

**CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

**MELCHIZEDEK IN BIBLICAL AND  
EXTRABIBLICAL TRADITIONS**

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# CHAPTER ONE

## GROWTH OF MELCHIZEDEK TRADITIONS AND HISTORY OF RESEARCH

The enigmatic nature of Melchizedek and the multifarious texts and traditions relating to this ancient regal priest have engendered the interest of more than a few thinkers throughout the centuries. Although Melchizedek receives scant attention in the OT (he is mentioned only in Gen 14:18-20 and Psalm 110), from Jewish, Gnostic, and Christian circles have proceeded many writings which, to a greater or lesser extent, deal with his identity, role, and purpose.

Melchizedek's unique status is readily grasped when one considers that no other personage from patriarchal history has been so diversely identified as the following: the priest-king of Salem, Shem, a man exalted to an angelic status, an angel, an archangel, a heavenly power over the angels, the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, a heavenly power over Christ, and the Father! His relation to Christ--a relation David established already in Psalm 110--has beckoned and still beckons particular examination by those in the Church. The thesis of this study is the following: *The biblical portrait of Melchizedek in Hebrews was influenced by the employment of typology within the OT and the presence of Jewish traditions about Melchizedek in the theological milieu of the first century B.C. and first century A.D..*

In the following history of Melchizedek traditions and research on those traditions, the reader will begin to understand and appreciate the study of one whose identity and purpose continues to evade ecclesial and scholarly consensus.

## **I. The Jewish, Gnostic, and Christian Growth of Melchizedek Traditions after the first century B.C. and A.D.**

Between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D.--during which time at least five writers authored texts dealing with Melchizedek--<sup>1</sup>one can detect *at least* three distinct paths down which Melchizedek traditions began to proceed: Jewish, Gnostic, and Christian. Not only are these three paths important for one who wishes simply to observe how differing communities or individuals viewed Melchizedek; by reading back through these later traditions to earlier traditions, one can also begin to discern the manner in which *earlier* Melchizedek traditions and ideologies were or were not appropriated by these *later* groups and individuals. The evidence presented will also correct the *errant* notion that interest in Melchizedek lay dormant from the first century until the twentieth century, when scholars discovered the Melchizedek document from Qumran (11QMelch).

### **A. Jewish Melchizedek Traditions**

The Jewish Melchizedek traditions may, for the sake of clarity, be divided into traditions which reflected upon Melchizedek and his role in a *positive* and a *negative* manner.

First, the majority of traditions regarding Melchizedek in Jewish writings paint him in positive colors. From an early date Melchizedek was identified as Noah's son, Shem. Although this identification was not made explicit until the first third of the second century A.D.,<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Those extant texts and/or authors are the following: 11QMelch (late first century B.C.); 2 Enoch (first century A.D.); Philo's *Legum Allegoira*e 3.79-82, *De Congressu* 99, and *De Abrahamo* 235 (first century A.D.); Josephus' *War* 6.438 and *Antiquities* 1.179-181 (first century A.D.); and the Book of Hebrews (first century A.D.). These texts will be discussed in Chapters III-IV of the thesis.

<sup>2</sup>Rabbi Zechariah, in the name of Rabbi Ishmael, makes this identification first in *b. Ned.* 32b: "R. Zechariah said in the name of R. Ishmael, 'The Holy One, blessed be He, desired to

evidence from the Targumim strongly suggests that it was based on an earlier tradition.<sup>3</sup> The dating in the MT for the birth and death of Shem and Abraham shows that Shem lived 210 years after the birth of Abraham and 35 years after his death, thus textually allowing the possibility of this identification.<sup>4</sup> In later rabbinic texts, in which Melchizedek is not identified with Shem, he is the one who reveals the priesthood or teaches the Torah to Abraham.<sup>5</sup> In certain medieval Jewish texts Melchizedek is elevated to the point of being equated no longer with Shem but with the archangel Michael and/or intimately associated with the Messiah and other leading figures of Judaism.<sup>6</sup>

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derive the priesthood from Shem, as it is said, *And he was priest to El Elyon* [ . . . ]." R. Ishmael was the "[l]eading rabbinic authority of the first third of the 2d century B.C.E. (contemporary with but in the long run overshadowed by Akiba ben Joseph) [ . . . ]," Robert Goldenberg, "Ishmael, Rabbi," in *ABD* 3:513.

<sup>3</sup>Targum Neophiti on Gen 14:18 reads, "And Melchizedek king of Jerusalem--that is the great Shem--brought bread and wine, for he was a priest and exercised the sovereign priesthood before the Most High God," A. Lods, *Histoire de la littérature hébraïque et juive des origines à la ruine de l'Etat juif* (Paris, 1950), 938. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan reads, "And Melchizedek, who is Shem, the son of Noah, went out to meet Abraham," A. Diéz Macho, *Neophyti I Targum Palestinense*, MS de la bibliotheca Vaticana, tomo I, *Genesis* (Madrid-Barcelona, 1968).

<sup>4</sup>Fred L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 114-124, offers possible textual and theological reasons as to why Melchizedek was identified as Shem.

<sup>5</sup>Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 124.

<sup>6</sup>*T.b. Sukka* 52b, e.g., identifies the "four workmen" of Zech 2:3 (English 2:20) as "the Messiah son of David, the Messiah son of Joseph, Elijah and Melchizedek," M. Delcor, "Melchizedek from Genesis to the Qumran Text and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JSJ* 2 (1971): 131. Michael and Melchizedek are equated in the medieval Jewish texts, *Yalqut hadas* and *Zohar hadas*. See W. Lueken, *Michael; der Erzengel Michael in der Überlieferung des Judentums* (Göttingen: Huth, 1898), 31-32, and Paul J. Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchiresa*, CBQMS 10 (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981), 73.

Secondly, there were a handful of traditions which denigrated Melchizedek as one from whom God took away the priesthood as punishment for blessing Abraham prior to blessing YHWH in Gen 14:19-20. In *b. Ned.* 32b, for example, we read,

R. Zechariah said in the name of R. Ishmael, 'The Holy One, blessed be He, desired to derive the priesthood from Shem, as it is said, *And he was priest to El Elyon*. Since he prefaced the blessing of Abraham to the blessing of the Place, he derived it from Abraham, as it is said, *And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by El Elyon who acquires the heavens and the earth, and blessed be El Elyon . . ."* (Gen. xiv. 19b-20a).<sup>1</sup> Abraham said to him, 'Does one actually preface the blessing of the slave to the blessing of his acquirer?' From the hand (of Shem) he gave it to Abraham, as it is said, *The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I shall set your enemies as a stool for your feet'* (Ps. cx. 1), and after this it is written, *The Lord has sworn and will not repent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'*. This corresponds to what is written, *And he was priest to El Elyon*. He was a priest, but his seed was not a priest.<sup>7</sup>

This negative portrayal, which may or may not have been a polemical attack against the Christian use of Melchizedek,<sup>8</sup> also reveals one Jewish opinion regarding the addressee of Psalm 110, namely, Abraham.

### ***B. Gnostic Melchizedek Traditions***

Because of the eclectic propensities of various Gnostic groups and individuals, it comes as no surprise that they readily employed Melchizedek traditions to further their own ideologies and cosmologies. Indeed, the open-ended, mysterious description of Melchizedek in Heb 7:3

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<sup>7</sup>Cited in Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 118.

<sup>8</sup>Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, finds "no occasion for such polemic within the Rabbinic sources themselves," 129, but his opinion is in the minority. M. Delcor exemplifies the majority opinion: "We must doubtless situate that conception of Melchizedek's fall, when he was deprived of his priesthood in favor of Abraham, as a response of the Rabbis to the outlook of the Epistle to the Hebrews and subsequently of the Fathers," 132. See Richard Longenecker, "The Melchizedek Argument of Hebrews," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd*, ed. R. A. Guelich, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 166-167, for a thorough discussion of the various views.

("ἀπάτωρ ἀμήτωρ ἀγενεαλόγητος, μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων, ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ, μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές") and his typological relation to Christ may actually have been the impetuses behind the Gnostic embrace and adoption of Melchizedek ideas.<sup>9</sup> Of the extant Gnostic works, there are five in which Melchizedek is mentioned or plays a major role: (1) the *Bala'izah Fragment* (=Kahle's Fragment 52),<sup>10</sup> (2) Nag Hammadi Codex IX:1:Melchizedek,<sup>11</sup> (3) the *Second Book of Jeu*,<sup>12</sup> (4) *Pistis Sophia*, Book IV; (5) and *Pistis Sophia*, Books I-III.<sup>13</sup>

The *Bala'izah Fragment* is an early "apocryphal text of obvious Gnostic character",<sup>14</sup> which might be called a "Gnostic midrash."<sup>15</sup> The text purports to be the record of a didactic conversation between Jesus and John regarding the spiritual, allegorical meaning of various figures and persons in the book of Genesis. The last four Coptic letters of (what is ostensibly) Melchizedek's name occur on line 12 (the text is badly damaged at this point and thus the

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<sup>9</sup>Birger Pearson, in *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), notes a "trajectory of interpretation in which the epistle to the Hebrews [7:3] provides a major starting point," 121.

<sup>10</sup>For text and translation, see Paul Kahle, *Bala'izah: Coptic Texts from Deir El-Bala'izah in Upper Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 1:473-477.

<sup>11</sup>For text and translation, see *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*, ed. B. A. Pearson, NHS 15, (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 19-85.

<sup>12</sup>For text and translation, see *The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex*, ed. Carl Schmidt, trans. V. MacDermot, NHS 13 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 98-141.

<sup>13</sup>For text and translation, see *Pistis Sophia*, ed. Carl Schmidt, trans. V. MacDermot, NHS 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

<sup>14</sup>Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 109.

<sup>15</sup>Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 134.

context is uncertain). The first three letters of his name appear in a later section, a portion of which reads:

Moreover, [I wish] to [ask that you] explain [to me] about Mel[chizedek]. Is it not said [about him], "he is [without] [father, without] mother, his generation not being [mentioned], not having a beginning of days, nor ends of life, resembling the Son [of] God, being a priest forever?" Moreover, it is said about him, that [ . . . ]<sup>16</sup>

The textual fragment ends at this point so one is left wondering what the response might have been. Despite the text's fragmentary nature and the relative ambiguity surrounding the author's conception of Melchizedek, one is at least able to discern that the earlier Melchizedek tradition of Heb 7:3 shaped, to some extent, the questions which were asked and probably the response(s) which followed.

The Nag Hammadi Codex IX:1:Melchizedek is "generically an apocalypse infused with Christian traditions and a strong influence from the epistle to the Hebrews, together with pre-Christian Jewish speculations on the figure of Melchizedek."<sup>17</sup> In this text Melchizedek, "the priest of God Most High," (12:10-11) first receives revelations from heavenly powers regarding the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The second set of revelations transports Melchizedek into the future again, this time *as the crucified, resurrected, and triumphant savior himself*. If this interpretation of the fragmentary text is correct, [the tractate] teaches the identity of Jesus Christ with the ancient priest Melchizedek; i.e., *Jesus is Melchizedek redivivus* (emphasis mine)<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Translation by Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 110, lines 78-90.

<sup>17</sup>Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 114.

<sup>18</sup>Birger A. Pearson, "Melchizedek," in *ABD IV*: 688.

As Pearson notes, this identification of Melchizedek and Christ seems to be based on Heb 7:3, in particular the depiction of Melchizedek as one ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ.<sup>19</sup> Gnostic elements are readily visible, especially in the liturgical interlude between the first and second revelations. In a prayer which invokes several Gnostic divine beings (i.e., Barbelo and the four "Luminaries": Harmozel, Oroiael, Daveithe, Eleleth [5:24-6:14]) one discerns that the author must have been associated with the same "Sethian" Gnosticism visible in the *Apocryphon of John* and other Gnostic texts. Of especial significance for determining the connection between this later Melchizedek tradition and earlier traditions is the fact that the language and imagery used in this document to describe Melchizedek's roles as a heavenly high priest and eschatological warrior are echoed in earlier, apocalyptic material such as 11QMelch, *1 Enoch* (37-71), and *2 Enoch*.

In the *Second Book of Jeu*, Melchizedek, called by the dual-name "Zorokothora Melchizedek,"<sup>20</sup> is designated as the heavenly being who, at the triple-baptism of Jesus' disciples (i.e., in fire, water, and Spirit), is first to "bring forth the water of the baptism of life in one of these pitchers of wine" (chapter 45) which the disciples had set up for the ritual. Secondly, he is to "bring the water of the baptism of fire of the Virgin of the Light [. . .]," (chapter 46). In both instances Melchizedek's name is mentioned in a prayer which Jesus is directing to His Father. Although Hebrews seems to have had no discernible influence on this text, the Genesis 14 account of Melchizedek in which he "brought forth" bread and wine to Abraham may have

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<sup>19</sup>Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 111.

<sup>20</sup>Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, notes that Zorokothora is "a name that reflects Egyptian magical traditions," 114.

suggested the portrayal of Melchizedek's task here as one who "brings forth" water and fire.<sup>21</sup>

Melchizedek (aka "Zorokothora Melchizedek") plays a decisive role in two locations in *Pistis Sophia, Book IV*--usually regarded as the most ancient of the four books--<sup>22</sup>as one of the two figures of light (the other is Jeu, the father of Jesus) who are *superior* to Jesus. In the first instance, Jesus describes Melchizedek as the one who "is the envoy of all the lights [=souls] which are purified in the archons, as he [Zorokothora Melchizedek] takes them into the Treasury of the Light [=the pleroma]," (chapter 139). In the second instance, in response to the souls which have been ensnared by Hekate and other evil forces, Melchizedek

looks forth from the height, and the world with the mountains moves, and the archons are in agitation. And he looks upon all the places of Hekate, and her places are dissolved and destroyed. And all the souls which are in her punishments are carried off and returned once more to the sphere, because they were perishing in the fire of her punishments.<sup>23</sup>

Pearson rightly notes that "Melchizedek is, therefore, a heavenly savior par excellence, whose rank in the divine hierarchy is clearly superior to that of Jesus Christ himself, though perhaps inferior to that of Jeu" and that "there is no trace left in this material of the biblical texts from which the figure of Melchizedek derives."<sup>24</sup>

The duties and rank of Melchizedek in *Pistis Sophia, Books I-III* are related to those in Book IV, but also surpass them in excellency. In Chapter 25 of *Pistis Sophia I*, Melchizedek,

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<sup>21</sup>This opinion is shared by Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 116, and Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 147-148.

<sup>22</sup>Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 117.

<sup>23</sup>Chapter 140

<sup>24</sup>Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 118.

(the magical name *Zorokothora* has been dropped) is termed the "great Receiver of light" who has other inferior "receivers" who transfer up "light" which they have collected in the cosmos. His subordinates, so to speak, now "do the work for him"; this is certainly an advance from the fourth book. In another section of *Pistis Sophia* (Book III, Chapter 112), which describes the process by which souls are "sealed" by several heavenly powers, Melchizedek is the one who places the final "seal" upon a soul. As with *Pistis Sophia*, Book IV, these books, in their description of Melchizedek, have lost almost all contact with the biblical description of Melchizedek.

### *C. Melchizedek Traditions Within the Church*

Christian thinkers of the first few centuries A.D., like the individuals and groups covered above, did not speak univocally regarding the identity, importance, and function of the ancient priest-king of Salem. Although the majority of Christian writers confessed Melchizedek to be merely a man whose dual office typified Christological realities, there were some within the pale of early Christendom who saw him as one who not only typified Christological realities: he *personified* them, i.e., he *was* Christ (cf. the discussion above of Nag Hammadi Codex IX:1: Melchizedek). Others viewed Melchizedek as an angel, the Holy Spirit, or some other heavenly power. One heterodox group attracted enough interest within the church to earn the dubious honor of being recognized by the heresiologists; Epiphanius, in his *Panarion*, dubbed them the "Melchizedekians."<sup>25</sup>

As noted, for most of the church fathers, Melchizedek typified Christological realities. It became a commonplace in expositions of Heb 7:3 to use the description of Melchizedek as one

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<sup>25</sup>Ed. K. Holl, *Epiphanius II*, GCS 31 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1980), 324-337.

"without mother" and "without father" to exemplify the eternal generation of the Son from the Father *without a mother* and the human generation of the Son from Mary *without a father*.<sup>26</sup>

Beginning with Justin Martyr (110-165 A.D.), Christian apologists referenced the uncircumcised priest of Salem as a typological forerunner of Gentiles who believe in and acknowledge the one, true God and who, like Melchizedek, are in no need of circumcision.<sup>27</sup> With virtually one voice, the Fathers also speak of the bread and wine of Melchizedek (Gen 14:18) as *typical* of the Eucharistic elements.<sup>28</sup>

There were within the Church, however, thinkers and theologians who elevated Melchizedek to a supra-human status. Origen and his pupil Didymus, for example, reportedly believed that Melchizedek was an angel. Although the work in which Origen made this claim is no longer extant, Jerome, in answering a question regarding Melchizedek's identity, searched through earlier writings of church fathers and found a homily of Origen in which "[. . .] *in qua multiplici sermone disputans, illuc devolutus est ut eum angelum diceret, isdemque paene*

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<sup>26</sup>See, e.g., Chrysostom: *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint John and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. P. Schaff, NPNF 14 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 423-424.

<sup>27</sup>See, e.g., Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* XXXIII, "[A]s Melchizedek was described by Moses as the priest of the Most High, and he was a priest of those who were in uncircumcision, and blessed the circumcised Abraham who brought him tithes, so God has shown that His everlasting Priest, called also by the Holy Spirit Lord, would be Priest of those in uncircumcision," *The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, ANF 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 211.

<sup>28</sup>See Patrick F. Cremin, "According to the Order of Melchisedech; Melchisedech, a type of the Eucharist," *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 53 (1939): 487-500 and "The Order of Melchisedech: The Patristic Interpretation and its Value," *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 54 (1939): 385-391. See also Gerald T. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conception of the Priesthood of Melchisedech: An Historico-Exegetical Investigation* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1951), 108-123.

*argumentis, quibus scriptor tuus de Spiritu Sancto, ille de supernis virtutibus est locutus.*"<sup>29</sup>

Although Jerome and the other fathers whom he consulted purportedly disagreed with Origen and Didymus, the minority views of these two Alexandrian exegetes are indicative of a more widespread hesitancy to identify dogmatically the sacerdotal king of Salem.

Toward the end of the second century A.D. and into the third, a relatively minor sect within the Church at Rome gathered themselves around one Theodotus the Banker, an erstwhile follower of the Theodotus of Byzantium, who had been excommunicated by Bishop Victor (cir. 198 A.D.) an account of his adoptionistic Christology.<sup>30</sup> Theodotus the Banker, like his teacher, was a proponent of "dynamic monarchialism" but also held the view that δύναμίν τινα τὸν Μελκισεδέκ εἶναι μεγίστην, καὶ τοῦτον εἶναι μείζονα τοῦ χριστοῦ, οὐ κατ' εἰκόνα φάσκουσι τὸν χριστὸν τυγῶναι.<sup>31</sup> Regarding this group, various Fathers wrote that the Melchizedekians believed their namesake to be the following: the highest heavenly power, after whose image Christ was formed;<sup>32</sup> one who engages in priestly intercession for the angelic hosts,

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<sup>29</sup>Jerome's *Epistle ad Evangelium LXXIII* in *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 22 (Paris, 1878-1890), 676-681.

<sup>30</sup>Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* 5.28 in *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace, NPNF 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 246-248.

<sup>31</sup>Translation, "A certain Melchizedek is a great power, and this one is greater than the Christ, according to whose likeness, they [the Melchizedekians] say, the Christ happens to be." This is reported by Hippolytus in *Elenchos* 7.36. See *Hippolytus' Werke*, ed. P. Wendland, Vol. 3, GCS 26 (Leipzig, 1916).

<sup>32</sup>As recorded by Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 7.36, in *Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix*, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, ANF 5 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 115.

as Christ does for mankind,<sup>33</sup> and one who receives offerings and sacrifices from the Melchizedekian sect on earth.<sup>34</sup>

There were also those in the Church, who, unlike the Melchizedekians, held to an orthodox Christology while simultaneously exalting Melchizedek to a supra-human status. For example, in the last half of the third century, Hierakas the Egyptian, a theological pupil of Origen, embraced the opinion that Melchizedek was the Holy Spirit.<sup>35</sup> A similar theory positing the identity of Melchizedek and the Holy Spirit was espoused in the latter years of the fourth century in an anonymous work entitled *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti CXXVII*.<sup>36</sup> In Question 109 of this text, through an exegesis of Ps 110, the author concluded that, since this psalm posits similar functions and the same nature for Melchizedek and Christ, yet still distinguishes them, the logical deduction is that Melchizedek is none other than the Holy Spirit. In addition to the *Quaestiones*, both Epiphanius and Mark the Hermit write during this time against certain views which equated Melchizedek with the Logos and even the Father.<sup>37</sup>

#### *D. Summary*

From this brief sketch of some of the Jewish, Gnostic, and Christian Melchizedek

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<sup>33</sup>As recorded in Pseudo-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies*, 28, in *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian I. Apologetic; II. Anti-Marcion; III. Ethical*, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, ANF 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 654.

<sup>34</sup>As recorded by Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 55.8.

<sup>35</sup>See the discussion in Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 101-105.

<sup>36</sup>The text is found in *Pseudo-Augustini Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti CXXVII*, CSEL, ed. Alexander Stout, vol. 50 (Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1908), 257-268.

