them. The term *malʾākîm* is used in this same sense eight times in the narrative.[16]

Spies. In 2 Kgs 6 and 7 Ben-Hadad king of Aram besieges Samaria. When the siege is unexpectedly lifted men are sent to see where the attacking army went.

They followed them as far as the Jordan, and they found the whole road strewn with the clothing and equipment the Arameans had thrown away in their headlong flight. So the messengers [*hammalʾākîm*] returned and reported to the king. (2 Kgs 7:15)

NIV translates *malʾākîm* here as "messengers," but the men referred to make no attempt to communicate with the fleeing Aramean army. Instead their task is to ascertain the army's movements and current position.

In Josh 6 and 7 the spies sent to examine Jericho are called *malʾākîm*.

"The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies [*hammalʾākîm*] we sent." (Josh 6:17)

These men did not take information to the people of Jericho for Joshua, or to Joshua for the people of Jericho, but instead they took information both to and for the same person. A spy might be called a messenger in the sense that he bears information, but his mission is not the same as that of a simple envoy.

Metaphorical. In Prov 16:14 the king's wrath is metaphorically called "a messenger [lit. plural] of death."

A king's wrath is a messenger of death [*malʾăkê-māwet*], but a wise man will appease it. (Prov 16:14)

The king's wrath is neither a person nor an inanimate force in nature. The above usage is simply metaphorical.

Angel Referent

There are sixty-one cases where the word *maḇāk* refers to an angel.[17] Below I quote only a representative sample of the passages that are available.[18]

Gen 28:12   He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God [*malʾăkê ʾŏhîm*] were ascending and descending on it.

Judg 5:23   'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the Lord [*malʾāk YHWH*]. 'Curse its people bitterly, because they did not come to help the Lord, to help the Lord against the mighty.'

1Sam29:9   Achish answered, "I know that you have been as pleasing in my eyes as an angel of God [*kᵉmalʾāk ʾĕlōhîm*]; nevertheless, . . ."

2 Sam 14:17   "And now your servant says, 'May the word of my lord the king bring me rest, for my lord the king is like an angel of God [*kᵉmalʾāk hāʾĕlōhîm*] in discerning good and evil. May the Lord your God be with you.'"

1 Kgs 13:18   The old prophet answered, "I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel [*ûmalʾāk*] said to me by the word of the Lord: 'Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.'" (But he was lying to him.)

2 Kgs 1:15   The angel of the Lord [*malʾāk YHWH*] said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So Elijah got up and went down with him to the king.

1 Chron21:15 And God sent an angel [*malʾāk*] to destroy Jerusalem.

2 Chron 32:21 And the Lord sent an angel [*malʾāk*], who annihilated all the fighting men and the leaders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king.

Job 4:18   "'If God places no trust in his servants, if he charges his angels [*ûbᵉmalʾākāyw*] with error, [(19) how much more those who live in houses of clay, whose foundations are in the dust, who are crushed more readily than a moth!'"]

Ps 103:20   Praise the Lord, you his angels [*malʾākāyw*], you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.

Ps 148:2   Praise him, all his angels [*malʾākāyw*], praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

Isa 37:36   Then the angel of the Lord [*maḷāk YHWH*] went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp.

Dan 3:28   Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel [*maḷᵃkēh*] and rescued his servants!"

Zech 1:14   The angel [*hammaḷāk*] who was speaking to me said, "Proclaim this word: This is what the Lord Almighty says: . . ."

Divine Referent

Fifty-two times in the Old Testament the word *maḷāk* refers not to an angel at all but to a divine Being,[19] identified here as the pre-incarnate Word or Logos.[20] A number of features are associated with passages in which *maḷāk* refers to a divine Being. These are summarized by A. H. Strong as follows:

> (a) The angel of Jehovah identifies himself with Jehovah; (b) he is identified with Jehovah by others; (c) he accepts worship due only to God.[21]

To this list should be added that the "angel of the Lord" often reveals His identity by implication, i.e., by saying things that only God could say or by making claims that only God could sustain.

When it is clear from context that God is speaking in a given passage, but the term *maḷāk* is used, then it is the meaning of *maḷāk*--or more accurately the appropriateness of the English glosses commonly associated with it--that should be reinterpreted rather than the substance of the narrative which contains it. In this section we are not dealing with angels. We are evaluating possible references to the preexistent Word of God in which the term *maḷāk* is used.[22]

It is important to bear in mind that each identification must be made in terms of the entire narrative in which it occurs. Thus, if the term *maḷāk* is used five times in a given narrative and one of those uses can only refer to a divine Being it follows that the other uses, if they refer to the same Being, also refer to One who is divine even though in isolation they might be interpreted more than one way. Below I suggest that in nine well known narratives and in three isolated cases we find clear references to the preexistent Christ, if we are willing to take seriously the implications of what is said in them. These are summarized in table 3. Each is discussed in turn.

