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THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL IN THE LIGHT OF CRITICISM.

"If there be with him an angel, an interpreter."—*Job* xxxiii. 23, R.V.

SOME time ago,[1] having the privilege of speaking from St. Mary's pulpit, I expressed a doubt whether our conception of Biblical interpretation was altogether adequate. The fear had haunted me that as interpreters of the Bible, and especially of the Old Testament, we might perhaps have given a disproportionate degree of attention to philological subleties and to what is now commonly called the Higher Criticism—good things, no doubt, but not the greatest and best. It was true that we had acted under a sense of duty, and had been rewarded by some measure of success. Both by oral instruction and by printed works we had made it understood that the Old Hebrew sages were not intellectual weaklings, and that their writings would remunerate the application of the ordinary principles of literary interpretation. In addition to this, the Higher Criticism, already impatient of its barriers, had begun to stimulate some students to conceive of the religion of Israel as historically developed, and, as the crown of the whole, to believe more intelligently in those ancient truths, the form of which, indeed, might be transitory, but their vitality would last for ever.

I ventured, however, to utter the conviction that though much had been done, the claims of investigation were not

[1] October 25, 1903. See EXPOSITOR, January 1904. The date of the present discourse is February 4, 1906.

fully satisfied. It was our business in the university, not only to teach but to prosecute the quest of truth. And it seemed that we should never reach the truth which lay at the heart of the Old Testament till we had gained a more historical comprehension of religious ideas and beliefs. I granted that both theoretically, and, to some extent, practically, the old view of Israel as a people set apart had been abandoned, but doubted whether we had acted with sufficient definiteness and consistency on the new view, which recognized the Israelitish people as an integral part of the nearer East, though gifted with a saving originality of its own. And as a preliminary to a satisfactory change in this respect I urged the importance, not only of more study of Eastern religions, but of a more persistent and resourceful investigation of the traditional readings of the Hebrew text. For our great object must henceforth be to put the Old Testament more fully and definitely in the light of history, and it was obviously the truest or the most probable critical text of the old Hebrew writings on which historical inquiries would have to be based. I admitted that an expanded textual criticism would lead on to an expanded exegesis. But it would not interfere with a faithful conservative interpretation of the traditional text, one which should put this text in its right place as a historical monument of the thoughts and beliefs of the age of the redactors, and of the views which those redactors held of past history.

Need I assure students of the more aspiring sort that I had no desire to make their path needlessly difficult? I did but seek to point out how much work would remain for them to do, and to encourage those who had time before them to plan a successful career. Nothing has happened since then to change the tenor of my advice. The reported failure of Old Testament criticism has not taken place, but

it cannot, I fear, be denied that, in order fully to justify their position at the bar of history, critics will have to take a very long step forward. No one, too, who reflects can fail to see the two chief causes of our comparative backwardness, namely, first, a hesitation to recognize elements of non-Jewish origin or affinities in Jewish religion; and next, an objection on the part of many teachers to complicate their task by taking up new and deep textual problems. And of these two causes is it not the second which most imperatively requires attention? The question of the text is, in fact, so important, so far-reaching, that we seem to be called upon to postpone other tasks in its favour. Some of us, I know, are tempted to think that we have done nearly all that might be done to settle it. Believe me, it is an illusion. Throughout the Old Testament there are textual phenomena of the most interesting kind which it is our duty to collect and study, looking below the often deceitful surface till we have enough to justify some assured inferences. After this, we must at least begin to recast our exegesis in accordance with these results, and with the facts of Semitic religion generally. It will be no easy task, I confess, and the subtle influence of our examination system is only too likely to hinder us. Still, that stedfastness in results which examinations naturally assume is unknown to true criticism. It is our duty from time to time to test the foundations of the critical opinions which have come down to us, or in which, by our own choice, we have for a length of time acquiesced. We have a great prize before us—not the winning of the praise of men, but the placing of the Biblical records more fully in the light of history. And as a churchman must I not add that we have to aim at the promotion of a more rightly adjusted piety, which shall not be always craving to have new truths pared down, but rejoice in a more complete apprehension of the rich contents of religion?

Such are some of the suggestions and considerations which, in this parting of the ways, I have been called upon to offer. May the seeds lodge in some candid minds! It is our common lot as students to have to move our tents from station to station. Let us accept our destiny with uplifted and thankful hearts, remembering the invisible presence of the "angel," the "interpreter"! It is time, however, that I should leave general principles. I will now ask your attention to the strange facts connected with the archangel Michael. How came these facts to be, and what is their historical and religious significance?