<sup>37</sup>See the discussion of Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 105-113.

traditions of the first few centuries A.D., the following conclusions may be drawn. *First*, the texts from the first century B.C. and A.D. that address Melchizedek were not the last chapter in Melchizedek speculation. Melchizedek traditions continued to flourish in some quarters well into the medieval era. *Second*, these traditions about Melchizedek were not produced, promulgated, or embraced in only one geographical location or by one religious communion or individual. *Third*, although many of these traditions adhere to, build upon, or echo the descriptions of Melchizedek in canonical texts, a few move beyond the scriptural portrait of Melchizedek to such an extent that the name "Melchizedek" alone echoes the biblical writings. *Fourth*, clear similarities between earlier non-canonical and later non-canonical Melchizedek traditions (e.g., between 11QMelch and NHC IX:1:Melchizedek) suggest strongly that these earlier traditions and/or texts continued to have an impact on later generations. *Fifth*, direct and indirect testimonies from Christian exegetes, homilists, and heresiologists concerning Melchizedek traditions lead one to conclude that there may have existed considerable latitude within the Church as to the identity, role, and significance of Melchizedek.

## **II. History of Twentieth Century Research on Melchizedek Traditions**

If in the first few centuries of the Common Era Melchizedek traditions "were fruitful and multiplied" among diverse groups and individuals, then in the twentieth century *research and theories* on these various traditions have imitated this astonishing growth. In particular, within the last three decades writers have produced a vast number of scholarly articles, monographs, and studies on Melchizedek and the traditions surrounding him.

The primary impetus behind much of this research and writing has been the discovery of

a fragmentary document from Cave 11 at Qumran (11QMelch).<sup>38</sup> This document is an eschatological midrash describing the redemptive work of an מלכזדק named Melchizedek who will provide emancipation for the "sons of light" in the tenth and final jubilee of world history. The discovery and publication of this first century B.C. document sparked a renewed interest in other early Melchizedek traditions such as are found in 2 Enoch, Philo, Josephus, and Hebrews. Many scholars have grappled with the different and often divergent descriptions and uses of Melchizedek in these traditions in a quest to discover genealogical or analogical connections between the texts and the communities or individuals who produced them. Much of this quest has centered on an effort to establish a link between the addressees of Hebrews and the Qumran covenanters. This history of research will discuss the more significant scholarly studies of this century on Melchizedek traditions.

#### ***A. Early Twentieth Century Scholars of Melchizedek Traditions (1900-1965)***

Three scholars of the early twentieth century--all of them remarkably writing within the same two-year period (1927-1928)--devoted extensive research to the subject of Melchizedek's treatment both in the Scriptures and in noncanonical Jewish, Gnostic, and Christian texts. F. J. Jérôme, in an unpublished doctoral dissertation entitled "Das geschichtlich Melchisedech-Bild und seine Bedeutung im Hebräerbriefe,"<sup>39</sup> explored the Melchizedek traditions found in Jewish

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<sup>38</sup>The *editio princeps* were provided by A. S. van der Woude in "Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim aus Qumran Höhle XI," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1965): 354-373.

<sup>39</sup>Freiburg University, 1917.

apocryphal writings (e.g., 2 Enoch and the Apocalypse of Abraham<sup>40</sup>), Gnostic writings (Pistis Sophia and the Book of Jeu), the Melchizedekians, and patristic works.<sup>41</sup> In the final chapter of his dissertation, Jérôme uses these for a foil in his exegetical treatment of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7.

In the same year, the work of **Gottfried Wuttke** on Melchizedek traditions appeared in a book entitled *Melchisedech der Priesterkönig von Salem: Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Exegese*.<sup>42</sup> Like Jérôme, Wuttke covered the majority of the Jewish, Gnostic, and Christian Melchizedek traditions and compared them to the depiction and use of Melchizedek in Hebrews. Although he has been criticized for conflating certain Christian heresies with Gnostic treatments of Melchizedek,<sup>43</sup> the enduring value of his work is in its exhaustive study of the views of Greek and Latin patristic writers up into the medieval era relative to Melchizedek.

A year later, in 1928, **Hellmuth Stork** provided the scholarly world with a study of the sect of the Melchizedekians. His monograph, *Die sogenannten Melchizedekianer mit*

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<sup>40</sup>Although the Apocalypse of Abraham (ApAb;) does not mention Melchizedek, the text does include a hymn taught by Iaoel to Abraham in which the Slavic word (*bezrodĭne*="ungenerated") is used to describe God, as are the epithets, "without mother" and "without father": "Eternal One, Mighty One, Holy El, God autocrat, self-originate, incorruptible, immaculate, unbegotten, spotless, immortal, self-perfected, self-devised, without mother, without father, ungenerated [. . .]," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 681-705. Because the Greek counterpart to *bezrodĭne* is most likely *αγεννητος* or *ἀγενεαλόγητος* ("without genealogy"), and because this unusual word, along with "without mother" and "without father," are used to describe Melchizedek in Heb 7:3, Jérôme provides a two page summary of ApAb (12-13).

<sup>41</sup>A review of these various traditions comprises the majority of Jérôme's dissertation (72 of the 98 pages).

<sup>42</sup>*BZNW* 5; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1927.

<sup>43</sup>Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 6.

*Untersuchungen ihrer Quellen auf Gedankengehalt und dogmengeschichtliche Entwicklung*,<sup>44</sup> focused on the treatment given this sect by Hippolytus, Pseudo-Tertullian, and Epiphanius, and attempted to deduce from these descriptions the peculiar views of the group relative to Melchizedek and Christ. His work and conclusions paralleled that of another scholar, **G. Bardy**, who had published his research on Melchizedek a few years prior to Stork.<sup>45</sup>

## ***B. Late Twentieth Century Scholars of Melchizedek Traditions (1965-1997)***

### **1. Articles and Essays on Melchizedek Traditions**

After the 1920's, interest in Melchizedek *per se* waned until the discovery and publication of 11QMelch in 1965. This fascinating text, which depicts Melchizedek as a celestial, eschatological redeemer-figure, breathed new life back into Melchizedek studies. Fresh inquiries into Melchizedek traditions were soon forthcoming.

It is noteworthy, however, that the foundation had already been laid for determining possible relationships between Hebrews (and thus, by inclusion, Melchizedek) and Qumran before the publication of 11QMelch. **Yigael Yadin**, for instance, in 1958, argued for several plausible links between Hebrews and Qumran in one of the essays in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls*.<sup>46</sup> In this study, Yadin compares and contrasts many of the beliefs held by the Qumran convenanteers with the beliefs of the addressees of Hebrews, as these beliefs can be logically

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<sup>44</sup>"Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur," vol. 8.2; Leipzig: A. Deichert.

<sup>45</sup>"Melchisédech dans la tradition patristique," *RB* 35 (1926): 496-509, and 36 (1927): 25-45.

<sup>46</sup>"The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. C. Rabin and Y. Yadin, Scripta Hierosolymitana 4 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1958), 36-55.

deduced from the theological foci and argumentation of this homily. Regarding Melchizedek, he writes,

In fact, by over-emphasizing different parts of the Scriptures relating to Melchizedek, and by applying "Midrashic" interpretations to some of the words and names thereof, he tried to present to his readers Jesus the Messiah--king and priest--in such manner and terminology as must have been intended to coincide both with their ideas of the Messianic Priest and the Messianic King and at the same time to repudiate other beliefs which they might have held and which do not suit his concept.<sup>47</sup>

Yadin held that "the 'addressees' themselves must have been a group of Jews originally belonging to the DSS Sect who were converted to Christianity, carrying with them some of their previous beliefs."<sup>48</sup> After the 1965 publication of 11QMelch, Yadin referenced the ostensible vindication of his earlier theory and remarked,

It seems that now we have the answer [as to how and why the author of Hebrews used Melchizedek as one of his main themes]; since Melchizedek was considered to have had such a heavenly position, as well as an active role as an eschatological savior, in the Qumranite theology, the writer [of Hebrews] chose him deliberately, in order to convey more intimately and decisively his perception of Jesus' unique position [. . .].<sup>49</sup>

That same year (1965) M. de Jonge and A.S. van der Woude co-authored an article entitled "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament,"<sup>50</sup> which offered several emendations to the *editio princeps* and a thorough exploration of how various facets of 11QMelch impacted one's understanding of the background and theology of the NT. *Contra* Yadin, they cautioned that

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<sup>47</sup>Yadin, "Dead Sea Scrolls," 44.

<sup>48</sup>Yadin, "Dead Sea Scrolls," 38.

<sup>49</sup>"A Note on Melchizedek and Qumran," *Israel Exploration Journal* 15 (1965): 154.

<sup>50</sup>*NTS* 12 (1965-1966): 301-326.

although there are intriguing ideological affinities between 11QMelch and Hebrews, there are also substantial differences between the two documents which preclude one from stating "with certainty that Hebrews is directed against adherents of the Qumran sect [. . .]." <sup>51</sup> In their treatment of Melchizedek, Jonge and van der Woude argue that in both Hebrews and 11QMelch he is viewed as a celestial being (in 11QMelch as a heavenly, angelic redeemer-figure and in Hebrews as an [arch-]angel). Regarding Melchizedek in Hebrews, they adopt the straightforward view that "[i]t seems much easier to assume that the author really meant what he wrote," as opposed to those who argue that the author was using an argument from silence or speaking only about Melchizedek's office, but not his person. <sup>52</sup> What the "author really meant," according to Jonge and van der Woude, is that Melchizedek was an (arch-)angel, inferior to the Eternal Son, who appeared to Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 14. <sup>53</sup> One may ask, did 11QMelch have any influence on Hebrews in its treatment of Melchizedek? These scholars answer: "[I]t is clear that the Melchizedek conception of Hebrews was influenced by notions which are also found in Qumran, but that there is no special connexion with the expectation of the messianic high-priest found there." <sup>54</sup>

The theories advanced by **Joseph A. Fitzmyer** in "Further Light on Melchizedek from

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<sup>51</sup>They argue instead that "11QMelch helps us to understand certain ways of thinking in the Judaism of the first century A.D. which form the background against which the argumentation in Heb. i-ii can be understood," "11Q Melchizedek," 318.

<sup>52</sup>"11Q Melchizedek," 321.

<sup>53</sup>"11Q Melchizedek," 321.

<sup>54</sup>"11Q Melchizedek," 322.

Qumran Cave 11"<sup>55</sup> buttress the arguments of Jonge and van der Woude relative to the influence of 11QMelch on Hebrews's employment of the Melchizedek theme. Fitzmyer says,

Even though it is not possible to say that the presentation of Melchizedek which is found in [11QMelch] directly influenced the midrash on him in Heb 7 (because the latter is developed almost exclusively in terms of the classic OT loci, Gen 14 and Ps 110), nevertheless its exaltation of Melchizedek and its view of him as a heavenly redemption-figure make it understandable how the author of the epistle to the Hebrews could argue for the superiority of Christ the high priest over the levitical priesthood by appeal to such a figure.<sup>56</sup>

Fitzmyer unfortunately fails to explain exactly *in what way* 11QMelch and Hebrews are similar to each other in their treatment of Melchizedek and precisely *why* 11QMelch makes Hebrews more "understandable."

**Irvin W. Batdorf**, in "Hebrews and Qumran: Old Methods and New Directions,"<sup>57</sup> helpfully delineates three distinct proposals regarding whether Hebrews and the DSS were or were not related to one another. His own proposal is summarized in the aphorism he borrowed from Erich Grässer: "analogy does not guarantee geneology,"<sup>58</sup> i.e., the existence of analogies between Hebrews and the DSS does not mean that the author of Hebrews copied from or even was aware of the Qumran writings. Batdorf's treatment of Melchizedek, however, is beclouded first by his tendency not to make clear distinctions when comparing the Melchizedek of

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<sup>55</sup>*JBL* 86 (1967): 25-41.

<sup>56</sup>"Further Light," 41.

<sup>57</sup>*Festschrift to Honor F. Wilbur Gingrich*, ed. E. H. Barth and R. E. Cocroft (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 16-35.

<sup>58</sup>*Festschrift*, 25.

11QMelch, the Melchizedek of Hebrews, and the Christ of Hebrews.<sup>59</sup> Secondly, when determining whether the Melchizedek traditions of 11QMelch and Hebrews are ideologically related, Batdorf virtually ignores the evocative imagery of Heb 7:3 as *the* connecting link between the two. **F. C. Fensham** commits the same error in a similar article.<sup>60</sup> He criticizes Y. Yadin for not "penetrating deeply enough into the problem" of how Christ and the Melchizedek of Hebrews are related to the Melchizedek of 11QMelch.<sup>61</sup> In Fensham's own discussion, however, one searches in vain for a reference to Heb 7:3!

## **2. Monographs on Melchizedek Traditions**

At least three noteworthy monographs<sup>62</sup> on Melchizedek traditions have been written since the resurgence of interest in Melchizedek in the mid-1960's. In 1976 a thorough study by **Fred L. Horton, Jr.** appeared, entitled *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Although Horton's work was the first of its kind after the publication of 11QMelch, his interest is not directed exclusively or even primarily toward the investigation of the Qumran document. Instead, he gives the reader a panoramic view of all the various Melchizedek traditions, beginning in Genesis 14 and continuing on through the views of various communities and individuals as far as the 5th century A.D.. Hebrews' use and treatment of Melchizedek are the last subjects to be

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<sup>59</sup>*Festschrift*, 31.

<sup>60</sup>"Hebrews and Qumran," *Neotestamentica* 5 (1971): 9-21.

<sup>61</sup>"Hebrews and Qumran," 18.

<sup>62</sup>See also the more recent study by G. L. Cockerill, "The Melchizedek Christology in Heb. 7:1-28," (Ph. D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1979).

covered. Reflecting upon the multiform shape of Melchizedek traditions and pondering the question, "What prompted all this speculation?," Horton urges that most of these traditions and most of this speculation may be attributed to the "fortuitous circumstance that *Melchizedek is the first priest mentioned in the Torah.*"<sup>63</sup> His priestly primacy would have been "of great moment"<sup>64</sup> to early Jewish exegetes and thus would have invited the kinds of imaginative reflection one observes in Philo, Josephus, 11QMelch, and Hebrews. Horton's emphasis on this singular impetus behind Melchizedek traditions, however, ignores many other factors which arguably contributed to the growth of traditions, even at an early stage (e.g., Ps 110:4 [!]; typology within the OT; and angelomorphic traditions).

In distinction from Horton's work, **Paul J. Kobelski**, in *Melchizedek and Melchireša*, focuses more narrowly on Melchizedek as he appears in several Qumran texts either as the leader of the celestial host of angelic warriors (in 11QMelch) or as the opponent and foe of the evil angel Melchireša (4QAmram). Kobelski investigates critically the Iranian background of many of the ideas expressed in the DSS and the angelology of the Qumran community. He then traces out potential trajectories into the texts of the NT (in particular, the Johannine Paraclete, Hebrews 7, and the Son of Man passages), asking how the Dead Sea Scrolls might elucidate the ideas or language behind NT texts. Like others before him, Kobelski argues that there are common elements in the treatment of Melchizedek in the Qumran texts and Hebrews, and that the author of Hebrews believed Melchizedek to be a divine being. He stops short, however, of

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<sup>63</sup>Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 157.

<sup>64</sup>Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 157.

positing direct influence of 11QMelch on Hebrews.<sup>65</sup>

More recently, the work the Italian scholar, C. Gianotto, *Melchisedek e la sua tipologia: tradizioni guidaiche, cristiane e gnostiche*, explores Melchizedek traditions in the early church, especially emphasizing the plurality of these traditions.<sup>66</sup>

### C. Summary

The remarkable upsurge of interest in Melchizedek and the traditions swirling about him was prompted primarily by the discovery and revelation of a tiny fragment of a manuscript from Qumran over thirty years ago. 11QMelch was the spark which set Melchizedek research on fire. Much of the scholarly work done since 1965 has been devoted to a rigorous re-examination of other Melchizedek traditions to ascertain their connection--if any--to 11QMelch. Traditional explanations offered by exegetes to render understandable the unusual epithets accorded Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 have been rendered questionable at best and perhaps even untenable.

The above summary of the opinions of various scholars confirms the fact that scholarly and ecclesial consensus regarding the identity and purpose of Melchizedek is lacking. Indeed, Melchizedek opinions seem as divergent today as they were in the first five centuries of the Church's history. As will be argued below, a clearer picture of who the Melchizedek of Holy Scripture was and what role he played can be more precisely realized only when one's hermeneutic is typological, one's horizon extends beyond biblical Melchizedek traditions, and one's overarching hermeneutic is thoroughly Christological.

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<sup>65</sup>*Melchizedek*, 129.

<sup>66</sup>(Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1984).

## CHAPTER TWO

# MELCHIZEDEK TRADITIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In two famously intriguing sections of the OT, Melchizedek appears: Genesis 14 and Psalm 110. To seek after the importance of Melchizedek in the OT accounts is a qualitative, not a quantitative, quest. The reader of holy writ must not judge Melchizedek's importance by the number of passages in which his name is written, but rather by the two contextual situations in which he is made known. Therefore, the first task of OT exegesis concerning Melchizedek is to ask the question: In which ways are these chapters in the Scriptures--and Melchizedek's role in them--important in the contextual framework of the whole canon? For Christological exegesis, that interrogative must be expanded to query: And how do they more sharply define the reality of Christ's person and work?

The second task of OT exegesis concerning Melchizedek is to examine both of these texts through the lens of *later* Melchizedek traditions to determine--as much as is possible--what precisely was in these *early* traditions that sparked such interest in subsequent generations. That examination will begin in this chapter and continue in the next. The relation of the two OT texts themselves is also a topic to be broached; that is, what prompted David to evoke ancient Melchizedek's name when he penned Psalm 110? Indeed, to fill in the "blank" behind that question is the first step toward a proper understanding of Melchizedek's place in later speculation, tradition, and doctrine since Ps 110:4 was the driving force behind many later Melchizedek traditions.

## I. Genesis 14

### A. Context

In the macro-structure of Genesis, the fourteenth chapter forms part of the extended Abrahamic narrative (chaps. 12-25). By chapter 14 the patriarch had arrived in Palestine, completed his trouble-laden sojourn in Egypt, separated from his nephew Lot, and settled by the oaks of Mamre at Hebron. The accounts leading up to Genesis 14 are narrowly focused on the travels and experiences of Abram.

The narrative of Genesis 14 widens the perspective of the reader by introducing an international conflict in which, ultimately, Abram finds himself involved.<sup>67</sup> For a dozen years the kings and peoples of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela had served as vassals to Chedorlaomer, king of Elam.<sup>68</sup> Having rebelled in the thirteenth year, they were confronted in

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<sup>67</sup>The literature of critical exegesis on Genesis 14, prompted by its anomalous character, is extensive; see C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary*, trans. J. J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 182-190, for a thorough discussion with bibliography. J. Skinner notes that it is "[. . .] an isolated boulder in the stratification of the Pent. [. . .], not fitting any of the four traditional sources," *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930), 256. Although various theories have been advanced—including, e.g., the argument that Genesis 14 is based on a poetical or Accadian original—none seems to have won the day; see, e.g., the works of J. A. Emerton: "Some False Clues in the Study of Genesis XIV," *VT* 21 (1971): 24-27; "The Riddle of Genesis XIV," *VT* 21 (1971): 403-439; and "Some Problems in Genesis XIV," *Studies in the Pentateuch*, VTSup XLI (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 73-102. Those who opine that the sections in the chapter were added at different time periods customarily view vv. 1-11 as the oldest, followed by 12-17 and 21-24; and then finally 18-20; e.g., G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 178-179.

<sup>68</sup>Although expectations have risen and fallen regarding the ability of archaeology to identify the four eastern kings and five minor kings in this chapter, all efforts heretofore have yielded no positive results. See V. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 400. Hamilton and other scholars, however, have argued

the next with the impending reprisal of their former overlord, who came not alone but with a triad of other kings and their armies. Following first a circuitous route, upon which they struck down many other nations, these four armies from the east then marched northeastward to the southern edge of the Salt Sea to punish the rebellious citizens of the pentapolis. The battle was so one-sided that Moses skips the details and records only the humiliating retreat of the overthrown five.<sup>69</sup> Having utterly defeated the weaker, smaller armies, the eastern armies proceeded to loot Sodom and Gomorrah, during which time Lot, who was residing in Sodom, was captured, as were his family and possessions.

Upon hearing of his nephew's precarious situation via a fugitive from the battle, Abram and 318 men<sup>70</sup> of his household pursued the invading armies, overtook them by night, soundly

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convincingly that there is nothing in Genesis 14 that precludes its historical veracity; see L. R. Fisher, "Abraham and His Priest-King," *JBL* 81 (1962): 264-270, and J. R. Kirkland, "The Incident at Salem: A Re-Examination of Genesis 14:18-20," *StudBibTh* 7 (1977): 3-23.

<sup>69</sup>Gen 14:10, "And the Valley of Siddim had many pits of bitumen [בְּאֵרֹת בְּאֵרֹת] and the king(s) of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and went down into them [וַיִּפְּלוּ-שָׁמָּה], and those who were left fled to the hills." The fate of those who נָפְלוּ into the bitumen pits is usually translated "fell" by English versions (e.g., KJV, NAS, RSV; the LXX has ἐπέπεσαν ἐκεῖ). Since Bera, king of Sodom, meets Abram after this unpleasant event (v. 17) the "fall" must not have been fatal. As H. C. Leupold comments, "So we have the somewhat disgraceful situation of a number of defeated kings hastily crawling into bitument pits, and their defeated army taking refuge in the mountains," *Exposition of Genesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1942), 456.