Table 3
Narratives in Which maᵊāk
Describes a Divine Being

Narrative	Reference
Hagar and Ishmael	Gen 16, 21
Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah	Gen 22
Jacob at Bethel and in Paddan Aram	Gen 31, 48
Jacob wrestling with the Stranger	Hos 12; cf. Gen 32
Moses and the burning bush	Exod 3
The "angel" who led Israel	Exod 14, 23, 32; Num 20; Judg 2; Isa 63
Balaam	Num 22
Gideon's commission	Judg 6
The parents of Samson	Judg 13
Other examples	Ps 34; Zech 12; Mal 3

Hagar and Ishmael

In Gen 16 Hagar runs away from Sarah and the "angel of the Lord," seeing the circumstances she is in, offers her not only encouragement but a promise in regard to her descendents.[23]

(7) The angel of the Lord [maᵊak YHWH] found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. (8) And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered. (9) Then the angel of the Lord [maᵊak YHWH] told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." (10) The angel [maᵊak YHWH] added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count." (Gen 16:7-10)

In Gen 21 Hagar does not run away at her own choice but is driven out by her mistress Sarah.[24] Here, as in Gen 16, the "angel of the Lord" addresses Hagar.

(17) God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God [maᵊak ᵊlōhîm] called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. (18) Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." (Gen 21:17-18)

Notice that the promise on the one hand is that "'I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count'" (16:10) and on the other that "'I will make him into a great nation'" (21:18). The One speaking is the One who takes responsibility for making Ishmael a great nation.[25]

Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah

In Gen 22 Abraham takes his son Isaac to Mount Moriah at the command of God to offer him there as a sacrifice. When he is refrained from doing so the "angel of the Lord" is the one who addresses him.

(11) But the angel of the Lord [*maʾak YHWH*] called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. (12) "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." (Gen 22:11-12)

In vs. 12, above, the "angel of the Lord" is the One from whom Abraham has not withheld his son. The narrative continues:

(15) The angel of the Lord [*maʾak YHWH*] called to Abraham from heaven a second time (16) and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, (17) I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore." (Gen 22:15-17)

In vs. 16 the "angel of the Lord" speaks on behalf of Yahweh, while in vs. 12 He speaks on His own authority. The One who speaks, however, is the same in both cases.

Jacob at Bethel and in Paddan Aram

In Gen 31:11 we read: "'The angel of God [*maʾak hāʾlōhîm*] said to me in the dream, "Jacob." I answered, "Here I am."'" There is nothing apparently noteworthy about this statement, but two verses later the same "angel" goes on to say:

"'I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.'" (Gen 31:13)

Later, in Gen 48:16, Jacob says:

"May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my Shepherd all my life to this day, (16) the Angel [*hammaʾāk*] who has delivered me from all harm--may he bless these boys." (Gen 48:16)

I must emphasize that the topic under review is not what God is like, but how the word *maʾāk* is used. God is not an angel and angels are not gods,[26] but the Hebrew word *maʾāk* can be used with reference to God--as Jacob himself does in the verses just quoted.

Jacob wrestling with the Stranger

The account in Gen 32 of Jacob's night of wrestling before meeting his estranged brother Esau is not one where the word *maʾāk* is used. Instead the mysterious Stranger that Jacob wrestles with is called a "man" (*ʾîš*).[27] Just as *maʾāk* refers to one's purpose or function as a messenger, *ʾîš* here refers to the physical form of the party involved. Neither term makes any claim as to the inherent nature of its referent. The One who confronted Jacob had the form and appearance of a man.

Without Hos 12:4-5(5-6) as a cross reference Gen 32:22-32 would lie outside the scope of the present paper. But when Hosea describes the same events he uses the term *maʾāk* instead of *ʾîš*.

He struggled with the angel [*malʾāk*] and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor. He found him at Bethel and talked with him there-- (5) the Lord God Almighty, the Lord is his name of reknown! (Hosea 12:4-5)

The One with whom Jacob wrestles is called "a man" in Gen 32 but "the angel" in Hos 12:4(5), and the same Being is identified as "the Lord God Almighty" in vs. 5(6). He was *ʾîš* with regard to physical form--as He appeared to Jacob--and *malʾāk* with regard to purpose and role. But notice that when the struggle was over "Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared'" (Gen 32:30). The One Jacob wrestled with was Christ.

Moses and the burning bush

In Exod 3 there is no question that Moses conversed with God, because of the twice repeated assertion that the One speaking was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob[28] and because of Moses' explicit inquiry as to God's name. Of special interest is the fact that *malʾāk* is one of the words used in reference to the One with whom Moses spoke.

(2) There the angel of the Lord [*malʾak YHWH*] appeared to him in flames of fire from with a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. (3) So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight--why the bush does not burn up." (Exod 3:2-3)

Thus, in vs. 2 we have "the angel of the Lord." In vs. 4 two additional terms are used.

When the Lord [*YHWH*] saw that he had gone over to look, God [*ʾĕlōhîm*] called to him from within the bush, "Moses, Moses!" (Exod 3:4)

There is no distinction to be made in vs. 4 between "the Lord" on the one hand and "God" on the other. Two terms are used, but only one Deity is available to be referenced by them. Interestingly the writer makes no distinction either between "the Lord" in vs. 4 and "the angel of the Lord" in vs. 3. In this narrative the "angel of the Lord" is Himself the Lord. Moses and Jacob were both confronted by Christ.[29]

The "angel" who led Israel

There are nine passages in the Old Testament where *malʾāk* is used in reference to the One who led Israel out of Egypt, through the wilderness, or into Canaan.