Let me begin by referring to a well known passage in Colossians (ii. 8), where the writer warns Christians against missing their prize by a self-made humility and cultus (*θρησκεία*) of the angels. This implies that in the Phrygian city of Colossae many Christians fancied that they could only approach their far-off heavenly Father by the mediation of angels, who therefore actually received worship. There can be no doubt about this strange fact. In a striking passage near the end of the canonical Apocalypse,[1] the real or imaginary John admits that he fell down to worship (*προσκυνῆσαι*) before the angel—evidently some exceptionally mighty angel, one of the Four or the Seven, but was forbidden by him to do so. To the Colossians, too, the greatest angel was undoubtedly one of the Four or the Seven, viz., Michael. Outside the walls of their city, at the chasm of the river Lycus, stood in later times a grand church dedicated to this mighty Being, under the title of the archangel or the chief captain, the legend being that when an inundation threatened destruction, Michael (who, as we know, was the prince of water) cleft the chasm, so that the water might run away.[2] Tradition also said that he made

[1] Rev. xxii. 8; cf. xix. 10.

[2] Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, i. 214–216.

this promise to the sick, "Whosoever shall take refuge here, in faith and fear calling upon the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and Michael the chief captain, by the name of God and my name, he shall not depart grieved." [1] In truth, it was through the reputation of Michael, not only as the victor over the swollen waters, but as a healer and compassionate friend of man, that both in Phrygia and elsewhere the cultus of Michael grew to such an enormous height. When, in that Jewish book *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*,[2] which was adopted and interpolated by Christians, Levi says to the angel who talks with him, and who has given him shield and sword, "O my lord, I pray, tell me thy name, that I may call upon thee in the day of trouble," the angel's answer is, "I am the angel who intercedes for the race of Israel that he may not be crushed to pieces, for every evil spirit stormeth against them." [3] That is, "I am Michael, active alike in prayer and in deed against the demons." His prayers, in fact, were not less mighty than his deeds, for according to the popular belief he was the mediator between God and man,[4] the heavenly high priest.[5] And if we would realize the depth and inwardness of the piety which this strange belief nourished, let us read the prayers in the encomia composed, it is said, by three bishops at the time when the cultus of Michael was at its height, that is, about the beginning of the seventh century A.D. Here is one of them: "O thou archangel Michael, pray to God for us that He may open to us the hand of His mercy and blessing, lest the hope of thy offering and gift which we bring to God in thy holy name, O archangel

[1] Anonym. Bonn., c. 12, ap. Lueken, *Michael*, p. 75.
[2] Levi, c. 5.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid. c. 6.
[5] *Ḥagigah*, 12 *b*; Hermas, *Mand.* x. 3; 2, 3; *Sim.* viii. 2, 5; Encomium of Eustathius, in Budge, *St. Michael*, p. 105.

Michael, perish from our hands. Thou knowest our hearts, and our love towards thee. We have no helper (προστάτης) beside thee, for thou hast been our helper from our youth up, and thou hast been an ambassador for us before God our Saviour." [1]

You may perhaps tell me that the date of the encomia being so late, we cannot use them in illustration of the New Testament. Sound method, however, does not always preclude the use of late authorities in the study of the history of religious beliefs. There is no reason why such a prayer as this should not have been framed even in the second century A.D. There was nothing strange in praying to such a great Being as Michael. The Jews did so, and why should not the Christians? Of course this involved decking out Michael with titles, some of which he ought not to share with a second. For instance, he is said to have "ordered the denizens of heaven, and redeemed the peoples of the earth"; he is also called "the likeness and similitude of God Almighty." [2] Strangely enough, however, the more Michael is honoured, the deeper, in a certain most undesirable sense, becomes the reverence for Christ, the reality of whose human nature is effaced.

Great indeed was the temptation to a cultus of Michael. Christians and Jews alike looked to him for help, not only in life but in death, and at the last day. It was Michael who would blow that trumpet blast which would wake the sleeping dead,[3] and when on that awful day the pious soul had been placed by Michael before the divine tribunal, it was the same gracious Being on whose intercession he would rely.[4] No wonder that Christian tombstones and amulets

[1] *St. Michael the Archangel.* Translation by E. A. Wallis Budge (1894), p. 25. Quoted by Lueken.

[2] Ibid. pp. 8, 80.

[3] So the Midrash, also Petrus-Apoc., Aeth., etc. (Lueken, *Michael*, p. 50).