<sup>70</sup>See A. Aschim, "Melchizedek the Liberator: An Early Interpretation of Genesis 14?" *SBLSP* 35 (1996): 255. There he comments: "A widespread interpretation in rabbinical literature minimizes the force still more. Through the well-known example of *gematria* on the number 318--the numerical equivalent of the name of Eliezer, Abraham's faithful servant--the sages concluded that Abraham and Eliezer alone defeated the enemy (e.g., *b. Ned.* 32a; *Gen. Rab.* 43:2; 44:9; cf. *Tg. Pseudo-Jonathan*)!"

defeated them--presumably through miraculous intervention--<sup>71</sup>"and brought back all the goods, and also his [Abram's] brother Lot and his possessions he brought back, and also the women, and the people," (v. 16).

The holy patriarch, and now victorious warrior, was greeted by two kings upon his return from the battle: Bera, king of Sodom, and Melchizedek, king of Salem. Although form and source critics typically label vv. 18-20 a later interpolation,<sup>72</sup> a narrative analysis demonstrates that the account is wisely crafted so that the Melchizedek encounter protrudes from the text, highlighting its significance.<sup>73</sup> Melchizedek, on the one hand, offers a repast to the warrior patriarch and his men, blesses El Elyon and Abram, and receives a tenth of the booty from the victor. Bera, on the other hand, comes only with demands: "Give to me the souls [שׂוֹפְרוֹת] and the goods take yourself," (v. 21). Abram, uttering an oath--the first oath of the Bible--refuses all except the food eaten by his warriors, which of course, could not be returned anyway.

### ***B. Exegesis of Genesis 14:18-20***

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<sup>71</sup>The record here of the overwhelming odds and the complete defeat of the larger army by a smaller one is similar to Gideon's victory against the Midianites in Judges 7. There, however, the victory is *explicitly* ascribed to divine intervention (7:22).

<sup>72</sup>See footnote 67.

<sup>73</sup>By Melchizedek appearing on the narrative stage the moment after Bera reappears from the bitumen pits (v. 10), the reader's attention is deftly directed away from the shameful, defeated, tar-covered king of Sodom and onto the peaceful, gift-bestowing, regal priest of El Elyon. The difference in the two kings is blatant; Abram's acceptance of godly Melchizedek's gifts and blessing plus his response of tithes to the same stands in sharp contrast to his refusal even to take a "thread or sandal thong" from ungodly Bera (v. 23). Were the author to have placed the Melchizedek narrative (vv. 18-20) before or after the Bera narrative (vv. 17, 21-24)--as critics would have instructed Moses to do--the sharp contrast and literary effect would have been dulled.

Moses records the Melchizedek narrative as follows:

[18] And Melchizedek,<sup>74</sup> king of Salem,<sup>75</sup> brought out [הוֹצִיא] bread and wine and he was priest of El Elyon [אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן].<sup>76</sup> [19] And he [Melchizedek]

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<sup>74</sup>The name of Salem's sacerdotal ruler, מֶלֶךְ־צֶדֶק, has provoked no small amount of interest in scholarly writings. Although common first century explanations of the name understood it to mean, "king of righteousness," (e.g., Heb 7:2 [βασιλεὺς δικαιοσύνης]) or "righteous king" (Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.1 [βασιλεὺς δικαίος]), many writers of this century have sought to explain either the first or second part of the name as a *theophoric* element: either "Malak is righteous" or "Tsedeq is my king," though most lean toward the latter (e.g., Skinner, *Genesis*, 267; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 204). This understanding of the name is prompted in large part by the opinion that El Elyon was a pagan deity--presumably synonymous with Malak or Tsedeq--whom the pagan priest Melchizedek served.

<sup>75</sup>Several possibilities for the location of Salem have been suggested: Jerusalem, see Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 409-410; Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 463; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 204; von Rad, *Genesis*, 179; J. A. Emerton, "The Site of Salem, The City of Melchizedek (Genesis XIV 18)," *Studies in the Pentateuch*, VTSup XLI (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 45-71; Shechem, see J. G. Gammie, "Loci of the Melchizedek Tradition of Genesis 14:18-20," *JBL* 90 (1971): 385-396; see Gammie, 387, for others who share his opinion; Salumias, a village south of Scythopolis, see Eusebius, *Onomast.* no. 152; or even the modern town of Sālīm, east of Balata. Jerusalem has captured the majority opinion because (a) Salem is used in poetic parallelism with Zion (=Jerusalem) in Ps 76:3; (b) Psalm 110 links the Melchizedek of Salem to the Davidic ruler of Jerusalem; and (3) first century B.C. and AD writers equate the two (e.g., Genesis Apocryphon 20.13 and Josephus [*Jewish War* 6.438 and *Antiquities* 1.180-181]). Authors who favor the Salem=Shechem identification frequently refer to Gen 33:18a, "וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֶם." They understand שָׁלֵם not adverbially (cf. most English translations) but in reference to a place, "And Jacob came to Salem, the city of Shechem."

<sup>76</sup>In this pericope El Elyon is acknowledged by Abram to be synonymous with YHWH: "And Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I cause my hand to be raised [i.e., I vow; cf. Dt 32:40; Dan 12:7] to YHWH El Elyon, Creator of heaven and earth [. . . ],'" (v. 22). Of course, those who argue that vv. 18-20 are a later addition suppose a redactor placed "YHWH" upon the lips of Abram to ameliorate the pagan priest's standing in the eyes of later orthodox, monotheistic Israelites. It must be acknowledged that יהוה or its translational equivalent are missing in the LXX, Peshitta, and 1QGenAp; the Samaritan Pentateuch has יהוה. Even without the tetragrammaton being present, however, the rest of the verse certainly echoes Melchizedek's blessing and lends credence to the opinion that Abram considered El Elyon and YHWH to be one and the same. For treatments of El and Elyon as pagan deities, see *Dictionary of Deities and*

blessed him [Abram] and said, "Blessed be Abram of El Elyon, Creator [קִנְיָה] <sup>77</sup> of heaven and earth, [20] and blessed be El Elyon who has delivered your enemies into your hands." And he [Abram] gave him [Melchizedek] [וְיֵתָן־לּוֹ] <sup>78</sup> a tenth of everything.

Not only is it true that the "brevity [of this narrative] deepens its mystery";<sup>79</sup> it is also "an 'open' text [. . . which] leaves room for various interpretations and compels the reader to make a number of decisions."<sup>80</sup> Unanswered interrogatives arise, such as: who is Melchizedek? where is Salem? for what were the bread and wine used? who is El Elyon? what happened to Melchizedek after this incident? These and a host of other curious questions are literary gaps in the text which fell like sparks onto the theological tinder of creative exegetes in following generations.

In addition to the intriguing nature of what is *not* said in the text, much that *is* stated beckons further analysis and contextual comparisons. *First*, Melchizedek combines in his person the dual offices of priest and king. Even though this combination was strictly forbidden

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*Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn and Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 521-533 and 560-571.

<sup>77</sup>The basic meaning of קִנְיָה is "to get" or "to acquire." In a few instances, however, it carries the connotation of "to create": here; Dt 32:6; Ps 139:13; and possibly Ps 78:54.

<sup>78</sup>Although the naked grammatical structure leaves the giver and receiver unnamed, the modifying phrase מְכַלֵּל at the end of the sentence clothes Abram in subjective raiment. For another opinion, see F. L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 14.

<sup>79</sup>G. T. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conception of the Priesthood of Melchisedech: An Historico-Exegetical Investigation* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1951), 6.

<sup>80</sup>Theo de Kruijf, "The Priest-King Melchizedek: The Reception of Gen. 14:18-20 in Hebrews Mediated by Psalm 110," *Bijdragen* 54 (1993): 393.

in Israel at the time Moses recorded this incident,<sup>81</sup> not a hint of disapproval is betrayed by the author.<sup>82</sup> *Second*, Melchizedek bestows upon Abram a sacerdotal blessing at the conclusion of his miraculous victory over international armies. Divine favor showered upon the progenitor of Israel in his military success over cosmopolitan powers could easily be transformed into an inspiration for later Israelite military campaigns as they sought to conquer God's foes.

*Third*, the blessing uttered by Melchizedek upon Abram fulfills and perpetuates the promised blessing of YHWH to Abram in Gen 12:2-3,

[2] And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you [וְאַבְרָם] and I will make your name great and you will be a blessing [בְּרָכָה]. [3] And I will bless the ones who are blessing you [וְאַבְרָם מְבָרְכֶיךָ] and the ones who are cursing you I will curse and blessed [וְנִבְרַכְתָּ] in you will be all the families of the earth.

The recurrence of the root בִּרַךְ in this narrow context underlines its importance in the

Abrahamic narrative.<sup>83</sup> *The captivating observation, however, that in Genesis 12-25 only YHWH (12:3), His Angel (22:17-18), and Melchizedek (14:19-20) verbally בִּרַךְ Abram places in bold*

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<sup>81</sup>Even though many scholars argue on the basis of *exceptions to the rule* (2 Sam 6:14, 17-18; 24:25; 1 Kgs 8:14,55-56) that *the rule was* that OT kings exercised sacerdotal prerogatives, the OT evidence does not substantiate this claim (cf. 2 Chr 26:16-18). See M. J. Paul, "The Order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4 and Heb 7:3)," *WTJ* 49 (1987): 195-211, for a helpful corrective to these views.

<sup>82</sup>Some might argue that no criticism is suggested because this incident occurred before the institution of the Mosaic legislation. That Moses, however, often molded the pre-Sinai portions of the Pentateuch according to the pattern of his own later legislation is readily apparent in a number of locations (e.g., the shape of the week and purpose of the Sabbath, Gen 1:1-2:3; marriage, 2:24; prohibitions of murder, 9:6; Abram's typological "Exodus," 12:10-20; tithes, 14:20b [!], 28:22; and prohibitions of food, 32:32).

<sup>83</sup>See Christopher Mitchell, *The Meaning and Significance of BRK "To Bless" in the Old Testament*, SBLDS 95 (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1987), 115-117.

*relief this priest-king's importance.*

In that same regard, a *fourth* observation is in order: following immediately after this pericope the **דְּבַר־יְהוָה** comes to Abram "in a vision" [**בַּמְּחֻזָּה**], saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield [**מִגִּן**] to you, your reward shall be very great," (15:1). Not only does the **דְּבַר** of Melchizedek link 14:18-20 to the previous **דְּבַר** of YHWH in 12:1-3; the announcement of Melchizedek that El Elyon has **מִגִּן** ("delivered") Abram's enemies into his hand links it to the subsequent announcement of the **דְּבַר־יְהוָה** that He is a **מִגִּן** ("shield") to the patriarch. That (1) *only* Melchizedek and YHWH (or His angel) *directly* bless Abram, (2) Melchizedek arrives on the scene immediately after Abram's miraculous victory, (3) Melchizedek's language echoes language uttered in theophanic encounters, and (4) that Melchizedek's appearance is followed (almost) directly by a theophanic appearance of the **דְּבַר־יְהוָה** with the qualifying phrase "in a vision," would subtly suggest--*or at least leave open the possibility*-- to later readers that the figure of Melchizedek was an angelophany, Christophany, or theophany.

With that foundation laid, we have already begun to understand *why* and *in what way* later Melchizedek traditions exegeted Genesis 14. One example will suffice to demonstrate how the gaps, language, and contextual situation of the Melchizedek pericope gave impetus to the growth of later traditions. 11QMelch, one of the Melchizedek traditions from Qumran, portrays Melchizedek as an angelomorphic redeemer figure who battles against the arch-enemy of God,

Belial, and his evil host in order to free the sons of light from slavery to Belial.<sup>84</sup>

Complementing and expanding the conservative conclusion of Paul Kobelski regarding the relation of 11QMelch to Genesis 14,<sup>85</sup> Anders Aschim concludes,

[. . .] I have established a reading of Gen 14 which assigns Melchizedek, understood as a heavenly figure, an active role in the rescue of Lot (Gen 14:12-16). As a commander of the angelic forces and a patron angel of Abraham, the ancestor of Israel, Melchizedek contends in the heavenly sphere against the forces of the evil powers, simultaneously with the earthly battle between Abraham and his enemies.<sup>86</sup>

Aschim argues that "the wider literary context of the Melchizedek passages from the Hebrew Bible, and of Genesis 14 in particular, is of decisive importance for the development of the figure 'Melchizedek the Liberator' in the texts under discussion."<sup>87</sup> Aschim points primarily to the victory of Abram and his 318 men over the four foreign armies as the incident which would invite the explanation by later generations that divine intervention--in the form of *angelic*

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<sup>84</sup>The *editio princeps* were provided by A. S. van der Woude, "Melchizedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim aus Qumran Höhle XI" (Oudtestamentische Studiën 14; Leiden: Brill, 1965), 354-373.

<sup>85</sup> See Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchiresha*, CBQ Series 10 (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981), 52. He states, "There is no reason to suspect that Melchizedek was thought to be an angel in the tradition of Gen 14:18-20; however, there are several elements in the passage in Genesis that may have suggested to the author of 11QMelch that Abram's meeting with Melchizedek was an encounter with an angel." And again, "It is difficult to say if the author of the Peshar on the Periods [i.e., the longer document of which 11QMelch was ostensibly a section] associated the sudden and mysterious appearance of Melchizedek with the rescue of Lot from captivity and his deliverance from the enemy, but the association of Melchizedek in 11QMelch with a rescue from captivity and the deliverance from the enemy Belial raises this possibility."

<sup>86</sup>"Melchizedek the Liberator," 257.

<sup>87</sup>"Melchizedek the Liberator," 248.

intervention--made possible this success.<sup>88</sup> *Melchizedek, then, is the angelic intervener in the eyes of later readers.* Kobelski adds (1) that the title of Melchizedek, מְלִיךְ שָׁלֵם, "calls to mind the expression מְלִאךְ שָׁלוֹם, 'angel of peace,' which occurs in 4Q228 1 i 8 in the form מְלִאךְ וּשְׁלוֹם [. . .]" and is found in *1 Enoch* 40:8 and 52:5 and the *Testament of Twelve Patriarchs*<sup>89</sup> and (2) that "[t]he unusual description of Melchizedek in Gen 14:18 as [. . .] 'priest of El Elyon,' may have suggested to one well versed in beliefs about the heavenly priesthood of angels, the heavenly priesthood of Melchizedek."<sup>90</sup> Thus, the author of 11QMelch may have looked no further than Genesis 14 to find material that formed the basis of his depiction of Melchizedek.

Whether these later Melchizedek traditions are correct in their exegesis of Genesis 14 is an entirely different question. What the above presentation has demonstrated, however, is that what the text and context of Genesis 14 does say and does not say encouraged the later growth of Melchizedek traditions along angelomorphic lines. Victor Hamilton notes that Genesis 14 is distinctive because "[. . .] it is the only one in chs. 12-22 in which the divine voice does not speak to somebody."<sup>91</sup> In the opinion of some later generations, Genesis 14 loses this distinction for Melchizedek's voice is the voice of YHWH.

### C. Summary

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<sup>88</sup>"Melchizedek the Liberator," 248.

<sup>89</sup>*Melchizedek and Melchiresha*, 52. In the *Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs* the angel is referred to as *aggelos tēs eirēnēs* (*T. Dan* 6:5; *T. Asher* 6:6; *T. Benj.* 6:1).

<sup>90</sup>*Melchizedek and Melchiresha*, 52.

<sup>91</sup>*The Book of Genesis*, 399.

Melchizedek, the regal priest of Salem, appears to Abram, grants him a repast, blesses him, accepts his tithe, and disappears (from the text) as quickly as he came. The unusual literary location of the pericope--placed there purposefully by Moses--sharply differentiates him from the king of Sodom. His actions and his speech mirror those connected elsewhere in the Genesis narrative with YHWH and His angel. Much is left unanswered by the text, giving rise to various interpretations. Some of these interpretations, found in later Melchizedek traditions, took advantage of the ambiguities in the account to foster their own peculiar understandings of Melchizedek's role and identity.

## II. Psalm 110

Bridging the chronological, literary, and theological gaps between Genesis 14 and the Melchizedek traditions of the first century B.C. and A.D. is Psalm 110.<sup>92</sup> Whether later generations of exegetes, if they had not held in their hands the captivating map of Psalm 110, would have explored Genesis 14 for theological treasure is a moot interrogative; that the psalmic "treasure map" led them there is incontrovertible.

The psalm of King David which mysteriously evokes the name of the equally mysterious

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<sup>92</sup>Scholars earlier in this century often advocated Hasmonean authorship of Psalm 110; e.g., D. B. Duhamel, *Die Psalmen* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1922), 400. To buttress their arguments, many "creatively discovered" an acrostic in vv 1-4 for שמעון (Simon, the Maccabean leader). For a critique of the existence of such an acrostic, see J. W. Bowker, "Psalm CX," *VT* (1967): 31-41. This later dating has largely been abandoned by modern scholars, who argue for a date within the reign of David. For example, see M. Dahood, *Psalms 101-150, The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970), 112; Hans-Joachim Kraus, trans. H. C. Oswald, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 346-347; and Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 29-33.

regal priest of Salem is the most quoted psalm of the NT and the most referenced chapter of the OT in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Christologically as important to the NT as Psalms 2, 8, and 22, the 110th hymn of the psalter has given impetus to an impressive plethora of ecclesial and scholarly literature.<sup>93</sup> Martin Luther speaks in concert with the cumulative evidence of apostolic references to Psalm 110 when he succinctly avers that "[h]ere, as nowhere else in the OT Scriptures, we find a clear and powerful description of [Christ's] person [. . .] and of His resurrection, ascension, and entire kingdom."<sup>94</sup>

Although some scholars question whether Jewish worshipers understood Psalm 110 to be messianic before and during the first century A.D., the evidence of the NT more than adumbrates the veracity of the claim. The interlocutors of Jesus in Mt 22:41-46 (cf. Mk 12:35-37 and Lk 20:41-44), in their answer to Christ's question regarding the messianic content of Ps 110:1, certainly did not seem caught off guard by the Christological interpretation put forward by Jesus. Indeed, their mute response ("And no one was able to answer Him a word [. . .],"<sup>95</sup> 22:46) would have been rather unintelligible had not Christ referenced a passage of holy writ which both He and they regarded as indicative of the Messiah's identity.<sup>95</sup>

These two facts--that Psalm 110 is of inestimable importance for NT Christological

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<sup>93</sup>See esp. David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (SBLMS 18; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973); Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 119-225; and the bibliography in Kraus, *Psalms*, 343-344.

<sup>94</sup>*Luther's Works, Selected Psalms II*, vol. 13, ed. J. Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 228.

<sup>95</sup>For discussions of whether Psalm 110 was understood in a messianic sense in and before the first century A.D., see Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*, 19-33 and H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash* (Munich: Beck, 1956), 4:452-460.

formulations and that the NT writers were continuing, *not creating*, a messianic understanding of this holy hymn--must be borne in mind as one investigates the place and purpose of Melchizedek in the fourth verse of the psalm. Since Psalm 110 is of massive significance in the contextual framework of the biblical whole because it sharply defines the reality of Christ's person and work, it ought to be no surprise to find that Melchizedek, having been so intimately linked with the Messiah by invocation of his name in 110:4, magnetically drew the attention of many back to Genesis 14 who wished to answer the rather simple questions, "Why him? What is it about Melchizedek that makes him so important in the salvific economy of God?" Some answers to these questions, found in the literary Melchizedek traditions at Qumran and elsewhere, will be perused in the next chapter. For now we will examine the text of the psalm to define particularly what elements inspired later exegetes to use it as the primary lens through which to view the Melchizedek of Genesis 14 and to shape their own literary picture of the priest-king.

#### *A. Exegesis of Psalm 110*

The MT of Psalm 110 is notoriously difficult to render accurately, fraught, as it is, with unusual language and grammatical structures.<sup>96</sup> The ancient versions (LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate) reflect this translational conundrum.<sup>97</sup> The translation below follows primarily the MT, with

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<sup>96</sup>For a thorough discussion of the various textual problems, see Kraus, *Psalms*, 343-354; Thijs Booij, "Psalm CX: 'Rule in the Midst of Your Foes!'" *VT* 41 (1991): 396-407; and Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 23-34.

<sup>97</sup>Psalm 110 is one of the missing chapters of the Qumran psalter, rendering the comparison of the MT with earlier Hebrew mss. impossible. The closest Hebrew comparison is Jerome's *Juxta Hebraeos*, the consonantal text of which is the same as the MT, (Dahood, *Psalms*, 113).

textual emendations noted.

[1] A Psalm of David.

YHWH uttered to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand  
until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."

[2] The rod of Your strength YHWH will stretch forth from Zion,  
"Rule in the midst of Your enemies."

[3] Your people volunteer freely<sup>98</sup> in the day of your power,  
On holy mountains,<sup>99</sup> from the womb of the dawn,<sup>100</sup> like dew I have begotten You.<sup>101</sup>

[4] YHWH has sworn and will not repent,  
"You [are a] priest forever according to the order<sup>102</sup> of Melchizedek."

[5] Adonai is at Your right hand;<sup>103</sup>  
in the day of His wrath He will smite kings.

[6] He will judge among the nations full of corpses,

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<sup>98</sup>Cf. Judges 5:2.

<sup>99</sup>Many Hebrew mss., Symmachus, and Jerome read בְּהַרְרֵי instead of the MT בְּהַרְרֵי. The confusion of a *daleth* and *resh* is common and the reading "holy mountains" fits the theme of Zion in vs 1 well, echoing Ps. 87:1, "בְּהַרְרֵי־קִנְיָשׁ." For a contrary opinion, see H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961), 778.