Out of Egypt. Three passages which deal with the exodus from Egypt and use *malʾāk* to describe the One responsible for bringing Israel out are Exod 14:19, Num 20:16, and Judg 2:1. Here only one of the three is quoted.[30]

The angel of the Lord [*malʾak-YHWH*] went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers." (Judg 2:1)

He then continues: "'I said, "I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars." Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this?'" (vs. 2).[31] The covenant referred to can only be the one made at Sinai in Exod 24. No other covenant was made with Israel. Note that the One

who defined its terms and presented it to the people was Yahweh Himself, as described in Exod 19:16-25. "The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, 'I am trembling with fear'" (Heb 12:21).

Through the desert. The One who led Israel forty years in the desert is identified as follows in Exod 23:20: "'See, I am sending an angel [*malʾāk*] ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared.'"[32] Here is yet another case where *malʾāk* does not mean angel. Paul, in 1 Cor 10:3-4, explicitly identifies the One who led Israel during that period time.

 (3) They all ate the same spiritual food (4) and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. (1 Cor 10:3-4)

Into Canaan. The entrance of Israel into Canaan was brought about by the same "angel of the Lord" as their exodus from Egypt.

My angel [*malʾākî*] will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out.[33] (Exod 23:23)

A general summary statement is found in Isa 63:9.

In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence [*ûmalʾak pānāyw*] saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. (Isa 63:9)

The "angel" that led Israel out of Egypt, through the desert, and into Canaan was in fact not an angel. Use of the term *malʾāk* does not imply He was an angel. The preexistent Christ led Israel. The words *malʾāk* and "angel" are not the same.

Balaam

When Balaam attempted to come to king Balak's aid in Num 22 by pronouncing a curse on Israel he was met by the "angel of the Lord," who stood in his way.[34] Balaam, not knowing this, tried to go on and beat his donkey each time it balked.

The angel of the Lord [*malʾak YHWH*] asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me." (Num 22:32)

Balaam then admits, unwillingly, that he has sinned (vs. 34) and asks if he should turn back. "The angel of the Lord [*malʾak YHWH*] said to Balaam, 'Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you'" (vs. 35).

Notice that the One before whom Balaam's path is reckless is the "angel of the Lord" who has opposed him on the way and that when he arrives it is Yahweh Himself who tells Balaam what to say.[35] This "angel" was not an angel, but the same preexistent Christ who was then leading and trying to bless the same people that Balaam was trying to curse.[36]

Gideon's commission to fight
the Midianites

In Judg 6 the people of Israel are being overrun by the Midianites. Gideon is commissioned by the "angel of the Lord" to champion his people's cause.

(11) The angel of the Lord [*maḻak YHWH*] came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. (12) When the angel of the Lord [*maḻak YHWH*] appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." (Judg 6:11-12)

The response is not as positive as the greeting: "'But sir,' Gideon replied, 'if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? . . . But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian'" (vs. 13). At this

The Lord [*YHWH*] turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and same Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" (Judg 6:14)

Gideon then offers the One speaking to him both meat and bread (vs. 20), which are consumed by fire as he watches (vs. 21).

When Gideon realized it was the angel of the Lord [*maḻak YHWH*], he exclaimed, "Ah, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord [*maḻak YHWH*] face to face!" (Judg 6:22)

Thus, in Judg 6 *YHWH* and *maḻak YHWH* are used interchangeably and the Being so addressed transforms a gesture of hospitality into an act of worship, which He in turn accepts. "Angel" is perhaps unavoidable as a gloss for *maḻāk* in this and other similar passages, but if the implications of the English word are used to interpret the meaning of the corresponding Hebrew word a serious misunderstanding is sure to result.[37]

The parents of Samson

The way in which Samson's birth is announced to his parents has a number of similarities to the account of how Gideon was commissioned to fight for Israel. In both narratives the "angel of the Lord" appears in human form, is offered food, and consumes it with fire. In both cases there is a sense of shock when the ones addressed realize who it is they had been speaking to.

We know that Samson's father was named Manoah, but little information is available about his mother. Whoever she was,

The angel of the Lord [*maḻak-YHWH*] appeared to her and said, "You are sterile and childless, but you are going to conceive and have a son." (Judg 13:3)

The woman, in reporting the incident to her husband, said, "'A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God [*maḻak hāʾlōhîm*], very awesome. I didn't ask him where he came from, and he didn't tell me his name'" (vs. 6).[38]

Manoah then prays that the "man of God" might return and give them further instruction as to how their child should be raised (vs. 8). The prayer is answered (vs. 9), but again not while Manoah is present. At this, "The woman hurried to tell her husband, 'He's here! The man [hāʾîš] who appeared to me the other day!'" (vs. 10). Manoah then meets the "man" (vs. 11) and both asks for (vs. 12) and receives (vss. 13-14) the counsel he had wanted about raising the child. In vs. 13 the term used is once more the "angel of the Lord."[39]

The item of food that Manoah offers the "angel of the Lord" is a young goat (vs. 15).

(16) The angel of the Lord [malʾak YHWH] replied, "Even though you detain me, I will not eat any of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the Lord." (Manoah did not realize that it was the angel of the Lord [malʾak YHWH].) (17) Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the Lord [malʾak YHWH], "What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?" (18) He [malʾak YHWH] replied, "Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding [pelîʾ]." (Judg 13:16-18)

The NIV margin says, "Or *is wonderful*." I return to this point below.