[4] Pitra, *Anal. Sacra*, p. 54 (Lueken, p. 131).

so often bear the names of Christ, Michael and Gabriel.[1] Yes, Gabriel. For of him also, though in less abundance, great things are said.[2] In fact, to solve the problem of Michael will enable the skilled student to solve that of Gabriel.

You may perhaps have remarked that I have not kept Jewish evidence strictly apart from Christian. It is really impossible to do so. The Jews were among the first teachers of the Christians in speculation; in Hermas, for instance, the conception of Christ is based on the Jewish statements respecting Michael.[3] In one respect, however, the Jewish notion was narrower than the Christian. To the Jews Michael was the patron of Israel; to the Christians, of the human race.[4] But how, we ask, came the idea of Michael's patronship of Israel to develop? Was not Israel the cherished possession of Yahweh Himself? How can He delegate the care of His own "son" to another?

Obviously the idea referred to was suggested by the belief in the angelic princes of the heathen nations; the Book of Daniel shows this. There is a difficulty, however, which I hope to remove, arising out of the fact—already noticed by an ancient Rabbi[5]—that whereas the seventy princes of the nations were subjected divinities, Michael (as orthodox Jews believed) was the delegate of his Creator. Certainly this is remarkable. In former times it was Yahweh who fought Israel's battles, but now it is His angelic representative, the same who in Daniel xii. 1 receives the title, "the great prince who protecteth the sons of thy people." And here is another noteworthy fact. The popular Jewish

[1] Lueken, pp. 118 f.

[2] On the Gabriel traditions, see Driver's note on Dan. viii. 16, and cf. Lueken's *Michael.*

[3] Ibid. pp. 148–154; cf. Bousset, *Offenbarung*, p. 399.

[4] See e.g. *Ascens. of Isaiah* (Charles), ix. 23, second Greek recension.

[5] Ibid. p. 14.

exegesis is constantly finding references to Michael in the sacred history. It was Michael, for instance, who communed with Abraham at Mamre, and led Israel through the wilderness, and through Michael that Israel obtained its best possession—the Law. How came Israel to suppose this ? Surely this is a point which requires a full explanation.

In Jewish eschatology, too, strange things are said about Michael; the Christians did not hesitate to borrow them. I will here only mention two or three statements. It is Michael who, in concert with Gabriel, will intercede successfully for the final liberation of Israel, Sammael the accuser, the angelic patron of Israel's foe, Edom, being chased away. It is Michael, too, who, as the "chief captain," will in the latter days overcome the hosts of Gog and Magog. But strangest of all is the section of Jewish lore which reveals Michael to us as a cosmic power. Not only is he the chief of the four mighty angels of the Face or Presence,[1] and of the seven Watchers,[2] but, according to Enoch lxix. 15–23, he is in possession of the divine oath through which the earth was founded, and the sun and moon fulfil their appointed course. He is the prince of the world, and not only of Israel; God's viceroy, who preserves the universe. And even if it is only in Revelation xii. that we hear of his successful struggle with the dragon of chaos and darkness, yet it is evident that Revelation xii. is mainly derived from a Jewish source. Here, then, is one of the strangest honours that Michael has received; it is not the Being "like a son of man" (Dan. vii. 13), nor the World-Redeemer or Messiah, but Michael, who has the privilege of representing the Good Principle in its fight against the Bad at the end of the days.[3]

[1] See Eth. Enoch xl. [2] Ibid. xx.
[3] See Cheyne, *Bible Problems* (1904), pp. 218–222.

I ask, therefore, How is all this to be accounted for? It is not enough to reply that angelology was rampant, and that the imagination grows by exercise. There must be some definite historical explanation, and I will give that which seems to me the best, beginning with the observation that the four angels of the Presence and the seven Watchers are, by Jewish theologians, distinguished from the other angels by their creation on the second day,[1] and by their having a permanent existence.[2] To this I add that there is the strongest probability that originally they were not dependent beings at all. From a comparative historical point of view the holy Four are derived from the gods of the four quarters of the world, who, both in the Egyptian and in the North American mythologies, are the living pillars of the heaven; the holy Seven, called Watchers, like the Amshaspands of Zoroastrianism, come from the sleepless rulers of the sky, the sun, the moon, and the five planets. Some of the Jews, indeed, were dimly conscious of this, for, as the Talmud shows, they sacrificed to the sun, the moon, the planets, and Michael.[3] Michael, however, and his double or offshoot Gabriel, must originally have been distinct from the Four and from the Seven. Things are said of them which exceed all that is related of the other angels put together. They are indeed even called the "kings of the angels."[4] From whence then can Michael (to put aside Gabriel as superfluous) be derived?