<sup>100</sup>The second *mem* of מִשְׁחָרַם מְרַחֵם is unusual and probably a dittography.

<sup>101</sup>The rendering, "I have begotten You (יְלִדְתִּיךָ)," is supported by many Hebrew mss., Origen, the LXX (ἐξεγέννησά σε), and the Peshitta. It is also the form found in Ps. 2:7, "I have begotten Thee (יְלִדְתִּיךָ)."

<sup>102</sup>The phrase עַל־יְדֵי־בְרִיתִי is also found in Ec 3:18; 8:2, where it means "on account of." The "κατὰ τὴν τάξιν" of the LXX is followed by the author of Hebrews.

<sup>103</sup>There is debate among scholars as to the subject of vv 5-7. Some hold the subject to be YHWH and not the Adonai of v 1; see, e.g., Kraus, *Psalms*, 351; Booij, "Psalm CX," 403; and A. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 696. Others argue that the Adonai of vv 1 and 5-7 are identical; see, e.g., E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1970), 82-83; C. A. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1907), 378; and St. Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, ed. A. C. Coxe, NPNF First Series, vol. 8 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 544. The similarities, however, between the actions of the messianic king in vv 1-3 and those of the actions of the מְרַחֵם in vv 5-7 more than suggest that he is the subject in both sections of the psalm.

He will smite the chief upon the broad land.  
[7] From the brook along the way He will drink,  
Therefore, He will lift the head.

The Messiah, having been exalted onto the divine throne of YHWH, renders justice and punishment to His foes. From the right hand of God, which is linked to Zion, the Messiah will exercise sovereignty over those who surround Him on all sides, yet who lie vanquished under His feet. The imagery is vivid and strikingly anthropomorphic: the Messiah "sits" (v 1); puts His feet on the neck of the enemies (v 1); holds in His hand a royal staff (v 2); is wrathful (lit. "a [burning] nose"; v 5); drinks from a brook (v 7); and He lifts up His head after smiting the head of the nations (vv 6-7). The militaristic components are paralleled in similar messianic psalms (e.g., Psalms 45 and 72), particularly Psalm 2.

In the middle of Psalm 110, between the two sections which depict the Messiah's regal and militaristic accomplishments, is the divine oath concerning the relationship between the Messiah and sacerdotal Melchizedek: "YHWH has sworn and will not repent, 'You [are a] priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.'" How is one to understand this sworn promise of YHWH? In what way does it fit with the rest of the psalm? What relation does this reference to Melchizedek have with Genesis 14? To these questions we now turn.

Referencing the oath of Ps 110:4, John Calvin reminds his reader that "God was not wont to mingle his venerable name with matters of minor importance."<sup>104</sup> The seriousness of the oath, indeed, is doubly bespoken by the positive and negative<sup>105</sup> nature of the statement, "YHWH *has*

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<sup>104</sup>*Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. J. Anderson, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 305.

<sup>105</sup>"The notion of God's not repenting stresses by way of negation the immutability of His decree," J. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conception*, 63.

*sworn* (נִשְׁבַּע) and *will not repent* (וְלֹא יִנְחָם) [ . . . ]" This freighted language heightens the interest of the worshiper and affirms the irrevocability of what is about to be spoken. The Messiah is promised that He is "a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (אַתָּה־כֹּהֵן לְעוֹלָם עַל־דְּבָרְתִי מִלְכִּי־צְדָק:). That Christ will possess an eternal sacerdotal office is abundantly clear from the text; what is not clear is in what way this unending priesthood is based upon, follows from, or is related to the person and office of Melchizedek.

When one reads Psalm 110 from the perspective of Genesis 14, and vice versa, some potential answers to these questions begin to surface. The textual and contextual similarities in which Melchizedek appears ought to be noted first. The following observations are true for both David's psalm and Moses' book: (1) the person or name of Melchizedek appears within a highly militaristic context; (2) the references to Melchizedek are fleeting and mysterious; (3) the sacerdotal status and functions of Melchizedek are emphasized while the regal are virtually ignored,<sup>106</sup> (4) and both texts are "exegetically open," allowing for various interpretations.<sup>107</sup>

When the two texts are read in tandem and these similarities are noted, it becomes increasingly apparent that *the Messiah addressed in Psalm 110 is a melding together of the*

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<sup>106</sup>In Genesis 14 (as in Hebrews 7), Melchizedek's kingly office is of *minor* importance. His actions of bringing out a holy repast, blessing Abram, and receiving tithes have little if anything to do with his regal office. The oft-stated similarity between Melchizedek and Christ, that they both occupy the regal and sacerdotal offices, is hardly the similarity emphasized in the Bible. *It is assumed that one recognizes and realizes that fact, but the Scriptures never explicitly reference Melchizedek as one who, like Christ, holds both offices simultaneously.* Rather, each time Melchizedek appears in the Scriptures, his priestly office and/or functions are nearly exclusively of paramount importance. Melchizedek is the priest who also happens to be a king.

<sup>107</sup>Cf. Kruijf, "Priest-King Melchizedek," who says, "Psalm 110 is just as enigmatic and open to different interpretations as Gen 14,18-20," 396.

*persons, offices, and functions of Abram and Melchizedek as seen in Genesis 14.* The military victory of Abram over the foreign armies due to the divine intervention of YHWH serves as a *type* of the victory of the Messiah over His foes due to His occupation of the divine throne of YHWH.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, the sacerdotal office of Melchizedek serves as the type of the sacerdotal office of the Messiah.

What remains unclear, however, are the precise implications of the adverbial modifier לְעוֹלָם. Is the attribute of eternalness applicable *only* to the person, office, and functions of the Messiah or to Melchizedek as well? Furthermore, if applicable to Melchizedek, is the attribute meant to refer only to his office, only to his functions, or to his office, functions, and person, as in the case of the Messiah? The psalm text is equivocal, capable of answering "Yes" to any or all of the questions posed. For later generations of exegetes, including the author of Hebrews (7:4, 8), the attribute of eternalness was not possessed exclusively by the Messiah; *rather, Melchizedek's priesthood and person, precisely because they were considered to be eternal, served as the fundamental type of the sacerdotal work of the Messiah.*

Paul Kobelski, in his discussion of Melchizedek's role in the argument of Hebrews, says, "It is my contention that Ps 110:4 is the key to understanding the attribution of eternal life to Melchizedek in Judaism of late antiquity (11QMelch) and in Christianity (Hebrews 7)."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>Kruijf helpfully notes the verbal similarities between the LXX versions of Gen 14:20a and Ps 109:1b: *ὃς παρέδωκεν τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποχείριους σοι* (Gen 14:20a) and *τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου*. (Ps 109:1b)." Kruijf concludes, "This in turn means that they *were not confronted with two distinct enigmatic figures, Melchizedek the priest-king and the Davidic king who received the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, but rather with both figures superimposed upon each other,*" 397, emphasis mine.

<sup>109</sup>Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchiresha*, 124.

Noting the troubled textual history of the verse, particularly the meaning of *עַל־דְּבָרָתַי*, he suggests that "[. . .] the precise meaning of the verse was not understood. It would seem to be a verse that could lend itself to speculative interpretations."<sup>110</sup> It is just such "speculative interpretations" which are in the background of Hebrews and the forefront of 11QMelch, 2 *Enoch*, and other early Melchizedek traditions.

Genesis 14, when read with and through the highly messianic Psalm 110, with the understanding that the text of the psalm allowed the possibility of attributing eternalness not only to the Messiah but also to Melchizedek, became the fount from which flowed streams of creative exegetical activity. The gaps and ambiguities of the Genesis text, along with the highly suggestive actions of Melchizedek (e.g., blessing Abram), only heightened the flow of creativity. Readers of the Genesis account then saw Melchizedek as a foretaste of the Messiah.

### *B. Summary*

The language and imagery of Psalm 110 played an important role in the early Christological formulations of the NT. By referencing the name and priesthood of Melchizedek, David directed the worshipers back to the text of Genesis to ascertain what, in that account, prompted the inclusion of Melchizedek in such a highly messianic psalm. The ambiguity of the quality of eternalness—applied certainly to the Messiah and possibly to Melchizedek—prompted further inquiry by later generations into the possibility that the priest-king of Salem may, in fact, have been more than a human officeholder. To understand the presence of Melchizedek traditions of the first century B.C. and A.D., one must realize that the primary impetus behind

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<sup>110</sup>Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchiresha*, 124.

them was the speech of Psalm 110 and not the silence of Genesis 14.

### III. Typology Within the Old Testament

The research which has heretofore been presented on Melchizedek's position and importance in the OT texts of Genesis 14 and Psalm 110, although providing a basis for beginning to understand why later generations of exegetes found Melchizedek such a captivating figure, has not sufficiently answered the question posed at the beginning of this chapter, "What prompted David to evoke Melchizedek's name when he penned Psalm 110?" When the interrogative was stated, it was suggested that "to fill in the 'blank' behind that question was the first step toward a proper understanding of Melchizedek's place in speculation, tradition, and doctrine." The purpose of this last section of Chapter 2 will be to offer an answer to that important question through an investigation and explanation as to how typology was employed by the writers of the Old Testament, including, of course, the Davidic author of Psalm 110.

#### A. *The Definition of Typology and Its Place in the Exegetical Task*

The orthodox Lutheran theologian, Johann Gerhard (1582-1637), in his *Loci Theologici*, offered this brief definition of typology by using allegory as a foil: "Typology consists in the comparison of facts. Allegory is not concerned with facts but with words from which it draws out useful and hidden doctrine."<sup>111</sup> David L. Baker puts forward a more expansive definition, delineating the following three aspects of typology:

- a *type* is a biblical event, person or institution which serves as an example or pattern for other events, persons or institutions;
- *typology* is the study of types and the historical and theological correspondences between them;

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<sup>111</sup>*Loci Theologici*, 1.69; Quoted in Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 7.

● the *basis* of typology is God's consistent activity in the history of his chosen people.<sup>112</sup>

That the authors of the NT were directed in much of their exegesis of the OT through the employment of a typological hermeneutic is not a moot point. Scholars by and large agree that the NT writers wove together typology, proclamation of prophetic fulfillment, and (restrained) allegory to bind the two testaments into one Christological whole.<sup>113</sup> In early patristic exegesis the former two maintained a prominent place, though allegory was not wholly neglected. In the well-known quarrels between the Antiochene and Alexandrian schools, which centered primarily on the appropriateness of allegorical interpretation, typology was a non-issue, being accepted and utilized freely by both parties.<sup>114</sup> As allegory gradually became "king of the exegetical mountain," there to reign for centuries, typology took a back-seat, only to become of especial interest to exegetes again at the advent of the Reformation. Although ostensibly discredited by the "discoveries" of Enlightenment rationalism<sup>115</sup> and thus ignored in favor of more "objective" exegesis, in recent decades a form of typology has once again been adopted and promulgated by

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<sup>112</sup>*Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of the Theological Relationships Between the Old and New Testaments* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1991), 195.

<sup>113</sup>Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 142-173.

<sup>114</sup>William Horbury, "Old Testament Interpretation in the Writings of the Church Fathers," *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Jan Mulder (CRINT; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 727-787.

<sup>115</sup>G. W. H. Lampe elaborates on how rationalism and the approach to Scripture adopted by the historical-critical method undermined typological interpretation in "The Reasonableness of Typology," Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1957), 17.

numerous scholars.<sup>116</sup>

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and other American Lutheran bodies have not remained outside of discussions regarding the fidelity of typological exegesis to the Scriptural witness. The debates within these circles, however, largely revolve around *the extent to which typology should be employed* and not typology per se.<sup>117</sup> If typology can *legitimately* be embraced in the interpretation of certain *messianic prophecies* is by far the most controversial question.<sup>118</sup>

The following pages will seek to demonstrate, on the basis of OT texts, three major points: first, typological interpretation, far from being invented by the NT authors, *was used extensively by and thus received its imprimatur from the OT itself*. Second, one area of OT

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<sup>116</sup>For a helpful but dated list of the views of various scholars, see D. L. Baker, *Two Testaments: One Bible*, 239-250. One must note, however, that these scholars define their typological interpretation as something distinct from the typology employed by the Reformers. As Gerhard von Rad explains, "And yet the essence of our view differs from earlier typology [ . . . ] at one very crucial point; for the latter used the data with reference to a salvation-historical progress which it objectified naïvely [ . . . ] There can now be no question of declaring certain persons or objects or institutions as, in their objective and as it were static essence, types. Everything depends on the *events* between Israel and her God [ . . . ]," *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (Vol. II; London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 371.

<sup>117</sup>The recent document released by the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) entitled "Prophecy and Typology," lists among the "Common Postures" held by Lutheran interpreters, in regard to typology, "that the Scriptures describe and illustrate such a category," 1.

<sup>118</sup>"The chief difference is whether the words of one prophecy can have two referents and, usually in connection with that, two somewhat different meanings, and, therefore, two fulfillments," "Prophecy and Typology," 3. Cf. A. von R. Sauer, "Problems of Messianic Interpretation," *CTM* 35 (1964): 566-574; W. R. Roehrs, "The Typological Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," *Concordia Journal* 10 (1984): 204-216; W. J. Hassold, "Rectilinear or Typological Interpretation of Messianic Prophecy?" *CTM* 38 (1967): 155-167.

typology was that of typical individuals who served as prototypes both of other individuals within the OT and of Christ. Third, the Melchizedek of Gen 14:18-20 served as an individual type of the Messiah within the OT, as evinced in Ps 110:4. In conclusion, on the basis of the exegetical research presented in the first two sections of this chapter, I will list several plausible reasons as to why David chose Melchizedek as the typical individual to be used in Psalm 110.

### ***B. Typological Interpretation Within the Old Testament***

Horace Hummel has argued persuasively that the writings of ancient Israel first laid the foundation for typological interpretation.<sup>119</sup>

My main thesis in this paper is that the *typical* is a dominant concern of the O.T., its historiography, its cultus, its prophecy, etc. Israel's understanding of its whole life and destiny centered around what I might describe in Albright's terminology as "judgements of typical occurrence" [ . . . ] I submit that most of the O.T. literature was selected, preserved, arranged and presented to a large extent with an eye to the "typical" [ . . . ].<sup>120</sup>

The arrangement of much of the *typical* material within the OT was guided by several fundamental assumptions about YHWH and his dealings with the covenant people of Israel.

*First*--to utilize NT language--YHWH is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Far from being

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<sup>119</sup>Cf. also: Lampe, "The Reasonableness of Typology," 26; Woolcombe, "The Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology," 44-45, and *Essays on Typology*, 26; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 357-387, and "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," 17-39; and W. Eichrodt's "Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?", *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. Claus Westermann, trans. J. L. Mays (London: SCM, 1960), 224-245. In this latter work von Rad states, "From such passages as these [which speak of second exodus], and many other similar ones, one sees that already within the Old Testament the dumb facts of history had become prophetic, and had come to be viewed as prototypes to which a new and more complete redemptive act of God would correspond," (emphasis mine) 34.

<sup>120</sup>"The Old Testament Basis of Typological Interpretation," *Biblical Research* 9 (1964): 40-41. Hummel delineates several *typical* categories in the OT: history, individuals, groups, laws, nations, places, legends, and the cult.

capricious and erratic, the covenant God of Israel remains consistent in his grace toward Abraham and his seed. He keeps his promises and remains faithful to the covenant. He reveals himself in the things of creation and through the same works redemption, punishment, or hope for Israel. *Second*, Pentateuchal events, individuals, and institutions primarily define the *esse* of Israel. They elucidate how YHWH has dealt in the past and will deal in the future with the tribes of Jacob. *Third*, the future of Israel will be more magnificent than the past. Although this fact is somewhat muted in the earlier prophets, it is boldly and forthrightly proclaimed in virtually all the later prophets. *Fourth*, this hope for the yet-to-come is fundamentally based on the arrival of the Messiah of YHWH who will transform the bronze of the past into the gold of the future, ushering in the "last days" as the Second and Greater Moses, David, etc.<sup>121</sup>

This four-fold "hermeneutic" was the impetus behind the prophetic use of typological language to describe the present and the future which were facing the nation. Prophets foretold *what would be* with the vocabulary and imagery of *what had been*; they painted the promise of the future with the colors of the past. The older events (e.g., of the Exodus from Egypt) were "pregnant with the future."<sup>122</sup> That is to say, a salvific event bore "in her womb" the child whose splendor and significance would far surpass that of the mother. This was so, not because of a "modern" view of the gradual progression and amelioration of humanity, but because of the

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<sup>121</sup>Although the latter two assumptions are foundational to much of the typology employed within the OT, they do not necessarily influence all of it. Oftentimes the antitype is not directly referenced as "greater than" the type nor is he/it directly related to the messianic promise. For example, as will be discussed below, Joshua as the antitype of Moses is not necessarily greater than Moses. When, however, there *is* an escalation (type < antitype), the antitype is always to be seen in connection with the Messiah.

<sup>122</sup>G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 372, and "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," 17-39.

promise to Israel of a Redeemer whose person and deeds would supersede even the greatest persons and deeds of years gone by.

The following three examples clearly illustrate the manner in which this four-fold hermeneutic was employed by the holy writers of the OT. The first and most frequently referenced OT type is the Exodus from Egypt. What is not always realized is that this Exodus was actually an antitype of the typical Abrahamic descent into Egypt (Genesis 12). Abraham's famine-driven migration to Egypt resulted in trouble with Pharaoh (12:15), plagues from YHWH against Pharaoh (12:17), and departure from there laden with gifts (12:16,20). To use the imagery of von Rad referenced above, Abraham's "mother exodus" gave birth to the daughter Exodus (Exodus 13) which, in turn, was described in prophetic discourse as the mother of yet another Exodus. As Isaiah says in reference to this future Exodus,

[51:9] Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of YHWH; awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not You who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? [10] Was it not You who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a pathway for the redeemed to cross over? [11] So the ransomed of YHWH will return, and come with joyful shouting to Zion; and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.<sup>123</sup>

The supersession of the Second Exodus over the First is embraced in Is 52:11-12,

[11] Depart, depart, go out from there, touch nothing unclean; go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of YHWH. [12] But you will

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<sup>123</sup>Cf. Isa 40:3-5; 41:14-20; 48:20-21; 49:9-11; 52:12 and Hos 2:14-18; 8:13; 9:3; 11:15. Regarding the "Second Exodus," see D. Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963); F. Foulkes, *The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1955), 21-22; and W. Eichrodt, "Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?", who affirms, "One could indeed probably speak of a 'typical' meaning of the Exodus tradition [ . . . ], and the surpassing of the type by the excellence of the antitype is almost always emphasized [ . . . ]," 234.

not go out in haste (יִצְאוּ בְּחֵפָז), nor will you go as fugitives; for YHWH will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

In contrast to Ex 12:11, where haste (יִצְאוּ בְּחֵפָז) marked the Israelites' flight, the Second Exodus will be marked by calm assurance due the presence of YHWH as the One who has totally vanquished his people's foes. Here (and in 43:17) one can see that the anti-type will not be a mirror image of the type but an enhancement of it. The comely mother will give birth to a beautiful, stunning daughter.

The second illustrative OT type is of a negative nature—the example of Sodom and Gomorrah. Because of the punishment meted out on these two infamous cities and because of the pervasive iniquity in them, they became *typical* of that which is directly contrary to the divine will. For example, Jeremiah, reflecting back upon these two Pentateuchal cities, cries out in the name of YHWH,

[23:14] Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; and they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one has turned back from his wickedness. All of them have become to Me like Sodom, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah.<sup>124</sup>

In contrast to the above example of the Exodus, in which YHWH would graciously redeem his people as he had done in times past, Jeremiah implicitly warns that YHWH will do unto Jerusalem as he had done unto Sodom and Gomorrah. As with the type, so with the antitype.

One more example will suffice to illustrate typology within the OT: Eden as the type of future blessings. This paradisiacal locale of Adam and Eve was used typologically in later prophets to picture the blessedness of the future messianic kingdom. This method of viewing

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<sup>124</sup>FFor other examples, see Is. 1:9; 3:9; Eze 16:46; and Amos 4:11.

the former times as the blueprint or pattern for the end times is commonly called *Urzeit-Endzeit* typology ("primeval time equals ultimate time").<sup>125</sup> Ezekiel, for instance, says,

[36:33] Thus says the Lord God, "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt. [34] And the desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passed by. [35] And they will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate, and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.'"<sup>126</sup>

When viewed within the context of the prophetic books in which they appear, and especially within the context of the larger OT canon, these three instances of OT typology give one a glimpse into how the constancy of YHWH, the Pentateuchal foundation, the supersession of the antitype,<sup>127</sup> and the hope of the Messiah all shaped and molded the typological thinking and writing of the prophets. To them history was not "naked" but with clothed with the raiment of typology. To know what YHWH *would do* they looked to *what he had already done*.

### ***C. Typical Individuals Within the Old Testament***

Only one of the three examples of OT typology described above (i.e., of the Abrahamic "exodus"), however, alludes to perhaps the most significant "type of types": typical individuals within the OT canon. Typical individuals are arguably the most important of OT types for they

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<sup>125</sup>W. Eichrodt, "Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?", 235.

<sup>126</sup>For other examples, see Isa 51:3 and Joel 2:3.