(19) And the Lord did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched:[40] (20) As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the Lord [malʾak-YHWH] ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground. (21) When the angel of the Lord [malʾak YHWH] did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the Lord [malʾak YHWH]. (22) "We are doomed to die!" he said to his wife. "We have seen God!" (Judg 13:19-22)

In this account Manoah and his wife use the word ʾîš as a way to describe the physical appearance of the One they are dealing with and the biblical writer uses malʾāk because of His mission representing Yahweh. But who it is that looks like a man and comes with a task to perform is not understood until the encounter is at an end. The divinity of this "man of God," or "angel of the Lord," is recognized by Manoah only in vs. 22, where he exclaims, "'We have seen God!'" In fact he had seen Christ.[41]

Here, as in Gen 32 above,[42] the One speaking refuses to give His name. "Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the Lord, 'What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?' He replied, 'Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding [pelîʾ]'" (Judg 13:17-18). This rendering is more sensitive to context than to the lexical meaning of the word being translated. The word pelîʾ means "wonderful."[43] A parallel is found in Isa 9:6.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful [pēleʾ] Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isa 9:6)

This is the same One of whom God had said earlier, "'my Name is in him'" (Exod 23:21).

Other examples

Apart from the nine narratives discussed above, there are three isolated uses of the word malʾāk that should be considered here as well. The first is found in Ps 34:7(8).

The angel of the Lord [*maḻak YHWH*] encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. (Ps 34:7[8])

The second is in Zech 12:8.

On that day the Lord will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the Lord [*keḻmaḻak YHWH*] going before them. (Zech 12:8)

And the third is in Mal 3:1.[44]

"See, I will send my messenger [*maḻākî*], who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant [*ûmaḻak habberît*], whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. (Mal 3:1)

Conclusion

The word *maḻāk* is translated "angel" 111 times in the King James Version and 113 times in the New International Version.[45] But although the semantic ranges of the Hebrew word and this particular English gloss for it overlap to an extent, they are by no means identical. The word *maḻāk* does not mean "angel," but one who is sent to carry a message or perform a task for someone else.[46] It may be that angels often fit this description, but almost as frequently the word applies to some other type of referent. Ninety-nine times, for example, it refers to ordinary people carrying messages or performing tasks for someone or otherwise representing the one who sent them. In such cases "messenger" is a common gloss.

Actually, though, the situation is more complex than counting glosses. In Ps 104:4 God makes the point that even inanimate forces of nature such as wind and fire can be used by Him to accomplish His purposes. The word used to describe such forces--when they serve as agents to carry out God's will--is *maḻākāyw* "his messengers" (NIV). The word "messenger" is used 81 times in NIV to translate various forms of *maḻāk*.[47] But although the gloss is the same in Ps 104:4 as so many times elsewhere, the meaning is not. On the one hand *maḻāk* is inanimate, on the other it is human. At this point 100 out of 213 examples have been accounted for.

The same caution about counting glosses must be introduced where *maḻāk* is translated "angel" as where it is translated "messenger." The tail should not wag the dog. The English gloss should not be made the primary criterion in determining the meaning of the word from which it is translated. Of the 113 cases where "angel" corresponds to *maḻāk* in NIV I submit that the referent is actually an angel only sixty-one times, where by an angel I mean a created being that is neither human nor divine. Fifty-two times the word describes One who is divine. In such cases the English word "angel" is misleading unless it is explained that the word reflects Hebrew usage.[48]

What Christ was like before His incarnation is not the question raised in the present paper. Christ was not then and has never been an angel. Before the incarnation He was fully God. After that time He has been both fully God and fully man. This point is not at issue. What is at issue is whether the Old Testament refers to the preexistent Logos or Word of God apart from

predictions of His eventual incarnation during New Testament times. I submit that such references do occur, but that they might not always come in a form we expect.

The incarnation of Christ was predicted by various writers of Old Testament books, but there is more here than prediction. The preexistent Word created the world (John 1:1-3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:10-12) and led Israel out of Egypt (1 Cor 10:3-4). Moreover, it was against Christ that the people He had chosen to preserve a knowledge of Himself more or less consistently rebelled during the next several centuries (Matt 23:37). After a brief hiatus during the intertestamental period the story resumes with the gospels which document the course of Christ's earthly life and the early history of the church He established--again for the purpose of preserving a knowledge of Himself in the world. The whole Bible is a book about Christ. This is the point to be made. This holy Being is not confined to the New Testament and references to Him in the Old Testament are not confined to what He would eventually do in the New Testament.

Hebrew *malᵊāk* does not mean "Christ" any more than it means "angel," but it can refer to the preexistent Christ in the Old Testament, just as it can refer to ordinary people or to inanimate forces of nature. It is one of many terms that biblical writers have used in order to convey what information they could about the coming Messiah.

Note: All Scripture quotations in this paper, except when noted otherwise, are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.

[1] L. Berkhof, 4th ed., *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), pp. 331 ff., 344 ff.

[2] A sheet of New Testament motifs that illustrate and support the deity and preexistence of Christ is now being compiled.