An eminent Jewish scholar[5] has plausibly suggested that he may be the Zoroastrian Amshaspand Vohumanô (Good Thought), who, like Michael, is the pious soul's chief helper

[1] Hermas, *Vis.* iii. 4, 1; cf. *Sim*, ix. 6, viii. 3, 3 (Lueken, p. 112).
[2] See *Bereshith Rabba*, par. 78.
[3] *Ḥullin*, 40*a*; *Abodah Zarah*, 42 *b*.
[4] *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim*, on iii. 7.
[5] Kohut, *Jüd. Angelologie* (1866), p. 24.

on its last journey,[1] and who, with the other Amshaspands, takes part in the final struggle with Ahriman and the serpent. Such incomplete parallelisms, however, do not help us much. There were other conductors of the soul besides Vohumanô; ancient Jews identified Michael with Hermes Psuchopompos, or with Osiris or Anubis. And as for the great final struggle, Vohumanô is not the chief captain like Michael.

A better parallelism can be drawn between Michael and Mithra, the wonderful phases of whose worship, now in splendour, now passing into eclipse, I need not recall in detail.[2] If Mithra, even more than the Parsee Messiah Sôshyans, is parallel to Christ, it follows that he must to a great extent be parallel to Michael. We may even venture to go further, and assert that in Michael, as well as in a later product of Jewish angelology, who, as it seems, actually bears a name derived from Mithra—I mean Metatron, the so-called "driver of the (heavenly) chariot"[3]—there are elements directly derived from Mithra. No apology is needed for this. It is now beyond dispute that Persian religion, in its various forms, was too powerful and on the whole too congenial to the Jews not to exercise a considerable influence on Judaism. Again and again the leaders of the Jews showed a wonderful power of assimilating external beliefs, and we may perhaps say that in the person of Michael the god Mithra surrendered his crown to the God of the Jews, as he had done once before to that glorious Being who comes nearest to the God of the later prophets—Ahura Mazda.

At the same time we must not disregard the hardly less

[1] Later on his place is taken by the holy and strong Sraosha.

[2] See Cumont, *Mystères de Mithras*.

[3] See Kohut, op. cit. pp. 36–42. For Metatron as Psuchopompos, see the *Testament of Job*.

potent influences of Babylonia.[1] If Michael was "the merciful one," "the mediator between God and man," the healer, the dragon slayer, so before him was Marduk. It is not inconceivable that the Jews, whose forefathers had long ago virtually substituted Yahweh for Marduk in the creation story, may have fused the god Marduk with a celestial figure of their own, viz., Michael.

Michael, then, is a reflexion, not only of Mithra, but of Marduk. As such he owes his fuller being, not to the theologians, but to the people, though the Jewish theologians accepted the popular faith with modifications. But is this really a complete explanation of Michael? Surely the way in which he is introduced in Daniel implies that the name had a long history behind it. Even if some of the features of Michael were either borrowed from Marduk, or deepened through the contact of the Jews with Marduk worshippers, yet the name Michael, as applied to a celestial Being, cannot possibly have a Babylonian origin.

We may at this point be helped by remembering that Michael is represented in Enoch as the chief of the Angels of the Face or Presence. Now "face" or "presence" is a term applied in Phœnician, and therefore possibly also in Hebrew, to a divine Being who represents the supreme God. Is there any Being spoken of in the Old Testament who stands apart from all other Beings except the One, and who is called the Face, or representation, of Yahweh? There is. He appears with special frequency in Genesis, Numbers, and Judges, and much difficulty has his appearance caused to critics. The name which he bears is Mal'ak Yahweh, for which the English Bible gives "the angel of the Lord." The objection to this is that Mal'ak Yahweh is by no means a mere angel or messenger, but equivalent

[1] Cheyne, *Bible Problems* (1904), pp. 224–226; Zimmern, *Keilinschriften*, etc., 3rd ed., p. 376.

to Yahweh or Elohim (i.e. God). Moreover, in Exodus xxiii. 21 the name of Yahweh is said to be "in him," and in Exodus xxiii. 14 he is called by Yahweh "my face," i.e. my representation.[1] It is plain, therefore, that Mal'ak must have come from some proper name. Not indeed from "Michael"—for this means "who is like the Divinity?"—and is therefore not suitable as a divine name, but from some name out of which, according to analogies, both Michael and Mal'ak can have come.