<sup>127</sup>In discussing the supersession of the antitype over the type, Francis Foulkes summarizes, "There is to be a new David, but a greater than David; a new Moses but a greater than Moses; a new Elijah or Melchizedek, but one greater than those who stand out from the pages of the old records. There is to be a greater and more wonderful tabernacling of God, as His presence comes to dwell in a new temple. There is to be a new creation, a new Israel, redeemed, revived, a people made up of those to whom a new heart and a new spirit are given that they may love and obey their Lord," *The Acts of God*, 32.

are the clearest and most precise expressions of the One who would come as *the Antitype of types--the individual*, Jesus of Nazareth. Since typology has to do fundamentally with comparisons between two items of interest, the closer those two "items" are to one another in form and function the more exact the correspondence will seem to be and actually be. Therefore, since Jesus is, above all else, an individual who accomplished redemption, it stands to reason that those types which are also individuals who accomplished redemption will most perfectly model his ministry; they are types *par excellence*.<sup>128</sup>

There are, however, typical individuals within the OT who do not serve such an exalted status, that is, they are *not* (or are *not exclusively*) proleptic portraits of the Messiah but, e.g., of other individuals within the OT. As typical individuals are only a subset of various other OT types, so within the broad range of typical individuals one may also delineate three "types of typical individuals": the person-type, the office-type, and the action-type.<sup>129</sup>

### 1. Person-Type

Of the *typical* individuals within the OT, only two are of the person-type: David and Elijah. A person-type individual may be defined as the following: an historic individual whose office and name are *explicitly* stated to be a prefiguration (i.e., a type) of one in the future (i.e., antitype) who will perform the same or similar functions and hold the same or similar office.

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<sup>128</sup>This is probably one reason why King David (who successfully defeated Israel's foes) and Moses (who led the people out of bondage in Egypt [i.e., redeemed them]) are so central in the NT as types of the Messiah; cf. Goppelt, *Typos*, 61-82 and 83-90.

<sup>129</sup>For discussion of individuals as types within the OT, see D Daube, "Typology in Josephus," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 31 (1980): 18-36, and J. Day, "Prophecy," *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars, SSF*, eds. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 39-55.

What separates the person-type from the office-type (cf. below) is that, in the former, the actual name of the typical individual is said to be shared by the antitype. For example, in Ez 34:23-24

God promises,

[23] "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. [24] And I, YHWH, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I, YHWH, have spoken."

Note that YHWH does *not* say, "Then I will set over them one shepherd, one *like* my servant David [ . . . ]," but "[ . . . ] one shepherd, My servant David [ . . . ]."<sup>130</sup>

Similarly, in Mal 4:5-6 God says,

[5] "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of YHWH. [6] And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse."

God promised to send "Elijah the prophet" and *not* "one *like* Elijah." Both of these texts ostensibly suggest a true David *redivivus* and Elijah *redivivus*. Indeed, as evinced in the NT (Mt 16:14; Mk 6:15; Mk 8:28; Lk 9:8,19; Jn 1:21) and in extra-biblical Jewish literature<sup>131</sup> some understood these person-types quite literally and believed David or (especially) Elijah would re-appear. The type for them *was identical* with the antitype.

## 2. Office-Type

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<sup>130</sup>G. L. Davenport notes that the "dominant messianic hope [in the first century] seems to have been the Davidic royal one," "The 'Anointed of the Lord' in Psalms of Solomon 17," *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, eds. J. J. Collins and G. W. E. Nickelsburg (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 67. For a discussion of Davidic typology in the OT, see S. H. Hooke, *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Pattern of Revelation* (Digswell Place: James Nigbet & Co. Ltd., 1961), 103-106, and Foulkes, *The Acts of God*, 24-25.

<sup>131</sup>Goppelt, *Typos*, 36.

Typical individuals of the office-type are numerous. An office-type individual is one whose functions in an office correspond closely to or set the pattern for those carried out by one who fills the same office in a later period. In this instance the typical individual and his office are likened to but not equated with those of the anti-type.

For example, the following two texts demonstrate that Adam and his "office" over the pristine creation are likened to Noah and his "office" over the "new" creation after the Deluge.

[Gen 1:28] "And God blessed [וַיְבָרֶךְ] them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply [פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ], and fill the earth, [וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ] and subdue it and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' [29] Then God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you.'"

[Gen 9:1] "And God blessed [וַיְבָרֶךְ] Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply [פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ], and fill the earth [וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ]. [2] And the fear of you and the terror of you shall be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.' [3] Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as [כִּי] I gave the green plant."

The verbal affinities between the two accounts establish the link of Adam as type and Moses as antitype. The  $\text{כ}$  of 9:3 specifically hearkens back to the creation account of 1:28.

Moses exemplifies one who is an office-type individual both to his immediate successor, Joshua, to a later prophetic successor, Elijah, and to his eschatological "supersuccessor," Jesus. Since this study is focused primarily on typology within the OT, we will restrict the comparison to Joshua and Elijah. First, the "typicalness" of Moses in relation to Joshua is displayed most lucidly in his office of headship over Israel and in his leading them across the Red Sea. These

features are likened to the antitype Joshua who leads Israel in the crossing of the Jordan and in the conquering of the promised land. The typological connection is explicated in the early chapters of the book of Joshua:

[3:7] Now YHWH said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you."

[4:14] On that day YHWH exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so that they revered him, just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life.

[11:15] Just as YHWH had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that YHWH had commanded Moses.

Secondly, the manner in which Moses "typifies" Elijah can easily be demonstrated by a comparison of the common experiences they shared in the prophetic office over Israel.

**MOSES:** He was fed by YHWH (Ex 16:8-12) with food like cakes baked with oil (Num 11:7-9); complained about YHWH's mistreatment of him (Num 11:11-12); fled king's wrath to Mt. Sinai/ Horeb (Exodus 1-2) where he saw a theophany (Exodus 3-4); crossed body of water on dry ground (Exodus 14); and had a mysterious departure from life (Dt 34:1-6).

**ELIJAH:** He was fed by YHWH (1 Kgs 17:6) with food like cakes baked with oil (17:12-16); complained about YHWH's mistreatment of him (17:19-21); fled the queen's wrath to Mt. Sinai/ Horeb (19:1-3) where he saw a theophany (19:9-18); crossed body of water on dry ground (2 Kgs 2:8); and had a mysterious departure from life (2 Kings 2).<sup>132</sup>

As these three examples (Adam → Noah; Moses → Joshua; Moses → Elijah) amply prove, the office-type individual is the model or pattern which is followed by later antitypes. Also, these examples confirm the point made above that not all typical individuals within the OT simply serve as proleptic portraits of the coming antitypical Messiah. Although they may serve

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<sup>132</sup>Cf. S. S. Johnson, "Elijah," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:464.

that ultimate purpose (e.g., Moses is indeed a type of Christ [Deuteronomy 18; cf. note 128]), within the canonical perimeters of the OT they penultimately serve the purpose of prefiguring those who will--to a greater or lesser extent--fill the same office and carry out similar functions.

### 3. Action-Type

The third and final type of typical individual is the action-type. This individual differs from the prior two in that he or his actions serve as the pattern *not* for a future *individual* but for future *peoples or actions*. The clearest example of this, already noted above (Section 1), is the Exodus action-type of Abraham. Both Abraham and the Israelites are driven down to Egypt by famine (Gen 12:10; 42:5); after a time both suffer trouble at the hands of Pharaoh (Gen 12:15; Ex 1:8-14); YHWH strikes the Pharaoh with plagues (Gen 12:17; Ex 12:29); and they both depart from Egypt laden with gifts (Gen 12:16,20; Ex 12:35-36). Thus, Abraham and his actions served as a pattern or blueprint for what was later to happen to the *entire nation* of Israel.

Jacob, as an historic *individual* whose changed name, "Israel," came to be the name of the *whole nation* of his descendants, is doubtlessly another action-type individual. The typological correspondence between the two is more than adumbrated in Hosea 12:

[1] Ephraim feeds on wind, and pursues the east wind continually; he multiplies lies and violence. Moreover, he makes a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt. [2] YHWH also has a dispute with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; he will repay him according to his deeds. [3] In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his maturity [יְבִיאֲנֹהוּ] he contended with God. [4] Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought His favor. He found Him at Bethel, and there He spoke with us, [5] Even YHWH, the God of hosts; YHWH is His name. [6] Therefore, return to your God, observe kindness and justice, and wait for your God continually. [7] A merchant, in whose hands are false [מִזְרֵי מְזֵדָה; cf. Gen 27:35] balances, he loves to oppress. [8] And Ephraim said, "Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth [אֲנִי] for myself; in all my labors they will find in me no iniquity [עֲוֹן], which would be

sin." [9] But I have been YHWH your God since the land of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, as in the days of the appointed festival.

Michael Fishbane comments:

That the prophet fully intended this conclusion [i.e., that "Jacob's *personal* activities were considered the typological antecedent for Israel's *national* transgressions"] is also evident from the way he has exegetically linked Jacob's biography to the later history of 'Jacob' through a series of deft verbal associations and puns. Hosea underscores the negative prototype of Jacob's acts--including the encounter with Elohim. Thus, like Isaac's condemnation of Jacob's actions as 'deceit מִדְּמָה', Hosea refers to contemporary Jacob as a trader who connives with 'false scales' (מִדְּמָה; v. 8), and, just as old Jacob 'strove with Elohim in his manhood (בְּאִמּוֹנָה)' [ . . . ], so does latter-day Jacob deceitfully find 'wealth' (אִוֵּן) with the hope that his 'iniquity' (עוֹן) will not be found out (v. 9).<sup>133</sup>

One sees that "[ . . . ] the historical wiles, deceptions, and treacheries of corporate Israel are represented as a national reiteration of the behavior of their eponymous ancestor, Jacob-Israel."<sup>134</sup> One may also include as action-types Aaron → priests, Moses → prophets, David → kings. Each served as the individual action-type of persons who followed in their footsteps.

This section has substantiated the affirmation that within the OT world there were individuals who served as types for later antitypical individuals, offices, and actions. One typical individual, moreover, could serve to foreshadow a single individual, two or more individuals, or even a whole group or the action(s) of a whole group. Thus, the above three-fold delineation should not be regarded as hermetically-sealed typology; e.g., David was the person-type of Messiah, the office-type of Solomon, and the action-type of all future kings of Judah.

In order to confirm further the matrix of typology within the OT text, and, in particular,

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<sup>133</sup>M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 377-378.

<sup>134</sup>Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 376.

the typology of individuals, we now turn to the specific example of an office-type individual, Melchizedek.

#### ***D. Melchizedek as a Typical Individual***

Of the three groups of typical individuals within the OT, Melchizedek fits within the definitional parameters of an office-type. We have defined an office-type individual as one whose functions in an office correspond closely to or set the pattern for those carried out by one who fills the same office in a later period. In this instance the typical individual and his office are likened to but not equated with those of the antitype. Melchizedek "corresponds closely to" and "sets the pattern for" the coming Messiah, prophesied in Psalm 110. In addition, the NT book of Hebrews presents Melchizedek as one who is "likened to but not equated with" Christ Jesus.

Precisely in what manner, however, does Melchizedek "correspond closely to" or "set the pattern" for the Messiah? *That* he does is clear from his close association with the Messiah in Psalm 110. *In what way* he does, however, is the interrogative under discussion. What was it about Melchizedek that persuaded David to use him as an individual type of the Christ? In order to offer plausible answers to this query, we will (1) briefly re-examine the text of Genesis to ascertain which elements of the account were significant for NT typology (i.e., in Hebrews), which typology—one must always bear in mind—was but a continuation of OT typology,<sup>135</sup> (2)

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<sup>135</sup>That is to say, because the NT authors were greatly influenced by and "catechized" in the art of typological interpretation by the OT, to ask which elements of the Genesis account were significant for NT typology is to ask which elements would have been significant for OT typology. The aspects of Genesis 14 which were important for the author of Hebrews in his Melchizedek typology would most likely have been important for David as well. A student is a mirror of his teacher.

inquire as to the primary theme of Psalm 110 and ask how Genesis 14 may have complimented and reinforced that theme; (3) and suggest which curious "blanks" in the open pentateuchal text may have served as impetuses to the typology espoused in the psalm.

The elements of Genesis 14 which were significant for later biblical typology are: (a) Melchizedek's name means "king of righteousness"; (b) he is "king of Salem"; (c) he is both a king and priest; (d) he blesses Abram; (e) he collects a tenth or a tithe from Abram; and (f) this is the first, last, and only Scriptural mention of Melchizedek within a distinct, historical setting.

Concerning the etymology of Melchizedek's name, the author of Hebrews parenthetically comments that it means "king of righteousness" (7:2), but he offers no further explanation as to how this name-meaning further solidifies the typological relationship between Melchizedek and Jesus. The same lack of explanation applies to the city over which Melchizedek reigns as king, as the author of Hebrews notes in passing that "king of Salem" means "king of peace," (7:2). It is certainly possible that the name-meaning of Melchizedek could have influenced David to use him as a type of the Messiah, especially since regal righteousness was an attribute of the Messiah-to-come. Other figures of Genesis were given names which were "prophetic" (one might say "typological") of that which lay in the future. For example, the names of Abraham (Gen 17:5), Sarah (Gen 17:15), Jacob/Israel (Gen 32:28), and Judah (49:8)<sup>136</sup> were all nominal arrows pointing toward that which was to be in the future. That Melchizedek was king of Salem

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<sup>136</sup>In the blessing of Judah, Jacob uses a play on words with Judah's name, prophesying what will come to pass in the latter days of the Messiah, "Judah (יהודה), your brothers shall praise (יודו) you. . . .", (Gen 49:8).

(=Jerusalem)<sup>137</sup> and that David's psalm speaks of the Messiah ruling from Zion may also have contributed to Melchizedek's inclusion.

Although the Scriptures never focus on Melchizedek's dual status of king and priest as a reason for his messianic, typological significance, the fact that he bore both offices simultaneously likely played a role in his inclusion in Psalm 110. There are no other individuals in Israel's history, especially her history as recorded in the Pentateuch,<sup>138</sup> to which the explicit titles of מֶלֶךְ and כֹּהֵן are applied except Melchizedek. Although Moses, for instance, did carry out quasi-regal and sacerdotal functions in Israel, he is never called a king and only mentioned later, in the psalms (99:6), as a priest.

Melchizedek's blessing and tithing of Abram, actions of central importance to the argumentation of Hebrews for the superiority of Melchizedek (7:1-10), could also have attracted the attention of David. Especially when one considers--as was stated in Section One of this chapter--that in Genesis 12-25 only YHWH (12:3), His Angel (22:17-18), and Melchizedek (14:19-20) verbally בֵּרַךְ Abram, this priest-king's importance shines forth. Thus we see that some of the elements of the Genesis 14 account which were valuable for later typological exegesis may also have led David to portray Melchizedek as a messianic type in Psalm 110.

In order to answer the question, "Why Melchizedek?" we must secondly inquire as to the primary theme of Psalm 110 and ask how Genesis 14 may have complimented and reinforced that theme. Based on the exegesis of Psalm 110 presented above, the conclusion was reached

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<sup>137</sup>See note 75 above.

<sup>138</sup>As argued above (Section I), the Pentateuchal traditions largely determined what or who best served as types for future persons, events, etc.

that the Messiah addressed in Psalm 110 is a melding together of the persons, offices, and functions of Abram and Melchizedek as seen in Genesis 14. Given this conclusion, it would seem that *not only does the Genesis text compliment and reinforce the theme of Psalm 110; the psalm is a Christological "midrash" based upon Genesis 14.*

Finally, we must ask the question, "Is it possible or probable that the curious 'blanks' in the open pentateuchal text, which served as impetuses to the growth of later Melchizedek traditions, prompted the typology espoused already in Psalm 110?" That Melchizedek arrives on the scene immediately after Abram's miraculous victory; that Melchizedek's language echoes language uttered in theophanic encounters; and that Melchizedek's appearance is followed (almost) directly by a theophanic appearance of the **רַב־יְהוָה** may indeed have stimulated interest in this priest-king already during the time of David. Certainty is and always will be lacking, but the fact that later generations of Jews found these "blanks" exegetically stimulating strengthens the hypothesis that earlier generations did also.

### ***E. Conclusion***

Typological interpretation is firmly rooted within the text of the OT itself. Of the various categories of types, the individual type has been the focus of this last section, with particular interest centered on the office-type, of which Melchizedek is an example. David's employment of Melchizedek in Psalm 110 as a type of the Messiah is one illustration of how an OT author spoke of the actions and office of a future person by reference to the actions and office of a person in the past. By reflection upon Genesis 14 and the themes of Psalm 110, several plausible reasons have been given as to why David chose to speak of the Messiah by referencing Melchizedek. In the next chapter we will move beyond the OT texts to investigate the growth of

**Melchizedek traditions during and prior to the first century A.D.**

## CHAPTER THREE

### MELCHIZEDEK TRADITIONS IN SECOND TEMPLE TEXTS

The years prior to and contemporaneous with the birth and growth of the Christian Church were marked by a sizeable literary output by Jewish authors. These writings, some of which have been discovered only in the latter half of the twentieth century (e.g., the Qumran literature), reveal a religious, cultural, and theological milieu in which diversity was the norm. If there is a common, central "sun" around which these "planetary texts" revolve, then it is unquestionably the sacred writings of Moses and the prophets. This same Old Testament, however, was appropriated, construed, and applied in a myriad of ways, depending upon the hermeneutic of the author and the situation to which he applied the text.

Diversity, however, did not totally preclude the emergence of shared themes in this literature. Common features, such as images, figures, genres, and messianic expectations, are witnessed in many extra-biblical texts, although the manner in which they were employed often differs from author to author. Significant for the Christian exegete is the presence of many of these common features on the pages of the New Testament. The writings of the evangelists and apostles were indeed inspired by the Eternal One but they also mirrored and echoed the literature of the times.

Melchizedek--his place and purpose in the salvific economy of YHWH--exemplifies this mirroring and echoing. Although the question, "Did or did not extra-biblical traditions influence the portrait of Melchizedek in Hebrews?" continues to elicit debate among scholars, **most now**

agree that when the author of Hebrews evoked Melchizedek in his Christological argumentation, he did not reference a figure for whom there was scant interest in the first century. Quite the opposite, in fact: First century B.C. and first century A.D. Jewish writings reveal a significant, widespread focus on Melchizedek. This focus and--in some cases--fascination was doubtlessly not confined to a handful of literary documents; rather, these documents are lasting witnesses to a broader curiosity about this priest-king and his role in the divine plan of salvation for Israel. In a word, these texts illustrate what a large number of Jews were thinking about Melchizedek, not just what the authors of the texts were thinking.

In this chapter several first century B.C. and first century A.D. texts which contain Jewish Melchizedek traditions will be perused with four purposes in mind: to delineate how these texts describe Melchizedek; to compare and contrast these descriptions with Genesis 14 and Psalm 110; to discern what relation Melchizedek has to angelic figures, especially the archangel Michael; and to compare and contrast these first century texts with one another.

## **I. Literature from Qumran: 11QMelchizedek and Related Texts**

### ***A. Melchizedek in 11QMelch***

The year 1965 was a major milestone in Melchizedek studies. Theretofore, although literature about Melchizedek had not been wanting, lacking was evidence of traditions contemporary with the NT which would illuminate, or at least prompt new questions regarding, the identity of Melchizedek in Hebrews. The milestone was the publication of the *editio princeps* of 11QMelch by Adam S. van der Woude, appearing under this attention-grabbing title: "*Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim*"

aus Qumran Höhle XI."<sup>139</sup> The Hebrew text of 11QMelch, consisting of at least three columns, the second of which is the best preserved, was written between the second half of the first century B.C. and the first half of the first century A.D.<sup>140</sup> Presented below is a translation of the second column:<sup>141</sup>

Col. II (1) [. . .] your God . . . [. . .] (2) [. . .] And as for what he said: "In this year of jubilee, [you shall return, each one, to his respective property," as is written: "This is] (3) the manner (of effecting) the [release: every creditor shall release what he lent [to his neighbor. He shall not coerce his neighbor or his brother when] the release for God [has been proclaimed]." (4) [Its inter]pretation for the last days refers to the captives, about whom he said: "To proclaim liberty to the captives." And he will make (5) their rebels prisoners [. . .] and of the inheritance of Melchizedek, for [. . .] and they are the inheri[tance of Melchi]zedek, who (6) will make them return. He will proclaim liberty for them, to free them from [the debt] of all their iniquities. And this will [happen] (7) in the first week of the jubilee which follows the ni[ne] jubilees. And the day [of atonem]ent is the end of the tenth jubilee (8) in which atonement will be made for

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<sup>139</sup>*Oudtestamentische Studiën* 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 354-373.

<sup>140</sup>See Van der Woude, "Melchizedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt," 357, and J. A. Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11," *The Semitic Background of the New Testament: Combined Edition of Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament and A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramean Essays* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 245-246). Both scholars date 11QMelch in the first half of the first century A.D. Subsequent scholarship has gravitated toward the earlier date, sometime within the first century B.C. See J. T. Milik, "Milki-sedeq et Milki-reša dans les anciens écrits juifs et chrétiens," *JJS* 23 (1972): 97; P. J. Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchireša*, CBQMS 10 (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981), 3; C. J. Davis, *The Name and Way of the Lord: Old Testament Themes and New Testament Christology*, JSNT 12 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 39; and J. R. Davila, "Melchizedek, Michael, and War in Heaven," *SBLSP* 35 (1996): 259.