[3] Ibid., p. 86.

[4] By contrast with L. Berkhof, G. C. Berkouwer, in his outstanding book *The Person of Christ*, Studies in Dogmatics, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), devotes much of the chapter entitled "The Deity of Christ" to a discussion of Christ's preexistence and to the necessity of laying heavy emphasis on the topic.

[5] A study similar to the present one on Hebrew *malᵊāk* should be done on Greek *aggelos*, both in early secular sources and in the Septuagint. The earliest meaning of Greek *aggelos* and the later Judeo-Christian applications made of it would be two different considerations. Both should figure in a study of the sort that I have in mind here.

[6] I accept the "Definition of Chalcedon" because I believe it to be true. The words have no special value over and beyond the substance of what they say. It is this that I support. The final statement drafted at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 reads in part: " . . . we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, . . . recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; . . ." (Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. [London: Oxford University Press], p. 73). On the question of whether Chalcedon represents a point beyond which the church cannot go in its understanding of the nature of Christ see G. C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ*, Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), pp. 85-100, the chapter entitled "Chalcedon a Terminal Point?"

[7] Gen 16:7, 9, 10, 11; 19:1, 15; 21:17; 22:11, 15; 24:7, 40; 28:12; 31:11; 32:1(2), 3(4), 6(7); 48:16; Exod 3:2; 14:19; 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2; Num 20:14, 16; 21:21(22); 22:5, 22, 23, 24,

25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 34, 35; 24:12; Deut 2:26; Josh 6:17, 25; 7:22; Judg 2:1, 4; 5:23; 6:11, 12, 20, 21(x2), 22(x2), 35; 7:24; 9:31; 11:12, 13, 14, 17, 19; 13:3, 6, 9, 13, 15, 16(x2), 17, 18, 20, 21(x2); 1 Sam 6:21; 11:3, 4, 7, 9(x2); 16:19; 19:11, 14, 15, 16, 20(x2), 21(x2); 23:27; 25:14, 42; 29:9; 2 Sam 2:5; 3:12, 14, 26; 5:11; 11:4, 19, 22, 23, 25; 12:27; 14:17, 20; 19:27(28); 24:16, 16(x2), 17; 1 Kgs 13:18; 19:2, 5, 7; 20:2, 5, 9(x2); 22:13; 2 Kgs 1:2, 3(x2), 5, 15, 16; 5:10; 6:32, 33; 7:15; 9:18; 10:8; 14:8; 16:7; 17:4; 19:9, 14, 23, 35; 1 Chron 14:01; 19:2, 16; 21:12, 15(x4), 16, 18, 20, 30; 2 Chron 18:12; 32:21; 35:21; 36:15, 16; Neh 6:3; Job 1:14; 4:18; 33:23; Ps 34:7(8); 35:5, 6; 78:49; 91:11; 103:20; 104:4; 148:2; Prov 13:17; 16:14; 17:11; Eccl 5:6(5); Isa 14:32; 18:2; 30:4; 33:7; 37:9, 14, 36; 42:19; 44:26; 63:9; Jer 27:3; Ezek 17:15; 23:16, 40; 30:9; Dan 3:28; 6:22; Hos 12:4(5); Nah 2:13(14); Hag 1:13; Zech 1:9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 19(2:2); 2:3(7)(x2); 3:1, 3, 5, 6; 4:1, 4, 5; 5:5, 10; 6:4, 5; 12:8; Mal 2:7; 3:1(x2).

[8]The distribution of these 213 examples by book is as follows: Gen (x17), Exod (x6), Num (x15), Deut (x1), Josh (x3), Judg (x30), 1 Sam (x19), 2 Sam (x19), 1 Kgs (x9), 2 Kgs (19), 1 Chron (x12), 2 Chron (x5), Neh (x1), Job (x3), Ps (x8), Prov (x3), Eccl (x1), Isa (x10), Jer (x1), Ezek (x4), Dan (x2), Hos (x1), Nah (x1), Hag (x1), Zech (x20), Mal (x3). The remaining fourteen books which do not contain the word *maʾāk* are: Lev, Ruth, Ezra, Esther, Song, Lam, Joel, Amos, Obad, Jonah, Micah, Hab, Zeph. In Dan 4:10(13), 14(17), and 20(23) the words *ʿîr* "watcher" and *qaddîš* are both used with the meaning "angel." For further discussion of the word *ʿîr* see Robert Murray, "The Origin of Aramaic *ʿîr*, Angel," *Orientalia* 52, 2 (1984):303-17.

[9]The numerical distribution of *maʾāk* in the sense of "messenger," by book, is as follows: Gen (x2), Num (x4), Deut (x1), Judg (x8), 1 Sam (x10), 2 Sam (x11), 1 Kgs (x6), 2 Kgs (x15), 1 Chron (x3), 2 Chron (x2), Neh (x1), Job (x1), Prov (x1), Eccl (x1), Isa (x6), Jer (x1), Ezek (x3), Nah (x1).