Theology, though much interested in the result, cannot, of course, offer any suggestion. What we have before us is a twofold historical problem, viz. (1) What is the name out of which both Michael and Mal'ak can have developed?[2] and (2) What is the significance of the combination of the two names, viz. the uncertain first name and Yahweh? It is, however, only the solution of the second problem which can be mentioned here. It is this—that the all-powerful representative of Yahweh and all-merciful friend of man, so often spoken of in the early books, is a Being who was once worshipped by the Israelites in combination with Yahweh, but who was afterwards completely subordinated to Him. In the period during which he was so worshipped, he often bore a name compounded of his own name and that of Yahweh, but afterwards, when such combined worship was frowned upon by the best of Israel's teachers, his name was modified, sometimes into Mal'ak, "messenger," or Mal'aki "my messenger," sometimes into Michael, "who is like the Divinity?"

It is now possible to understand better those strange speeches of the Most High in Genesis, "Let *us* make man"

[1] In the late passage, Isa. lxiii. 9, we find the singular phrase "the angel of his face," which can only mean "the angel who is his face (=representation)."

[2] See *Enc. Biblica*, "Michael," "Michaiah." In the writer's *Genesis* the explanation will be justified at length.

(Gen. i. 26), "the man is become as one of *us*" (Gen. iii. 22), and "let *us* go down" (Gen. xi. 7). Nor is it any longer uncertain how the Jews came to identify the "Angel of the Lord" with Michael. They must have had at least the shadow of a tradition that the great and good Being upon whom they loved to lavish all the worthiest titles of the Babylonian God Marduk and the Persian God Mithra, was the same of whom their sacred writers had related so many beautiful stories. Indeed, except as regards the name, it was perfectly correct to say that Michael relieved the forlorn Hagar, talked with Abraham at Mamre, interposed for Isaac at the mountain of sacrifice, and led the people of Israel through the wilderness.

It would be a delightful task to trace the references to this honourably deposed deity (Michael) throughout the Old Testament, and to supplement these from later Jewish and Christian sources. It would in fact be a study in the development of a divine ideal. The prologue would be concerned with that strange but no longer obscure story in Genesis xxxii., where Jacob wrestles for a blessing with a divine Man—a story which has been glorified by Charles Wesley, in the hymn, "Come, O thou Traveller unknown." And the epilogue would deal with the Archangel Word and the High Priest Word of the Jewish philosopher and theologian Philo, for it is obvious that the Logos of Philo is closely related to Michael. I trust, however, that I have opened a door through which many others may be enabled to pass.

Among those "others" I think especially of young men. To them we teachers would fain pass on the torch of life—life, in all its varied meanings. And we must do so promptly, for losses befall us. To-day I may fitly recall to mind the late President of Chicago University, William Rainey Harper, whose treasure-house of learning on Amos and Hosea had just been opened to students before his last

fatal illness. Truly "being made perfect in a little while, he fulfilled long years" (Wisd. iv. 13). And what is the message of his life? Surely this, that we put our whole strength into our work, and shrink from no task, however hard, which a sense of duty lays upon us. "If there be with us an angel, an interpreter," to lead us on the way, why should we fear?

My younger friends, I would now speak directly to you, and connect my words with the passage in the speech of Elihu, from which my text is taken (Job xxxiii. 23). It is true, the greater part of the verse is corrupt, though not beyond reach of restoration; it refers almost certainly to Michael, as, like the Most High, the healer of diseases. But the opening words are plain, and they have a comfort for students. Elihu says in effect that there is a great heavenly Being, whose business it is to interpret God to man and man to God. This Being speaks with authority for God, for he is himself a partaker of the Divine nature. He can also sympathize with man, for he is constantly occupied with human affairs, and from time to time manifests himself in human form. This is the imaginative vesture of the essential truth that there is an aspect of the Divine nature through which light is conveyed to the human soul, and which emboldens man to believe that his highest aspirations will not be disappointed. Yes, Michael, like Parakletos, is for us the symbol of the self-interpreting aspect of the Deity. Michael, too, may encourage us to form a bold but strangely sweet hope for ourselves. Shall it not be one of our chief aims to produce greater clearness in all the departments of life—to interpret one class to another, one age to another, one science or branch of knowledge to another? Heaven, as an old Rabbi said, is a clear world; and may not even we do something to dissipate a few of the mists of earth?

Yes, it is a worthy ambition to be an interpreter. And

if the words which I have been permitted to speak to-day should awaken in a few young men the desire to be foremost workers in the expansion of Biblical interpretation, it would be a result which would gladden my heart more than any material gain. For "the harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few."

T. K. CHEYNE.