<sup>141</sup>All translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DDS), unless otherwise noted, are taken from F. G. Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996). 11QMelch is found on pp. 139-140. Other English translations of 11QMelch are available in "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," M. de Jonge and Adam S. van der Woude, *NTS* (1965-1966): 303; F. L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, SNTSMS 30 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 67-69; and P. Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, 7-10.

all the sons of [God] and for the men of the lot of Melchizedek. [And on the heights] he will decla[re in their] favour according to their lots; for (9) it is the time of the "year of grace" for Melchizedek, to exa[lt in the tri]al the holy ones of God through the rule of judgement, as is written (10) about him in the songs of David, who said: "Elohim will stand up in the assem[bly of God,] in the midst of the gods he judges." And about him he said: "Above it (11) return to the heights, God will judge the peoples." As for what he sa[id: "How long will yo]u judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah." (12) Its interpretation concerns Belial and the spirits of his lot, who were rebels [all of them] turning aside from the commandments of God [to commit evil.] (13) But, Melchizedek will carry out the vengeance of God's judgements [on this day, and they shall be freed from the hands] of Belial and from the hands of all the sp[irits of his lot.] (14) To his aid (shall come) all "the gods of [justice"; he] is the one [who will prevail on this day over] all the sons of God, and he will pre[side] over this [assembly.] (15) This is the day of [peace about which God] spoke [of old through the words of Isa]iah the prophet, who said: "How beautiful (16) upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, of the mess[enger of good who announces salvation,] saying to Zion: 'your God [reigns.]" (17) Its interpretation: The mountains are the pro[phets . . .] (18) And the messenger is [the ano]inted of the spirit about whom Dan[iel] spoke [. . . and the messenger of] (19) good who announces salv[ation is the one about whom it is written that [he will send him "to comfo]rt the afflicted, to watch over the afflicted ones of Zion." (2) "To comfo]rt the afflicted," its interpretation:] to instruct them in all ages of the worl[d . . .] (21) in truth. [. . .] (22) [. . .] it has been turned away from Belial and it [. . .] (23) [. . .] in the judgements of God, as is written about him: "Saying to Zion: 'your God rules.'" ["Zi]on" is (24) [the congregation of all the sons of justice, those] who establish the covenant, those who avoid walking [on the pa]th of the people. "Your God" is (25) [. . . Melchizedek, who will fr]ee [them] from the hand of Belial. And as for what he said: "You shall blow the hor[n in every] land."<sup>142</sup>

The setting of 11QMelch is the tenth and final jubilee of world history (2:7). This method of dividing history into jubilee periods is not uncommon in other Jewish literature of the day (e.g., *Jubilees*, *T. Levi* 17:2-9, and the 4QPseudo-Ezekiel texts; cf. *T. Levi* 16:1-17:1, *I Enoch* 89:59-90:27; 91:12-17; 93:1-10). The roots of such a system of chronology go back not

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<sup>142</sup>For studies which "unravel" the OT references woven into this text, see M. P. Miller, "The Function of Isa 61:1-2 in 11Q Melchizedek," *JBL* 88 (1969): 467-469, and J. A. Sanders, "The Old Testament in 11Q Melchizedek," *JANESCU* 5 (1973): 373-382.

only to the jubilee periods of the Pentateuch (Leviticus 25) but also the seventy weeks of years (seventy x seven years=490 years=ten jubilees) in Daniel 9. Both J. T. Milik and P. J. Kobelski argue that 11QMelch is the "last chapter" of a much longer work called the "Peshar on the Periods (of History)," similar in style and substance to 4Q180 and 4Q181, which recorded and prophesied the activities of Israel and the angels throughout world history.<sup>143</sup> "If this hypothesis is correct, then it would indicate that Melchizedek is not the focal point of the original Peshar on the Periods of History, even though his centrality in the tenth jubilee, described in 11QMelch, is unquestionable."<sup>144</sup> This affirms the caveat offered by F. Horton, that "[e]ven the name given to the document, '11QMelchizedek', may be a misnomer, and we cannot in the absence of other supporting evidence conclude that this document is a treatise about Melchizedek."<sup>145</sup> Nevertheless, Melchizedek's leading role in the *final jubilee* of world history underlines his importance for the document as a whole.

Melchizedek is identified as a *himmlische Erlösergestalt*, celestial emancipator of the Qumran covenanters, general of the angelic armies, and visible representative of YHWH. His exalted status is evinced in the following ways. First, the redeemed ones are referred to as the "lot [גורל] of Melchizedek," (2:8) in distinction from "Belial and the spirits of his lot" (2:12).

This division of humanity into a good גורל and an evil גורל is prevalent in Qumran literature (e.g., see the "good lot" in IQS 1:10; 11:7-8; 1QM 13:9; 1Q34 3 I 2 and the "evil lot" in IQS 2:5;

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<sup>143</sup>Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, 50-51, and Milik, "*Milkî-sedeq et Milkî-reša*," 109-124.

<sup>144</sup>Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, 51.

<sup>145</sup>Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 74.

4:24 and 1QM 1:1,11). 1QS 3:18-25a describes the fact that mankind is divided into two lots and that each lot is ruled by a spirit, either of truth or falsehood:

He created man to rule [18] the world and placed within him two spirits so that he would walk with them until the moment of his visitation: they are the spirits of truth and of deceit. [20] In the hand of the Prince of Lights is dominion over all the sons of justice; they walk on paths of light. And in the hand of the Angel [21] of Darkness is total dominion over the sons of deceit; they walk on paths of darkness. Due to the Angel of Darkness [22] all the sons of justice stray, and all their sins, their iniquities, their failings and their mutinous deeds are under his dominion [23] in compliance with the mysteries of God, until his moment; and all their punishments and their periods of grief are caused by the dominion of his enmity; [24] and all the spirits of their lot cause the sons of light to fall. However, the God of Israel and the angel of his truth assist all [25] the sons of light.

The similarity between 11QMelch and this text from the *Rule* strongly suggests that the "Melchizedek" of 11QMelch is to be equated with the "Prince of Lights" (3:20) and the "angel of [God's] truth," (3:24) in the *Rule*.<sup>146</sup> The "lot of Melchizedek" in 11QMelch is the lot of the "sons of justice" (3:20) and "sons of light," (3:24) in the *Rule*.

The other way Melchizedek's exalted status in 11QMelch is revealed is that he is referred to as *El and Elohim*.<sup>147</sup> The first and most obvious reference is in 2:9-10, "[. . .] for (9) it is the time of the 'year of grace' for Melchizedek, to exa[lt in the tri]al the holy ones of God through the rule of judgement, as is written (10) about him [עליו] in the songs of David, who said: 'Elohim will stand up in the assem[bly of God,] in the midst of the gods he judges.'" Although

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<sup>146</sup>See Section C below for further elaboration on the identification of Melchizedek with the "Prince of Light" and Michael.

<sup>147</sup>The ascription of these divine titles to Melchizedek does not mean that he is perceived to be YHWH Himself. Rather, the titles point to his status as an exalted, heavenly being, distinct from YHWH. He is the "*Elohim*" (leading angel) among the other "*Elohim*" (angels).

there has been some dispute about the referent of עליון,<sup>148</sup> nearly all scholars agree that

Melchizedek is the Elohim of Ps 82:1.<sup>149</sup> Immediately following the quotation of Psalm 82, the

writer continues, "And about him he said: 'Above it (11) return to the heights, God [אל] will

judge the peoples.'" C. J. Davis has argued persuasively that Melchizedek is the אל who will

"judge the peoples."<sup>150</sup> A third possible ascription of divine status to Melchizedek is found in

2:23-25,

Saying to Zion: 'your God rules.'" ["Zi]on" is (24) [the congregation of all the sons of justice, those] who establish the covenant, those who avoid walking [on the pa]th of the people. "Your God" is (25) [. . . Melchizedek, who will fr]ee [them] from the hand of Belial.

Although there is a lacuna between "'Your God' is" and "Melchizedek," the "author's need to interpret 'Your God' [of Is 52:7] makes its usual reference to God unlikely."<sup>151</sup> Melchizedek is,

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<sup>148</sup>J. Carmignac, in "Le document de Qumran sur Melkisédeq," *RevQ* 27 (1970): 343-378, has argued that the referent of עליון is not Melchizedek but God and His judgement. That is, Carmignac suggests that it be translated "as it is written about *it*," not "as it is written about *him* (i.e., Melchizedek)." He also objects to many other conclusions of van der Woude, put forth in the *editio princeps*, which ascribe celestial status to Melchizedek. His particular reading of 11QMelch—which has been rejected by virtually all subsequent scholarship—is that Melchizedek is no more than an earthly person, expected in the future, who will assume the office or name of the Biblical Melchizedek.

<sup>149</sup>See, e.g., M. Delcor, "Melchizedek from Genesis to the Qumran Texts and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JSJ* 2 (1971): 125,134; Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 74-75; Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, 59; Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 82; G. J. Brooke, "Melchizedek (11QMelch)," *ABD* IV, ed. D. N. Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 687-688; J. C. McCullough, "Melchizedek's Varied Role in Early Exegetical Tradition," *NETR* ½ (1978-1979): 56; A. Aschim, "Melchizedek the Liberator: An Early Interpretation of Genesis 14?" (*SBLSP* 35; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996): 244.

<sup>150</sup>*Name and Way*, 41-42.

<sup>151</sup>Davis, *Name and Way*, 40.

therefore, the likely referent.

Melchizedek's activities in the tenth and final jubilee are primarily militaristic, regal, and judicial, but sacerdotal functions are not necessarily excluded. Regarding the militaristic, regal, and judicial functions, he will make the captive ones among the sons of light return to freedom, declaring liberty to them and freeing them from their sins (2:5-6,13); he will "carry out the vengeance of God's judgments" against Belial and his minions (2:13); and he will lead all the righteous angels (2:14).

Several aspects of the text also strongly indicate that Melchizedek was understood to engage in priestly activities. First, although the priest who offers the sacrifices on the day of atonement at the end of the tenth jubilee is not explicitly mentioned (2:7-8), Melchizedek's clear priestly identity in the OT (Genesis 14 and Psalm 110) and his centrality in the tenth jubilee would certainly put him forward as the most likely priestly candidate. Second, because Melchizedek is an exalted angelic figure, and since at Qumran angels were commonly thought to exercise sacerdotal functions (see *Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice*; cf. *1 Enoch* 9:1-11; *T. Levi* 3:5-6), readers would likely have assumed that he served as priest. Third, as Kobelski argues, similarities between the *T. Levi* 18:2-14--where a "new priest" will take office in the final jubilee--and 11QMelch strongly suggest that the author 11QMelch was in some way influenced by *T. Levi*, and thus conceived of Melchizedek as this "new priest" whose priesthood would last forever.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>*Melchizedek*, 66-68. For other scholars who argue for or leave open the possibility that Melchizedek performs priestly functions in 11QMelch, see Jonge and van der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek," 305-306; Davis, *Name and Way*, 44-45; J. R. Davila, "Melchizedek, Michael, and War in Heaven," 271, and "Melchizedek: King, Priest, and God," *The Seductiveness of Jewish Myth: Challenge or Response?*, ed. S. D. Breslauer (New York: State University of New York

Melchizedek, in 11QMelch, is, therefore, a heavenly *Elohim* who, as the head of the angelic armies of YHWH, frees the sons of light from captivity to Belial and the spirits of his lot, ushers in the final jubilee of world history, and (most likely) provides atonement for the children of God on Yom Kippur. His identity and functions reveal his exalted status as the visible representative of YHWH who is indispensable in the eschatological plan of God for the salvation of His elect.

### ***B. 11QMelch, Genesis 14, and Psalm 110 Compared and Contrasted***

What relationship, if any, exists between this eschatological midrash of the Qumran community and the earlier texts of the Hebrew Bible where Melchizedek is mentioned? Do the OT accounts provide any of the backdrop for 11QMelch? These are by no means questions agreed upon by current or past scholarship. Fred Horton, on the one hand, warns that not enough of 11QMelch remains even to determine whether or not "the Melchizedek of the 11QMelchizedek and the Melchizedek of Gen. xiv and Ps. cx were considered by the author [of 11QMelch] to be the one and the same."<sup>153</sup> Paul Kobelski, on the other hand, argues, "The

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Press, 1997), 222; Fitzmyer, "Further Light," 259-260; Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 79; Aschim, "Melchizedek the Liberator," 245.

<sup>153</sup>*Melchizedek Tradition*, 79-80. Cf. Fitzmyer, "Further Light," 254; Irvin W. Batdorf, "Hebrews and Qumran: Old Methods and New Directions," *Festschrift to Honor F. Wilbur Gingrich*, ed. E. H. Barth and R. E. Cocroft (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 31; and F. C. Fensham, "Hebrews and Qumran," *Neot* 5 (1971): 18. Gareth L. Cockerill, "Melchizedek or 'King of Righteousness,'" *EQ* 63 (1991): 305-312, carrying the argument to an extreme, offers the rather unconventional opinion that the name מלכי צדק, ought not to be translated as the personal name "Melchizedek," but rather as "King of Righteousness," "a natural Qumran title for the chief good angel," (312). This would, according to Cockerill's thesis, correctly convey the intention of the author, that the מלכי צדק of 11QMelch has absolutely no connection to Genesis 14 or Psalm 110.

background for the development of the figure of Melchizedek in 11QMelch is the author's understanding of the description of Melchizedek in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110."<sup>154</sup>

Although there are no extant references to either Genesis 14 or Psalm 110 in 11QMelch, this does not preclude their influence on the Qumran author. Indeed, to assume that this Jewish writer, with a thorough knowledge of the OT, was not influenced by the OT depiction of Melchizedek is to assume that which is highly unlikely. Given what we know, therefore, of the Qumran literature in general and 11QMelch in particular, what similarities exist between these three texts which may be brought forward as evidence that the author of 11QMelch was influenced by these OT writings?

Regarding Genesis 14, as has already been discussed, several "open" features of the text--especially when read through the "lens" of Psalm 110--would have appealed to the Qumran writer as compelling indicators that Melchizedek was an angelic figure who came to the aid of Abraham.<sup>155</sup> When Psalm 110 is read in concert with Genesis 14, the appeal is heightened. When one compares Psalm 110 to 11QMelch, several common features emerge. *First*, both depict a militaristic victor who possesses an exalted status second only to that of YHWH. In Psalm 110, this victor is Adonai (i.e., the Messiah) and in 11QMelch, he is Melchizedek. *Second*, both describe this victor as completely triumphant over his foes. *Third*, both ascribe

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<sup>154</sup>*Melchizedek*, 51. Cf. David Flusser, "Melchizedek and the Son of Man (A Preliminary Note on a new fragment from Qumran)," *CNFI* 17/1 (1966): 23-29; David Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 27.

<sup>155</sup>See Chapter 2, I, B. These "open" features are: only Melchizedek and YHWH (or His angel) directly bless Abram, Melchizedek arrives on the scene immediately after Abram's miraculous victory, the language of Melchizedek echoes language uttered in theophanic encounters, and the appearance of Melchizedek is followed (almost) directly by a theophanic appearance of the Word of God.

priestly status to the warring victor. *Fourth*, in Psalm 110:3, "[i]t is possible that if *hēlekā*, 'your host' and *hēharērê-qodeš*, 'on the holy mountains,' were read by the author of 11QMelch, they would have been understood as a reference to the heavenly army of Melchizedek (cf. 11QMelch 2:14) and to the mountains alluded to in the citation of Isa 52:7 (cf. 11QMelch 2:15-17)."<sup>156</sup> These common features more than intimate a connection between Psalm 110 and 11QMelch. Although a direct verbal link between the two exists only in the name Melchizedek, indirect links abound. There is more than sufficient evidence to affirm the conclusion voiced by Kobelski, that "the Melchizedek presented in 11QMelch was consciously modeled after the figure addressed in v 1 of Psalm 110 as Adonai."<sup>157</sup>

### ***C. Melchizedek and Other Angelic Figures***

When A. S. van der Woude published the *editio princeps* of 11QMelch, he introduced the notion that the Melchizedek of 11QMelch is to be equated with the archangel Michael: "*Bei diesem Sachverhalt kann man nun aber meiner Meinung nach (wenn man wenigstens nicht von parallelen Traditionen reden will) einer Identifizierung Melchisedeks mit dem Erzengel Michael kaum entgehen.*"<sup>158</sup> At first, other scholars were hesitant to make this identification. In fact, van der Woude himself, in an article co-authored with M. de Jonge the same year in which the *editio princeps* appeared (1965), seemed to be reluctant to continue the identification.<sup>159</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, two years later, questioned this identification, opining that it was "impossible" to

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<sup>156</sup>Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, 54.

<sup>157</sup>*Melchizedek*, 54.

<sup>158</sup>"*Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt*," 369.

<sup>159</sup>"11Q Melchizedek and the NT," 305.

determine whether the author understood the two to be the self-same figure.<sup>160</sup> In subsequent years, however, a growing number of scholars have affirmed van der Woude's initial argumentation, that Melchizedek is another name or title for Michael.<sup>161</sup> As will be demonstrated below, there is more than sufficient textual evidence to confirm the veracity of this identification of the two figures in Qumran literature.

In *4QAmram*, a document in the literary genre of testaments, a strong case has been made by Paul Kobelski that Melchizedek is listed alongside Michael and the Prince of Light as three who share the same identity.<sup>162</sup> In this testament, Amram, on his deathbed, describes to his sons a vision in which he saw the two spirits who rule over humanity (cf. 1QS 3:18) fighting one another for his soul. The dying man describes one as "terrif[yi]ng, [like an a]sp, [and] his cl[oak] was of colored dyes, and it was very dark," (1:13); this is undoubtedly the evil spirit. After a lacuna, Amram, in a dialogue with the good spirit, queries, "(2:2) This [watcher], who is he?" And he said to me, 'Is this the watcher [ ]. (3) [And these are his three names: Belial, Prince of Darkness], and Melchiresha.'" A few lines later Amram asked the good spirit what his name was, and he responded, "[My] three names [are Michael, Prince of Light, and Melchizedek.]", (3:2). The only extant name of the evil watcher is מלכי רשע ("Melchiresha"),

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<sup>160</sup>"Further Light," 255.

<sup>161</sup>Aschim, "Melchizedek the Liberator," 245; Delcor, "Melchizedek from Genesis," 125; Davis, *Name and Way*, 44; Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 37; Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 82,184; Davila, "Melchizedek, Michael, and War in Heaven," 271. Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 81-82, discusses the possibility but refrains from affirming the identification.

<sup>162</sup>See Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, 26-28, for the text of *4QAmram*.

which is found elsewhere only in 4Q280 2, in a litany of curses.<sup>163</sup> The other two names conjectured by Kobelski, however, are deducible from other Qumran literature and from the immediate context. Belial is a common designation for the evil spirit in Qumran literature (e.g., 1QM 1:1; 13:4; 1QS 2:4-5) and, although "Prince of Darkness" never occurs, it is the logical opposite of the Prince of Light, which is a common designation for the good spirit in Qumran literature (e.g., 1QS 3:20; CD 5:18; and 1QM 13:10).

All "three names" of the good spirit, however, are missing in the text; all we are told is that "three" were indeed uttered. Two of these names were probably Michael (1QM 9:15,16; 13:9-13; 17:6,7) and the Prince of Light, being well attested in other Qumran writings. It is highly likely that the third was Melchizedek ("king of righteousness"), since it is the antithesis of Melchiresha ("king of wickedness"). Although numerous lacunae in the text render complete assurance in the correctness of this reconstruction impossible, all indicators point to the probability that Michael and Melchizedek are here identified.

In addition to *4QAmram*, other texts which describe Michael's role as Protector of Israel and as the one who carries out the judgments of God in the last days, parallel what 11QMelch attributes to the heavenly-redeemer Melchizedek. Dan 12:1, for instance, says of Michael, "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as has never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued,"

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<sup>163</sup>A portion of 4Q280 reads, "[. . . May God keep him apart] for evil from the amongst the sons of light, [for they turn away from following him . . .] (2) [and they will say: Accur]sed are you, Melki-resha, in all the pla[ns of your guilty inclination. May] God [make you] (3) an object of dread at the hand of those exacting vengeance."

(cf. 10:13,21; *1En* 20:5; *T. Levi* 5:6; *T. Dan* 6:2; *AsMos* 10:2; Jude 9). Michael's place as Guardian over Israel in the "time of distress" is similar to that of Melchizedek as the Protector of his "lot" in the final jubilee.

The War Scroll lends further credence to the identification of Melchizedek and Michael. As 1QM 17:4-8 says, in the last days (1QM 1:12; 15:1), Michael will appear and provide redemption for the chosen ones of Israel (cf. 1QM 13:9-16).

(4) And you, exert yourselves and do not fear. They incline towards chaos and emptiness, and their support is the void [ . . . ] (5) [To the God of] Israel what is and will be [ . . . ] in all that always happens. This is the day appointed to humiliate and abase the prince of the dominion of evil. (6) He has sent everlasting aid to the lot redeemed by the power of the majestic angel for the dominion (blank) of Michael in everlasting light. (7) He will the covenant of Israel shine with joy, peace and blessing to God's lot. He will exalt the authority of Michael above all the gods (8) and the dominion of Israel over all flesh. Justice [צדק]<sup>164</sup> will rejoice in the heights and all the sons of his truth will have enjoyment in everlasting knowledge.

In this text Michael is the "majestic angel" whom God will place over Belial to "humiliate and abase" him. God exalts the authority of Michael above all the other *Elohim*. In similar fashion, 11QMelch describes Melchizedek as the angelic leader of the celestial army of *Elohim* who will destroy Belial and all forces of evil.