[10]Other passages that use the word *maʾāk* in the sense "messenger" are: Gen 32:6(7) (*hammalʾākîm*); Num 20:14 (*malʾākîm*); 22:5 (*malʾākîm*); 24:12 (*malʾākéykā*); Judg 7:24 (*ûmalʾākîm*); 9:31 (*malʾākîm*); 11:12 (*malʾākîm*), 13 (*malʾăkê* (cs.)), 14 (*malʾākîm*), 17 (*malʾākîm*), 19 (*malʾākîm*); 1 Sam 6:21 (*malʾākîm*); 11:3 (*malʾākîm*), 4 (*hammalʾākîm*), 7 (*hammalʾākîm*), 9 (*hammalʾākîm*), 9 (*lammalʾākîm*); 16:19 (*malʾākîm*); 23:27 (*ûmalʾāk*); 25:42 (*malʾăkê* (cs.)); 2 Sam 2:5 (*malʾākîm*); 3:12 (*malʾākîm*), 26 (*malʾākîm*); 5:11 (*malʾākîm*); 11:4 (*malʾākîm*), 19 (*hammalʾāk*), 22 (*hammalʾāk*), 23 (*hammalʾāk*), 25 (*hammalʾāk*); 12:27 (*malʾākîm*); 1 Kgs 19:2 (*malʾāk*); 20:5 (*hammalʾākîm*), 9 (*hammalʾākîm*), 9 (*lᵉmalʾăkê* (cs.)); 22:13 (*wᵉhammalʾāk*); 2 Kgs 1:2 (*malʾākîm*); 3 (*malʾăkê* (cs.)), 5 (*hammalʾākîm*); 5:10 (*malʾāk*); 6:32 (*hammalʾāk*), 33 (*hammalʾāk*); 9:18 (*hammalʾāk*); 10:8 (*hammalʾāk*); 14:8 (*malʾākîm*); 16:7 (*malʾākîm*); 17:4 (*malʾākîm*); 19:9 (*malʾākîm*), 14 (*hammalʾākîm*), 23 (*malʾākéykā*); 1 Chron 14:1 (*malʾākîm*); 19:16 (*malʾākîm*); 2 Chron 35:21 (*malʾākîm*); Isa 14:32 (*malʾăkê* (cs.)); 18:2 (*malʾākîm*); 30:4 (*ûmalʾākāyw*); 37:9 (*malʾākîm*), 14 (*hammalʾākîm*); Ezek 23:16 (*malʾākîm*), 40 (*malʾāk*).

[11]The unusual form *malʾākékā* in Nah 2:13(14) is equivalent to *malʾākéykā* (Num 24:11; 2 Kg 19:23).

[12]The numerical distribution by book of *maʾāk* in the sense of "prophet" is: 2 Chron (x2), Isa (x2), Hag (x1), Mal (x1).

[13]"'And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. He who has ears, let him hear'" (Matt 11:14-15).

[14]The numerical distribution of category 6 examples by book is as follows: Josh (x3), 1 Sam (x7), 2 Kgs (x1), Ezek (x1), Pss (x1), Prov (x2).

[15]A number of other English translations render *maʾāk* in Prov 17:11 as "messenger." These include the King James Version, American Revised Version of 1901, Jewish Publication Society translation of 1917, Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Bible, Jerusalem Bible, Modern Language Bible [formerly Berkeley], New English Bible, Today's

English Version, and New King James Version. Moffat translates "force," which bears no relation to the word in the Hebrew text. Douay has "angel," but the word being translated in this case is Latin *angelus* rather than Hebrew *maľāk*.

[16]For the other seven examples see: 1 Sam 19:14 (*maľākîm*), 15 (*hammaľākîm*), 16 (*hammaľākîm*), 20 (*maľākîm*), 20 (*malᵃkê* (cs.)), 21(x2) (*maľākîm*).

[17]The numerical distribution, by book, of examples where *maľāk* means "angel" is as follows: Gen (x6), Judg (x1), 1 Sam (x1), 2 Sam (x7), 1 Kgs (x3), 2 Kgs (x3), 1 Chron (x9), 2 Chron (x1), Job (x2), Pss (x6), Isa (x1), Dan (x2), Zech (x19).

[18]Other passages that use the word *maľāk* in the same sense but are not cited above are as follows: Gen 19:1 (*hammaľākîm*), 15 (*hammaľākîm*); 24:7 (*maľākô*), 40 (*maľākô*); 32:1(2) (*malᵃkê* (cs.)); Judg 13:6 (*maľak* (cs.)); 2 Sam 14:20 (*maľak* (cs.)), 19:27(28) (*kᵉmaľak* (cs.)); 24:16 (*hammaľāk*), 16 (*lammaľāk*), 16 (*ûmaľak* (cs.)), 17 (*hammaľāk*); 1 Kgs 19:5 (*maľāk*), 7 (*maľak* (cs.)); 2 Kgs 1:3 (*ûmaľak* (cs.)); 19:35 (*maľak* (cs.)); 1 Chron 21:15 (*ûmaľak* (cs.)), 12 (*ûmaľak* (cs.)), 15 (*lammaľāk*), 15 (*lammaľāk*), 16 (*maľak* (cs.)), 18 (*ûmaľak* (cs.)), 20 (*hammaľāk*), 30 (*maľak* (cs.)); Job 33:23 (*maľāk*); Ps 35:5 (*ûmaľak* (cs.)), 6 (*ûmaľak* (cs.)); 78:49 (*malᵃkê* (cs.)); 91:11 (*maľākāyw*); Dan 6:22 (*malᵃkēh* [Aramaic]); Zech 1:9 (*hammaľāk*), 11 (*maľak* (cs.)), 12 (*s* (cs.)), 13 (*hammaľāk*), 19(2:2) (*hammaľāk*); 2:3(2:7) (*hammaľāk*), 3(7) (*ûmaľāk*); 3:1 (*maľak* (cs.)), 3 (*hammaľāk*), 5 (*ûmaľak* (cs.)), 6 (*maľak* (cs.)); 4:1 (*hammaľāk*), 4 (*hammaľāk*), 5 (*hammaľāk*); 5:5 (*hammaľāk*), 10(2:1) (*hammaľāk*); 6:4 (*hammaľāk*), 5 (*hammaľāk*).