F. du Toit Laubscher, in a reconstruction of 11QMelch 2:13, demonstrates that there is a

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<sup>164</sup>Joseph M. Baumgarten, in "The Heavenly Tribunal and the Personification of Sedeq in Jewish Apocalyptic," *ANRW* II.19.1, notes that the "exaltation of Michael and the rejoicing of Sedeq [ . . . ] are paralleled by that of Israel below," (224), supporting his theory that Sedeq was closely associated with Michael. Of most importance for the current discussion, however, is the close relationship which Baumgarten also posits between Melchizedek and Sedeq in several texts (222-223). That both Michael and Melchizedek were possibly construed as personifications of Sedeq strengthens even more the hypothesis that the two were identical in the eyes of the Qumran community.



presumes the exegesis of that verse in 11QMelch but goes beyond what is said there to identify Melchizedek's role as specifically priestly."<sup>168</sup> This provides corroborating evidence from Qumran literature that Melchizedek was not only seen as the angelic leader and judge, but also the head of the sacerdotal angels.

The second fragment in which Newsom has found a possible reference to Melchizedek is 4Q101 22 3.<sup>169</sup> The first two lines mention "[. . .] holy ones of [. . .]" and "[. . .] they fill their hands [. . .]." The context, therefore, is the ordination of angelic priests. The third line reads, "[כִּי צִדְקָה]" Newsom comments, "In view of the reference to the consecration of priests in the preceding line, it is tempting to restore the name of Melchizedek here. In 11QMelch ii 5, as it would be in this line, the name is written as two words."<sup>170</sup>

What is significant about both of these fragments is not only that Melchizedek is probably directly connected with the sacerdotal ministry of angels, but also that his leadership over the priestly host corresponds strikingly with the assumed priestly leadership status of Michael. In the later traditions of the Babylonian Talmud, Michael is described as the high priestly angel in heaven (Hag. 12b; Zebah. 62a; Menah. 110a). As Kobelski points out, "Given the interest of the Essene community in the heavenly temple and the heavenly cult, it is not surprising that they too would identify the angelic leader Michael with the high priesthood in the heavenly liturgy. The exalted status they accorded him as leader of the angels (1QM 17:7) could

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<sup>168</sup>*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 37.

<sup>169</sup>*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 143-144.

<sup>170</sup>*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 143-144.

indicate that in the heavenly liturgy of the angels, he would function as high priest."<sup>171</sup>

There are, therefore, several significant indications that Melchizedek is to be identified with the archangel Michael.<sup>172</sup> Not only does *4QAmram* establish this link between Melchizedek and Michael; many other texts exhibit close connections between their status and work on behalf of YHWH and Israel.<sup>173</sup> This identification is extremely significant for determining the importance of Melchizedek for the Qumran community. It is beyond question that the archangel Michael played an indispensable role in the eschatological plan of salvation embraced by the Qumran community. His presence is firmly established in such foundational documents as the *War Scroll* and the *Rule of the Community*. Since, as has been argued, Melchizedek is a "differently-named" Michael, then Melchizedek plays that same indispensable role in the eschatological plan of salvation. Melchizedek's status cannot be downgraded or diminished by the fact that his name occurs only in three or four documents. Where Michael is explicitly mentioned or alluded to in the Qumran texts, Melchizedek is also understood.

#### *D. Summary*

11QMelch describes the eschatological, redemptive actions of the heavenly leader of the

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<sup>171</sup>*Melchizedek*, 72.

<sup>172</sup>Contra P. Rainbow, "Melchizedek as Messiah at Qumran," *BBR* 7 (1997): 179-194, who has argued that the fragmentary nature of many of the Qumran texts discussed above precludes a certain identification of Melchizedek and Michael. Indeed, he detects many weaknesses and contradictions in the identification. Rather than equating Melchizedek and Michael, he urges that the functions of Melchizedek in 11QMelch more closely conform to those of the Messiah than to a mere angel.

<sup>173</sup>In medieval Jewish texts (*Yalqut hadas* f. 115, col. 3, no. 19 and *Zohar hadas* folio 22,4 and folio 41,3) this Melchizedek-Michael identification is made explicit. Cf. W. Lueken, *Michael; der Erzengel Michael in der Überlieferung des Judentums* (Göttingen: Huth, 1898), 31-32.

angelic armies of YHWH named Melchizedek. At the omega of world history, this *Elohim* would descend from heaven to usher in the deliverance for the people of God from the power of Belial and his evil lot. Melchizedek's activities are judicial, regal, militaristic, and sacerdotal. Although in the extant sections of the document, there are no explicit references to Genesis 14 or Psalm 110, there are several indications in the text that the author formed his Melchizedek in the image and likeness of the Melchizedek in those OT sections. Numerous similarities between Melchizedek in 11QMelch and Michael in other Qumran and extra-biblical literature have established a firm link between these two figures. They were identified as the self-same angelic leader by the Qumran sectarians. Because, therefore, Melchizedek is merely another name for Michael and Michael another name for Melchizedek, one can conclude that Melchizedek was a highly important angelic, redeemer-figure for the Qumran community.

## II. Melchizedek in 2 Enoch

### *A. The Inclusion of 2 Enoch Within a Study of First Century B.C. and A.D. Melchizedek Traditions*

The pseudepigraph known--among other titles--as **2 Enoch** is an extensive **midrash on** Gen 5:21-32.<sup>174</sup> The work has traditionally been divided into two main sections: chapters 1-68 and chapters 69-73. The first and more extensive section narrates the account of Enoch's ascent through the **seven heavens**, the divine and angelic instruction he receives during this celestial sojourn of three-score days (chapters 1-38), and his subsequent descent back to his earthly

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<sup>174</sup>Francis I. Andersen, "Enoch, Second Book of," *ABD* 2:517 notes the bothersome fact that, "[. . .] the work has almost as many names as there are manuscripts [. . .], ranging from 'The Tale (*slovo*, literally "word") of or 'Life of or 'Book of (the Secrets of ) (Righteous or Wise) Enoch' to even more elaborate titles."

family, at which time he imparts his learned knowledge to his familial students and then re-ascends to the heavenly regions (chapters 39-68). The second section records the priestly appointments and activities of Methuselah and Nir, the miraculous birth of Melchizedek to Sopanim (Nir's wife) following the death of the pregnant woman, and concludes by describing the present and future significance of this mysterious sacerdotal *Wunderkind* in the divine plan of salvation.

Because of long-standing, scholarly disputes regarding the date, authorship, original language, provenance, and recensions of *2 Enoch*, this pseudepigraph has unhappily been disregarded in many major studies and monographs on Melchizedek traditions.<sup>175</sup> These disputes have been prompted by understandable concerns. Dates proposed by prominent scholars range from the first century B.C. to the fifteenth century A.D.<sup>176</sup> The author of *2 Enoch*, according to erudite opinions, may have been a Jew, hellenized Jew, Jewish-Christian, Christian,

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<sup>175</sup>Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 81, regards *2 Enoch* as "beyond the chronological bounds" of his study, which covers material to the fifth century A.D. C. Gianotto, in *Melchisedek e la sua tipologia: tradizioni guidaiche, cristiane e gnostiche* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1984), 45-46, note 1, limits his discussion of *2 Enoch* to a footnote. Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, also makes no mention of *2 Enoch*, though, admittedly, the primary purpose of his study is not to compare the varying traditions.

<sup>176</sup>All the following scholars argue for or leave open the possibility of a first century B.C. or A.D. date: R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 2.425; A. Lods, *Histoire de la littérature hébraïque et juive des origines à la ruine de l'Etat juif* (Paris, 1950), 50; F. I. Andersen, "2 Enoch," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1.94-95; P. Sacchi *Apocrifi dell'Antico Testamento* (Turin: Union Tipografico--Editrice Torinese, 1989), II.498-507; Delcor, "Melchizedek from Genesis," 128. J. K. Fotheringham, "The Easter Calendar and the Slavonic Enoch," *JTS* 23 (1922): 49-56, established a *terminus post quem* in the seventh century. J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 110, urges a ninth or tenth century date. A. S. D. Maunder, "The Date and Place of Writing of the Slavonic Book of Enoch," *The Observatory* 41 (1918): 316, assigned its composition sometime between the 12th and 15th centuries.

or from an unknown esoteric community.<sup>177</sup> The original language--which also has a bearing on the date of composition--could have been Hebrew (or Aramaic), Greek, or Slavonic.<sup>178</sup> There is no agreement on the geographical provenance of *2 Enoch*.<sup>179</sup> Although, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many scholars argued that, of the longer and shorter recensions, the longer was the original, most experts today accord the shorter recension premier rank, though divergent opinions are still voiced.<sup>180</sup> All of which prompts the understandable interrogative: Why include such a disputed text in a study of first century B.C. and A.D. Melchizedek traditions?

*2 Enoch* deserves consideration in a study of early Melchizedek traditions because of the following reasons. First, although some authors have wrongly stated that the "Melchizedek

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<sup>177</sup>Delcor, "Melchizedek from Genesis," 128; Sacchi, *Apocrifi*, 495-507; and C. A. Gieschen, "The Different Functions of a Similar Melchizedek Tradition in *2 Enoch* and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. C. A. Evans, JSNTSup 148 (Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 366-371, all argue that the author was Jewish. Charles, *APOT*, 425, and Lods, *Historie*, 50, opine that he was a hellenized Jew. J. Daniélou, *Theologie du Judéo-Christianisme* (Paris, 1952), 75, and A. Vaillant, ed., *Le Livre des Secrets d'Hénoch. Texte slave et traduction française* (Paris, 1952), 9-10, believe he was a Jewish-Christian. Arie Rubinstein, "Observations on the Slavonic Book of Enoch." *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 13 (1962): 15, is inclined to regard *2 Enoch* as being written by a Christian under little or no Jewish influence. Finally, Andersen, "2 Enoch," concludes that "[i]f the work is Jewish, it must have belonged to a fringe sect," 96.

<sup>178</sup>Andersen, "2 Enoch," 94.

<sup>179</sup>Andersen, "2 Enoch," 95-97.

<sup>180</sup>Charles, *APOT*, 15, argued that the longer recension was the original one. When N. Schmidt, "The Two Recensions of Slavonic Enoch," *JAOS* 41 (1921): 307-312, published his study, which favored the shorter version, most scholarship followed suit (cf. Vaillant, *Le Livre*). See R. van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix according to Classical and Early Christian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), for a more recent opinion in favor of the longer recension.

Appendix" (chapters 69-73) may not even be a part of the original work,<sup>181</sup> and thus unworthy of consideration in studies of early Melchizedek traditions, the facts are to the contrary: "There is no evidence that the second part [i.e., the "Melchizedek Appendix"] ever existed separately."<sup>182</sup> Doubts about the authenticity of chapters 69-73 are, therefore, ungrounded and ought not serve as an impetus to the exclusion of *2 Enoch*. Second, weighty reasons *against* Christian authorship of *2 Enoch* and *for* Jewish authorship undermine assumptions that the author must have been influenced by the Epistle to the Hebrews and written in post-first century A.D. years.<sup>183</sup> Third, recent scholarship, which has investigated and formed hypotheses based on the ideological system evident in *2 Enoch*, urges that a **pre-70 A.D.** date be ascribed to the text, thus placing it clearly within the scope of the study of **early Melchizedek studies**. These last two reasons need further elaboration.

Vaillant, Daniélou, and Rubinstein argue that the **author was a Christian** who was **influenced by Judaism**.<sup>184</sup> The opinion of all three is influenced to some extent by the Melchizedek tradition in chapters 69-73. Vaillant concludes, concerning Melchizedek's birth,

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<sup>181</sup>Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 81, mistakenly comments, "Only in one recension of the Slavonic Enoch does material about Melchizedek merge with Enochian tradition, and this text falls far beyond the chronological bounds of this present study [i.e., the fifth century A.D.]" Andersen, "2 Enoch," 92, note 3, referencing this objection of Horton, corrects him, "This argument is not itself logical; but the facts are otherwise. The tradition is found in both recensions, in six MSS representing four text families."

<sup>182</sup>Andersen, "2 Enoch," 92. Also see above note.

<sup>183</sup>These reasons will be discussed below.

<sup>184</sup>See note 177.

that "the imitation of the story of the birth of Christ is obvious."<sup>185</sup> He is echoed by Rubinstein who states, "[. . .] Melchizedek's conception in Sofonim's womb, without the intervention of a biological father, bears an obvious resemblance to the conception of Jesus."<sup>186</sup> What is "obvious" to both these scholars, however, does not bear up under scrutiny. As Delcor points out, "[T]here is no true parallel with the birth of Jesus, for the latter was born of a virgin whereas according to the apocryphal work, Melchizedek is the offspring of a barren woman, as was John the Baptist."<sup>187</sup> The only true commonality these two nativities share is their miraculous occurrence. Sopanim mirrors Sarah (Genesis 21), Elizabeth (Luke 1) and Noah's mother (*1En* 106) much more closely than she does the Virgin Mary.<sup>188</sup> In addition, if the author of *2 Enoch* were influenced by Hebrews, it seems odd that he would describe the birth of Melchizedek, when Hebrews describes him as "without father, *without mother*, without genealogy, *without beginning of days* or end of life," (7:3). The theory, therefore, of Vaillant, Daniélou, and Rubinstein has serious flaws. It seems much more likely, therefore, that the work is of Jewish

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<sup>185</sup>*Le livre*, 11.

<sup>186</sup>"Observations," 14.

<sup>187</sup>"Melchizedek from Genesis," 129. Cf. Andersen, "2 Enoch," 204, note 71c, where he refers to comparisons of the nativities of Melchizedek and Jesus as "hasty and superficial."

<sup>188</sup>*1En* 106:1-4 records the birth of Noah, many characteristics of which may have inspired the description of Melchizedek's birth in *2 Enoch*: "And after some days my son, Methusalah, took a wife for his son Lamech, and she became pregnant by him and bore him a son. And his body was white as snow and red as a rose; the hair of his head as white as wool and his *demdema* beautiful; and as for his eyes, when he opened them the whole house glowed like the sun-(rather) the whole house glowed even more exceedingly. And when he arose from the hands of the midwife, he opened his mouth and spoke to the Lord with righteousness."

origin.<sup>189</sup>

The third reason, stated above, that *2 Enoch* deserves consideration in a study of early Melchizedek traditions is because the ideological system undergirding and prompting the work is arguably an early Jewish ideological system. In a recent article which compares the Melchizedek traditions in Hebrews and *2 Enoch*, Charles A. Gieschen highlights the need for deliverance from sin and impurity as the common concern throughout *2 Enoch*.<sup>190</sup> Melchizedek is portrayed as the mediator figure who would secure this needed deliverance through his sacerdotal services. Melchizedek was likely chosen as the mediator figure because the group from which *2 Enoch* originated "sought a solution for the impurity of the Levitical priesthood."<sup>191</sup> Since "*2 Enoch* still reflects a concern for the Temple cult or priesthood as a means of dealing with evil," and since such "a concern quickly diminished after 70 CE," in all probability the work was written in the "earlier period in Jewish apocalyptic literature when mediator figures--and not the Law--were the focus of deliverance from sin."<sup>192</sup>

For these three reasons, therefore, *2 Enoch* is included in this investigation of first century B.C. and A.D. Melchizedek traditions. Although some questions about the text's history remain unanswered, they are not sufficiently substantial to preclude the consideration of *2 Enoch*. Like 11QMelch, Philo, and Josephus, it remains a viable witness to early Jewish

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<sup>189</sup>Cf. Michael E. Stone, author and ed., "Apocalyptic Literature," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, CRINT (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 406-408.

<sup>190</sup>"Different Functions," 366-371.

<sup>191</sup>"Different Functions," 369.

<sup>192</sup>"Different Functions," 369.

Melchizedek traditions.

### ***B. The Melchizedek Tradition in 2 Enoch***

The legend of the nativity and future ministry of Melchizedek, as told by the author of 2 *Enoch*, is one of the most bizarre and fantastic of the Melchizedek traditions, perhaps the example *par excellence* of what one author has called the "weird transformations" which Melchizedek undergoes in the various texts.<sup>193</sup> Leading up to the account of his miraculous birth is the brief narration of the priestly careers of Methuselah and Nir, both of whom were divinely selected to don the sacerdotal raiment of their predecessors. Methuselah, son of Enoch and grandfather of Nir, after several years of priestly service subsequent to Enoch's re-ascent to heaven, received a revelation from God which warned of the increase of ungodliness among the people of the earth and the resulting, punitive deluge which would follow. At God's behest, Methuselah invested his grandson Nir with the priesthood and, immediately thereafter, died, leaving Lamech's son as leader of the people and officiant at the altar.

Upon Nir's ordination as priest, he entered into a state of celibacy, though he remained married to a woman named Sopianim, who was childless, elderly, and ostensibly sterile. To her astonishment and grievous shame, however, Sopianim became pregnant apart from sexual relations with Nir or any other man. She remained in hiding until, shortly before her time of delivery, Nir requested her presence at the temple. Upon his discovery of the pregnancy, Nir became outraged, and, defiantly incredulous at his spouse's claim of innocence, he rebuked her so sharply that she fell at his feet and died.

Seeking, quite literally, to "cover up" this shocking travesty, Nir, in consultation with his

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<sup>193</sup>Davila, "Melchizedek: King, Priest, and God," 217.

brother Noah, decided to bury the deceased, pregnant woman surreptitiously to avoid public outcry. The author continues:

And they placed Sothonim [i.e., Sopanim] on the bed, and they wrapped her around with black garments, and shut the door. And they dug a grave in secret. And when they had gone out toward the sepulcher, a child came out from the dead Sothonim. And he sat on the bed. And Noe and Nir came in to bury Sothonim, and they saw the child sitting beside the corpse, and having his clothing on him. And Noe and Nir were very terrified, because the child was fully developed physically. And he spoke with his lips, and he blessed the Lord. And Noe and Nir looked at him closely, saying, "This is from the Lord, my brother." And behold, the badge of priesthood was on his chest, and it was glorious in appearance. And Noe said to Nir, "Behold, God is renewing the continuation of the blood of the priesthood after us." And Noe and Nir hurried, and they washed the child, and they dressed him in the garments of priesthood, and they gave him the holy bread and he ate it. And they called his name Melkisedek. And Noe and Nir lifted up the body of Sothonim, and divested her of the black garments, and they washed her body, and they clothed her in choice garments, and they built a grave for her. And Noe and Nir and Melkisedek came, and they buried her publicly. (71:16-23; Recension A)<sup>194</sup>

Following Sopanim's funeral, wickedness multiplied upon the earth, exciting anxiety within Nir as to the future welfare of his priestly prodigy, whom he feared might be killed. The Lord answered Nir's prayers in this regard, assuring him that the archangel Gabriel<sup>195</sup> would come to transport the child to the Garden of Eden, where he would be kept until after the Flood, after which time, God promised, Melkizedek would reappear to be "my priest to all priests, and I will sanctify him and I will change him into a great people who will sanctify me," (71:29). After Melchizedek spent forty days in Nir's tent, the Lord fulfilled his promise via a nocturnal visit from Gabriel, who winged Melchizedek to the paradisiacal locale where he would be kept in

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<sup>194</sup>Recension A is the shorter version and Recension J the longer. All quotations are from Andersen, "2 Enoch," Recension A, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>195</sup>In Recension J the archangel is identified as Michael.

safety until the days of the Flood were completed.

Several details in this account are noteworthy. First, Melchizedek is conceived without paternal involvement and delivers himself from his mother's corpse. This particular rendering of Melchizedek's nativity may have been influenced by the LXX translation of Ps 110:3, which speaks of the referent of the Psalm as being "begotten" from of old (see Section C below). C. Gieschen suggests that Melchizedek's unusual conception and birth were intended by the author "to emphasize the purity of this child. He was not the product of an impure sexual union or a bloody birth experience; he is a pure priest who would atone for sins."<sup>196</sup> Second, he emerges from the womb as a physically precocious child. Third, although the actual words are not recorded, the only reference to his speech is that he "spoke with his lips, and he blessed the Lord," (71:18). The action of blessing links this Melchizedek to the Melchizedek of Gen 14:19-20, whose only recorded words were those of blessing. Fourth, he was born with "the badge of priesthood" on his chest and "it was glorious in appearance," (71:19). Fifth, the purpose of this birth was that he might perpetuate the priesthood as its leader in the years following the Flood.

Such a priest as Melchizedek, who was miraculously born and divinely designated as the head of the priests of the future, would have provided for the community who produced this text the mediative answer to their problems of impurity and sin. In the longer recension Melchizedek is pictured as the "archpriest, the Word and Power of God, who will perform miracles, greater and more glorious than all the previous ones," (71:34). This depiction heightens and more sharply defines Melchizedek's place in the salvific economy of God for His people. The Jewish community from which *2 Enoch* emerged found in Melchizedek the fount of a non-levitical

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<sup>196</sup>"Different Functions," 370.

priesthood which would be sufficiently pure to provide atonement for their iniquities through sacerdotal service.

### ***C. 2 Enoch, Genesis 14, and Psalm 110 Compared and Contrasted***

The Melchizedek tradition of *2 Enoch*, when compared with the account given in Genesis 14 of Melchizedek's encounter with Abraham, seems to bear little resemblance to the biblical facts. In Genesis 14, Melchizedek is postdiluvian; in *2 Enoch*, he is antediluvian. In Genesis, he is both a priest and a king; in *2 Enoch*, there is barely an allusion to any future regal functions.<sup>197</sup> The one allusion in *2 Enoch* to the Genesis account is that the only recorded speech of Melchizedek is that in which he blesses the Lord (cf. Genesis 14:18-19). Even this action, however, may have been patterned more after the miraculous birth of Noah (1En 106:3, "And when [Noah] arose from the hands of the midwife, he opened his mouth and spoke to the Lord in righteousness.") than Melchizedek's actions in Genesis 14.