[19]The numerical distribution of category 1 examples by book is as follows: Gen (x9), Exod (x6), Num (x11), Judg (x21), Ps (x1), Isa (x1), Hos (x1), Zech (x1), Mal (x1).

[20]When John speaks of Christ as the Creator of the world and as One who was with God "in the beginning" this is the term he uses. Below I use both "Word" and "Christ" to designate the second member of the Godhead at a time before His incarnation and subsequent life on earth.

[21]Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology*, three volumes in one, (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1907), p. 319.

[22]There may be others. Where no positive evidence exists that would require an interpretation beyond the first and most obvious meaning of a passage I make no claims. Strong, in the quotation given above, takes a less conservative position. He continues: "Though the phrase 'angel of Jehovah' is sometimes used in the later Scriptures to denote a merely human messenger or created angel, it seems in the Old Testament, with hardly more than a single exception, to designate the pre-incarnate Logos, whose manifestations in angelic or human form foreshadowed his final coming in the flesh" (ibid.). The "single exception" referred to is in Mal 2:7 (see above under "Priest"). Examples of Hebrew *maľak YHWH* "angel of the Lord" ("angel of Yahweh," "angel of Jehovah") that I omit from the present section pending further information are Judg 5:23 (*maľak YHWH*); 2 Sam 24:16 (*ûmaľak YHWH*); Ps 35:5 (*ûmaľak YHWH*), 6 (*ûmaľak YHWH*); 1 Kgs 19:7 (*maľak YHWH*); 2 Kgs 1:3 (*ûmaľak YHWH*), 15 (*maľak YHWH*); 19:35 (*maľak YHWH*); 1 Chron 21:12 (*ûmaľak YHWH*), 15 (*ûmaľak YHWH*), 16 (*ʾet-maľak YHWH*), 18 (*ûmaľak YHWH*), 30 (*maľak YHWH*); Isa 37:36 (*maľak YHWH*); Zech 1:11 (*ʾet-maľak YHWH*), 12 (*maľak-YHWH*); 3:1 (*maľak YHWH*), 5 (*ûmaľak YHWH*), 6 (*maľak YHWH*). One very small bit of grammatical evidence in Strong's favor is the fact that whereas we find both "angel of God" (singular) (*maľak hāʾᵉlōhîm*: Gen 31:11; 2 Sam 14:20) and "angels of God" (plural) (*malᵃkê ʾᵉlōhîm*: Gen 28:12; 32:1(2)), there is no plural form *"angels of the Lord" corresponding to *maľak YHWH* "angel of the Lord." The term "angel of God" appears to be a more general expression than "angel of the Lord."

[23]Gen 16:7, 9, 10, 11.

[24]An earlier form of the name is Sarai (Gen 11:29-31; 12:5, 11, 17; 16:1-8; 17:15), for which no gloss is given in Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill: 1958), p. 931.

[25]Or "people." The word is *gôy*, which has ethnic rather than political or territorial significance. A mistreated Egyptian woman is not beneath the notice of the One who makes this promise. At a later time He goes out of His way to minister to the needs of a Greek woman from Syrian Phoenicia with a demon possessed daughter (Mark 7:24-30) and to a Samaritan woman who had to draw water in the heat of the day because she was an outcast in her community (John 4:1-42).

[26]On the relationship between the Son and the angels see Heb 1:4-6.

[27]The term *ʾîš* is used in Gen 32:24, 25, 26, 27, and 28. For other uses of *ʾîš* in a similar context see Judg 13 where Samson's birth is announced.

[28]Exod 3:6, 15.

[29]For further discussion of the narrative in Exod 3 see the article entitled, "Michael," in the next issue of *Historicism*.

[30]See also Judg 2:4.

[31]See also Exod 23:24, which I quote here along with vss. 20-23 to show the context: (20) "'See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. (21) Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. (22) If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. (23) My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. (24) Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces.'"

[32]See also Exod 33:1-3: "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, "I will give it to your descendants." (2) I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.'"

[33]See also Exod 32:34; 33:2.

[34]See Num 22:22-27, 31.

[35]See Num 23:3-5, 12, 16-17, 26; 24:1-2, 11, 13.

[36]For a recent and readily accessible article on Balaam's general influence and stature as a prophet see André Lemaire, "Fragments from the Book of Balaam Found at Deir Alla: Text Foretells Cosmic Disaster," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11, 5 (September/October 1985):26-39.

[37]The meaning of the Hebrew is discussed in greater detail below. I do not propose a general reworking of the glosses used in the available translations, but do urge the need for a clear understanding of the words behind those glosses.

[38]I quote this verse for its contextual value. When Manoah's wife compares the Being she has seen to "an angel of God" she is making a general statement about His appearance. This use of the term *maləāk* is listed in an earlier section of the paper having to do with cases where *maləāk* refers to created beings properly called angels.

[39]The word *ʾîš* "man" is used by Manoah (vss. 6, 8, 11) and his wife (vs. 10), while *maləāk* is used by the writer of the narrative (vss. 3, 9, 13, 15, 16, 16, 17, 20, 21, 21). There is one exception to this rule in vs. 11 where, with *ʾîš* used immediately before by the woman (vs. 10) and immediately after by the man (vs. 11), the writer also uses *ʾîš*. But in general the division of terms is as described.

⁴⁰Other translations render the verse differently: "So Manoah took the kid with the cereal offering, and offered it upon the rock to the Lord, to him who works wonders" (RSV); "Then Manoah took the kid and the oblation and offered it as a holocaust on the rock to Yahweh who works mysteries" (JB); "Manoah took a kid with the proper grain-offering, and offered it on the rock to the Lord, to him whose works are full of wonder." The word used to describe the name of the "angel of Yahweh" in vs. 18 (*pelîʾ* [*pelʾî?*]) and that used to describe the works of Yahweh in vs. 19 (*ûmaplîʾ laᵃśôt*) are both from the same root **plʾ*.

⁴¹The term "pre-incarnate Logos" (Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 319), based on John 1:1, would be accurate here but "Christ" is used by Paul in 1 Cor 10:4. In any event, notice that few have ever realized, in dealing with this holy Being, the full implications of doing so until after the encounter was over. In Luke 24:13-35, after His resurrection, Jesus walks with two of His disciples for a number of miles, but they don't realize who it is until He blesses the meal they are about to eat (vss. 30-31). That was two people. The Jewish nation as a whole had a similar experience. In a sermon soon after Pentecost Peter could say, "'Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders'" (Acts 3:17). It wasn't until Jesus went back to heaven that the people in large numbers started to realize who it was who had been with them for over thirty years.

⁴²"Jacob said, 'Please tell me your name.'" But he replied, 'Why do you ask my name?'" (Gen 32:29).

⁴³Solomon Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae* (Leipzig: Veit, 1896), p. 949, gives Latin *mirabilis* (=English "wonderful, marvelous, amazing, extraordinary") as a gloss for the term *pelîʾ* and suggests that the alternative vocalization *pelʾî* would also be possible. Other forms of the same word that occur in the Old Testament are *péleʾ* (Exod 15:11; Isa 9:5; 25:1; Ps 77:15; 78:12; 88:11), *wāpéleʾ* (Isa 29:14), *poᵃʾlékā* (Ps 77:12), *pilʾékā* (Ps 88:13), *pilʾkā* (Ps 89:6), *pᵉlāʾîm* (adv.) (Lam 1:9), *pᵉlāʾôt* (Ps 119:129), and *happᵉlāʾôt* (Dan 12:6).

⁴⁴It is the second use of *malʾāk* that I have in mind in Mal 3:1, quoted below, i.e., the "messenger of the covenant," not "my messenger."

⁴⁵My source of information for the word *malʾāk* as used in the King James Version is *Young's Analytical Concordance* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls: 1910), p. 23 of the Hebrew to English glossary in the back. The NIV word count represents a finding of the present paper.

⁴⁶The word *malʾāk* has a human referent ninety-nine times in the Old Testament. Seventy-seven of these have to do with persons bearing a message for someone else, as from one king to another. Six times the same word refers to a prophet--one who speaks for God. And in Mal 2:7 it is used to describe the role and function of a priest as one who makes the results of his learning available to those for whom he ministers. Here the best gloss would be "representative" rather than "messenger." In addition there are fifteen miscellaneous uses where the referent is clearly human.

⁴⁷Gen 32:3(4), 6(7); Num 20:14; 21:21(22); 22:5; 24:12; Deut 2:26; Josh 7:22; Judg 6:35; 7:24; 9:31; 11:12, 13, 14, 17, 19; 1 Sam 6:21; 11:3, 4, 7, 9, 9; 16:19; 23:27; 25:14, 42; 2 Sam 2:5; 3:12, 14, 26; 5:11; 11:4, 19, 22, 23, 25; 12:27; 1 Kgs 19:2; 20:2, 5, 9, 9; 22:13; 2 Kgs 1:2, 3, 5, 16; 5:10; 6:32, 33; 7:15; 9:18; 10:8; 14:8; 16:7; 19:9, 14, 23; 1 Chron 14:1; 19:16; 2 Chron 18:12; 35:21; 36:15, 16; Job 1:14; Ps 104:4; Prov 13:17; 16:14; Eccl 5:6(5); Isa 18:2; 37:9, 14; 42:19; 44:26; Ezek 23:16, 40; 30:9; Neh 6:3; Hag 1:13; Mal 3:1, 1; 2:13(14).

⁴⁸Perhaps "representative" would be better (see no. 46, above), but I do not propose making such a change. The burden of responsibility should rest with the exegete.