In distinction from Genesis 14, Psalm 110 impacted *2 Enoch* decisively. The very possibility of anything resembling a "Melchizedek priesthood" rather than a levitical priesthood was introduced by Ps 110:4, "The Lord has sworn and will not repent, 'You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.'" In addition, the third verse of the psalm, as translated in the LXX, may very well have suggested to the author of *2 Enoch* the miraculous nativity of Melchizedek. As David Flusser explains,

The story of the miraculous birth of Melchizedek is based upon a difficult verse of Psalm 110 (verse 3). The Hebrew text has 'מִרְחֹם מְשֻׁחָר לֵךְ מִלְּיָדָיִךְ':

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<sup>197</sup>In Recension J, 71:35 and 72:6, mention is made of Melchizedek's future place as a king, but it is possible that these are later interpolations which were added to link him more closely to the biblical account.

The LXX translates, 'From the womb, before the morning star, I have begotten thee.' The rendering 'I have begotten thee' is based upon the spelling ילדתיך. If one begins with the assumption that, in Psalm 110, God addresses Himself to Melchizedek, the text from which the LXX translated almost compels the conclusion that 'the Word of God has created' Melchizedek in the womb of his mother.<sup>198</sup>

Furthermore—and perhaps most importantly—Psalm 110 is invitingly ambiguous about the attribute of eternalness in reference to Melchizedek. When the psalm says, "You are a priest forever (לְעוֹלָם), according to the order of Melchizedek," (v 4), the text leaves unanswered the question, "Is Melchizedek eternal also?" To the writer of *2 Enoch*, Melchizedek apparently does not die, but lives on forever. This understanding of Melchizedek was probably derived from Ps 110:4. Therefore, as in 11QMelch, although *2 Enoch* does not use the specific language of Psalm 110, this does not automatically negate the probability of the psalm's theme being the impetus behind the document's use of Melchizedek.<sup>199</sup>

#### ***D. Conclusion***

*2 Enoch* provides a vivid example of the type of Melchizedek speculations and traditions which were alive in the first century religious and literary milieu. In this piece of Enochian literature, Melchizedek is a sacerdotal *Wunderkind* whose miraculous birth and concomitant priestly characteristics assure Noah and Nir that Melchizedek will carry on the priesthood after the Deluge. As the non-levitical head of the priests of the future, he would initiate a line of priests who, because of their ritual purity, would be able to provide atonement for the sins of the

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<sup>198</sup>"Melchizedek and the Son of Man," 27.

<sup>199</sup>Contra Andersen, "Enoch, Second Book of," 519, who argues that "[e]ven the Melchisedek legend shows no interest in what the Bible says."

people. The account draws upon Psalm 110 for its ideology, while making little reference to Genesis 14.

### III. Melchizedek in Philonic Literature

The remaining two extra-biblical sources of Melchizedek traditions in the first century B.C. and A.D. are Philo and Josephus. Both wrote in the first century A.D. and both offer further insights into the traditions surrounding the regal priest of Salem. Although, when compared with 11QMelch and 2 *Enoch*, these two Jewish writers paint Melchizedek with more "conservative" hues which more closely resemble the portrait of him in the OT texts, they nevertheless give to the modern reader new insights into what the Jews of the first century were thinking about Melchizedek.

The Jewish exegete Philo (c. 10 B.C. to 45 A.D.)<sup>200</sup> writes of Melchizedek in four of his works (*Legum Allegoriae* III.79-82; *De Congressu* 99; *De Abrahamo* 235; and a fragment), though in one (*De Abrahamo* 235) Melchizedek is not explicitly named and in another, a fragment discovered by Rendel Harris,<sup>201</sup> little is stated which is not referenced in the other three works.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup>For an excellent summary of Philo and his writings, see Peder Borgen, "Philo of Alexandria," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*. M. Stone, ed., CRINT (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 233-282.

<sup>201</sup>See Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 435,437.

<sup>202</sup>For studies which address Philo's treatment of Melchizedek, see Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 54-60; Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 434-439; Richard Longenecker, "The Melchizedek Argument of Hebrews: A Study in the Development and

In *Legum Allegoriae* III.79-82, in a discussion of how God is wont to bestow blessings upon those who have in no wise earned them, Philo adduces Melchizedek as exemplary of this divine prerogative:

Melchizedek, too, has God made both king of peace [βασιλέα τε τῆς εἰρήνης], for that is the meaning of "Salem," and His own priest [ἱερέα ἑαυτοῦ] (Gen. xiv.18). He has not fashioned beforehand any deed of his, but produces him to begin with [πρῶτον] as such a king, peaceable and worthy of His own priesthood. For he is entitled "the righteous king," [βασιλεὺς δίκαιος] and a "king" is a thing at enmity with a despot, the one being the author of laws, the other of lawlessness. So mind, the despot, decrees for both soul and body harsh and hurtful decrees working grievous woes, conduct, I mean, such as wickedness prompts, and free indulgence of the passions. But the king in the first place resorts to persuasion rather than decrees, and in the next place issues directions such as to enable a vessel, the living being I mean, to make life's voyage successfully, piloted by the good pilot, who is the right principle [ὀρθὸς λόγος]. Let the despot's title therefore be ruler of war, the king's prince of peace, of Salem, and let him offer to the soul food full of joy and gladness; for he brings bread and wine, things which the Ammonites and Moabites refused to supply to the seeing one, on which account they are excluded from the divine congregation and assembly. These characters, Ammonites deriving their nature from sense-perception their mother, and Moabites deriving theirs from mind their father, who hold that all things owe their coherence to these two things, mind and sense-perception, and take no thought of God, "shall not enter," saith Moses, "into the congregation of the Lord, because they did not meet us with bread and water" (Deut. xxiii.3f.) when we came out from the passions of Egypt. But let Melchizedek instead of water offer wine, and give to souls strong drink, that they may be seized by a divine intoxication, more sober than sobriety itself. For he is a priest, even Reason [λόγος], having as his portion Him that IS, and all his thoughts of God are high and vast and sublime: for he is priest of the Most High (Gen. xiv. 18) [. . .].<sup>203</sup>

Reflecting clearly upon Gen 14:18-20, Philo in this passage utilizes the etymological

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Circumstantial Expression of New Testament Thought," *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Thought*, ed. R. A. Geulich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 169-170; and J. L. Marshall, "Melchizedek in Hebrews, Philo, and Justin Martyr," *SE* 7 (1982): 339-342.

<sup>203</sup>*LCL*, I, 352-355. All quotations from Philo's writings are taken from *Loeb Classical Library, Philo*, eds. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1927-1962).

meanings of Melchizedek's city (i.e., Salem) and name, along with his gifts of bread and wine to Abram and his men, as springboards upon which to launch into an allegorical discussion. Referencing what was evidently a commonplace etymology in the first century (cf. Hebrews 7:1-2), Melchizedek as king of Salem is βασιλέα τε τῆς εἰρήνης ("king of peace"). Philo's comment that Melchizedek is God's own priest, ἱερέα ἑαυτοῦ, may have been partly influenced by Psalm 110.<sup>204</sup> Melchizedek's name is understood to mean βασιλεὺς δίκαιος ("the righteous king"), another common etymology of this time period (cf. Josephus [below] and Hebrew 7:1-2).

After using Melchizedek's name and regal office to contrast the king and the despot, both of whom respectively represent allegorically the "mind" (νοῦς) and the "right principle" (ὀρθὸς λόγος), Philo continues his exegesis of the Genesis account by contrasting Melchizedek's repast of bread and wine—especially the latter—with the actions of the Ammonites and Moabites who refused to supply bread and water to the wandering Israelites during their wilderness sojourn. Melchizedek's gift of wine, however, is even of greater worth than the water which these enemies of Israel withheld, for the fruit of the vine represents that which produces "divine intoxication, more sober than sobriety itself."

Finally, Philo identifies Melchizedek as "a priest, even Reason [λόγος], having as his portion Him that IS [. . .]." Peder Borgen explains Philo's use of Logos:

Philo's technical use of the term *Logos* connotes God's mental activity during the act of creating. The *Logos*, one of the powers of the intelligible world,

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<sup>204</sup>If this is a reference to Psalm 110, it would be the sole instance in which Philo quotes or alludes to that psalm. Horton comments, "One might take the wording here [. . .], as more readily stemming from Ps. cx. 4 than from the passage in Genesis. Philo makes a point of God's having made Melchizedek his own priest. However, this interpretation is not to be insisted upon," *Melchizedek Tradition*, 56, note 1.

reaches into our world, mainly through the mediators Moses and Aaron, both called *Logos*. The plural *logoi* can indicate the heavenly principles which are embodied in the laws and precepts given to the Jews through Moses.

In another sense, the *Logos* and the *logoi* may be conceived as heavenly figures such as angels and archangels. The *Logos* is also called a 'second god', or God's first-born. This *Logos* has many names: 'the beginning', 'the name of God', 'the man after his image', and 'he that sees' (Israel).<sup>205</sup>

Melchizedek, allegorically, was the symbol or personal embodiment of the divine Logos, as were Moses and Aaron. This statement about Melchizedek, according to Williamson, follows from "Philo's conviction that 'the Logos assumed personality the moment it appeared in finite individual minds.'<sup>206</sup> "[. . .] Melchizedek became for Philo the manifestation of the high-priestly Logos who intoxicates the soul with esoteric virtues."<sup>207</sup>

In the second text in which Melchizedek is mentioned, *De Congressu* 99, Philo parenthetically refers to him in the midst of a discourse on tithing.

It was this feeling which prompted the Man of Practice [i.e., Jacob] when he vowed thus, "Of all that thou givest me, I will give a tenth to thee" (Gen xxviii.22); which prompted the oracle that follows the blessing given to the victor by Melchizedek the holder of that priesthood, whose tradition he had learned from none other but himself [αὐτομαθῆ καὶ αὐτοδίδακτον]. For "he gave him," it runs, "a tenth from all" (Gen. xiv. 20); from the things of sense, right use of sense; from the things of speech, good speaking; from the things of thought, good thinking.<sup>208</sup>

Philo's description of Melchizedek's priesthood as αὐτομαθῆ ("self-taught") and αὐτοδίδακτον ("instinctive") is oddly out of context. The characteristics are mentioned in passing, receiving no

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<sup>205</sup>"Philo of Alexandria," 273.

<sup>206</sup>*Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 436.

<sup>207</sup>Longenecker, "Melchizedek Argument of Hebrews," 169.

<sup>208</sup>*LCL* IV, 506-509.

comment and adding nothing to the argument under consideration. It is therefore possible, as Horton speculates, that "[. . .] Philo is here borrowing on a tradition about Melchizedek not to be found in the Old Testament sources."<sup>209</sup> Whatever the source may be, Melchizedek is unique in Philonic thought as one who received his priesthood from God himself, not man. Coupled with the thought expressed in *Legum Allegoriae* III.79-82, that Melchizedek is the Logos, these epithets witness to Melchizedek's exalted place.

In *De Abrahamo* 235, Philo gives his most literal account of Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek in Genesis 14. After describing the complete victory of Abraham over his foes, Philo writes:

When the high priest [ὁ μέγας ἱερεὺς] of the most high God saw him [Abraham] approaching with his trophies, leader and army alike unhurt, for he had lost none of his own company, he was astonished by the feat, and, thinking, as indeed was natural, that such success was not won without God's directing care and help to their arms, he stretched his hands to heaven and honoured him with prayers on his behalf and offered sacrifices of thanksgiving for the victory and feasted handsomely those who had taken part in the contest, rejoicing and sharing their gladness as though the success were his own; and so indeed it was, for "the belongings of friends are held in common," as the proverb says, and this is far more true of the belongings of the good whose end is to be well-pleasing to God.<sup>210</sup>

In his retelling of the biblical narrative, Philo adds several embellishments to the account, one of which is that he gives Melchizedek the title "*high* priest." Horton identifies four other embellishments:

- (1) Abraham lost no men in the campaign.
- (2) Melchizedek 'lifts up his hands to heaven' in prayer.
- (3) Melchizedek offers victory sacrifices.

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<sup>209</sup>*Melchizedek Tradition*, 58.

<sup>210</sup>*LCL*, VI, 114-117.

(4) Melchizedek and Abraham are fast friends so that Abraham's victory is enjoyed vicariously by Melchizedek.<sup>211</sup>

Noteworthy also is Philo's "reading of Melchizedek's mind" by attributing astonishment to him upon Abraham's victorious return. Adumbrated, therefore, is Philo's conviction that Melchizedek was *not* an angel who had just provided assistance to Abraham, thus enabling him to win such a victory against forces which vastly outnumbered him. If, therefore, as has been suggested earlier in the thesis and as is argued by certain scholars,<sup>212</sup> some first century Jewish readers saw Melchizedek as Abraham's "guardian angel," then Philo was not one of them.

In summary, Philo sees Melchizedek as a "king of peace" and a "righteous king," who was a manifestation of the *Logos*. His priesthood was "self-taught" and "instinctive," a direct gift from God. Philo's main interest in Melchizedek is not in the historical man as such, but in what allegorical fruit he can harvest from Melchizedek's offices, name, city, and actions. Genesis 14 is the primary biblical text upon which Philo builds his exegesis, though a reference to Psalm 110 is possible in *Legum Allegoriae* III.79.

#### IV. Josephus and Melchizedek

Josephus, the famous Jewish historian of the first century (c. 37 to c. 100 A.D.), writes of Melchizedek in two of his works, *The Wars of the Jews* VI.438 and *The Antiquities of the Jews* I.179-181. Following on the heels of his description of Jerusalem's destruction by the Romans under Titus in 70 A.D., Josephus writes of the holy city (*The Wars of the Jews* VI.438):

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<sup>211</sup>*Melchizedek Tradition*, 56.

<sup>212</sup>See Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, 52, and Anders Aschim, "Melchizedek the Liberator," 248-249.

Its original founder [πρῶτος κτίσας] was a Canaanite chief [Χανααναίων δυνάστης], called in the native tongue 'Righteous King' [βασιλεὺς δίκαιος]; for such indeed he was. In virtue thereof he was the first to officiate as priest of God and, being the first to build the temple, gave the city, previously called Solyma, the name of Jerusalem. The Canaanite population was expelled by David, the king of the Jews, who established his own people there [. . .].<sup>213</sup>

As in Philo's account (*De Abrahamo* 235) of Melchizedek's actions in Genesis 14, Josephus adds a number of embellishments to the story: (1) Melchizedek is Jerusalem's πρῶτος κτίσας ("original founder"); (2) he was a Χανααναίων δυνάστης ("Canaanite chieftain"); (3) he was the first to carry out sacerdotal functions (in Jerusalem?); (4) he was the first to build the temple; (5) and he changed the name of the city from Solyma to Jerusalem. Echoing both Philo (see above) and Hebrews 7:1-2, Josephus understands Melchizedek's name to mean "righteous king."

In *The Antiquities of the Jews* I.179-181, after Josephus relates the overthrow of the foreign armies by valiant Abraham and his host, he describes the patriarch's encounter with Melchizedek.

So Abraham, having rescued the Sodomite prisoners, previously captured by the Assyrians, including his kinsman Lot, returned in peace. The king of the Sodomites met him at a place which they call the "royal plain." There he was received by the king of Solyma, Melchisedek; this name means "righteous king," and such was he by common consent [ὁμολογουμένως],<sup>214</sup> insomuch that for this reason [ὡς διὰ ταύτην] he was moreover made priest of God; Solyma was in fact the place afterwards called Hierosolyma. Now this Melchisedek hospitably entertained Abraham's army, providing abundantly for all their needs, and in the course of the feast he began to extol Abraham and to bless God for having delivered his enemies into his hand. Abraham then offered him the title of the

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<sup>213</sup>LCL, III, 500-503. All quotations from Josephus' writings are taken from *Loeb Classical Library, Josephus*, eds. H. St. J. Thackeray, R. Marcus, A. Wikgren, and L. H. Feldman, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1926-1965).

<sup>214</sup>Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 83, argues that the word ὁμολογουμένως "suggests the possibility that Josephus is here delivering a tradition or popular saying about Melchizedek."

spoil, and he accepted the gift.<sup>215</sup>

In this paraphrase of Gen 14:17-20, Josephus repeats the fact that Melchizedek was a "righteous king," affirming, as he did above in *The Wars of the Jews* VI.438, that for this reason ("ὥς διὰ ταύτην") Melchizedek was made a priest; his righteous regal reign led to his sacerdotal service.

These two portions of Josephus' writings, although ostensibly summaries of the biblical account, nevertheless supply additional details which either originated exclusively from Josephus' creative mind or were common, contemporary Jewish traditions which the historian merely incorporated as he penned his works. He makes no reference to Psalm 110, relying exclusively upon Genesis 14 and (perhaps) other traditions.

#### **V. Comparing and Contrasting 11QMelch, 2 Enoch, Philo, and Josephus**

At the conclusion of Fred Horton's chapter of the treatment of Melchizedek in Philo, Qumran, and Josephus, he illustrates the commonalities and differences between these three groups of writings by means of a table.<sup>216</sup> That table is reproduced below, with some modifications and additions.

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<sup>215</sup>*LCL*, IV, 88-91.

<sup>216</sup>*Melchizedek Tradition*, 86.

	<b>Genesis 14</b>	<b>Psalms 110</b>	<b>Philo</b>	<b>Josephus</b>	<b>2 Enoch</b>	<b>11QMelch</b>
King of Salem	X		X	X		
Priest	X	X	X	X	X	X
Salem=Jerusalem				X		
Priest of El Elyon	X		X			
Founder of Temple				XX		
Heavenly Figure					X?	X
First Priest to God				XX		
Unlearned Priesthood			XX			
βασιλεὺς δίκαιος			X	X		
King of Peace			XX			
Logos			XX			
Eschatological Figure					X	X
Friend of Abraham			XX			
Receives Tithes	X		X	X		
Entertains Army	X?		X	X		
Elohim					X?	X
Miraculous Birth					XX	
Head of Priests					XX	
Antediluvian Figure					XX	

Notes: X-info. given by source. XX-unique info. given by source. X?-info. perhaps given by source.

The first century B.C. and A.D. Melchizedek traditions covered in this chapter all share some common features. First, all four describe Melchizedek in such a way that they go beyond what the Scriptures have written concerning him. Second, they all bear some resemblance to the

biblical depiction of Melchizedek. Though no direct quotations may have been given of Genesis 14 or Psalm 110, allusions to these two texts can be found. Third, they all describe him in such a way that his uniqueness is brought forward as worthy of contemplation.

The differences between the four texts and authors are obvious, bearing witness to a multitude of Melchizedek traditions in the first century milieu. While Josephus restricts his comments to the historic personage of Abrahamic times, 11QMelch and 2 *Enoch* speak of a unique, salvation-bearing deliverer who plays a central role in God's plan for His people; Philo falls somewhere in between these two tendencies.

A survey of these texts is helpful in determining, quite simply, what first century Jews would have thought and answered were they to have been asked the rather straightforward question, "Who is Melchizedek?" If 11QMelch, 2 *Enoch*, Philo, and Josephus are indicative of their religious culture, then the answers would have varied considerably. As will be further developed in the following chapter on the author of Hebrews' use of Melchizedek in his argumentation, it was just such *variety* in conceptions about Melchizedek's person and significance which allowed the author to utilize this mysterious individual in his priestly homily.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MELCHIZEDEK IN HEBREWS

Scripture's song about Melchizedek reaches a crescendo in the New Testament homily of Hebrews.<sup>217</sup> In previous chapters of this thesis, the amplification of this "Melchizedek song" has been documented, with comparisons and contrasts between the existing Melchizedek traditions noted. The Melchizedek musical composition began with but a faint whisper in the first book of Moses, intensified in Psalm 110, and was joined by a cacophonous host of sounds in the non-canonical literature of the first century B.C. and A.D. The musical meridian, however, was reached in Hebrews, where the Christological purpose of Melchizedek was trumpeted forth with singular clarity.

Despite the prominence of Melchizedek in Hebrews, however, many questions about Melchizedek remain ostensibly unanswered or tantalizingly out of the modern reader's grasp. Melchizedek's personal identity, his earthly or heavenly origin, the reason(s) for his inclusion in the argument of the homily, and the relationship between the Melchizedek of Hebrews and the "Melchizedeks" of non-canonical literature: all of these questions and issues of substantial import have sparked many a fire of disagreement. A lack of scholarly consensus and exegetical clarity is the unhappy norm.

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<sup>217</sup>Albert Vanhoye has convincingly argued that the genre of Hebrews is homiletical, not epistolary, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Subsida Biblica 12 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1989), 2-6. Therefore, throughout this chapter the "Epistle to the Hebrews" is understood and spoken of as a sermon or homily.

This chapter will, first, seek to determine Melchizedek's place and function in the macrostructure of Hebrews and in the microstructure of Hebrews 7. Second, Melchizedek's identity will be addressed by comparing and contrasting the portrait of him in Hebrews with the same in the Old Testament and Second Temple texts. Third, probable reasons for the inclusion of Melchizedek in the argument of Hebrews will be put forward and conclusions drawn.

#### **L. The Place and Function of the Melchizedek Argument in the Macrostructure of Hebrews**

The chiasmic structure of the entirety of Hebrews has been helpfully and convincingly demonstrated by Albert Vanhoye.<sup>218</sup> In the *first section* of the homily (1:1-2:18), the author demonstrates the superiority of Christ to the angels (1:1-14), urges his addressees to take his message seriously (2:1-4), and proves Christ's brotherhood with humanity through the incarnation (2:5-18). In the *second section* (3:1-5:10), the homilist presents Jesus as a high priest worthy of faith (3:1-4:14) and merciful (4:15-5:10). Two important comparisons are made in this section between Christ and Moses (3:1-6) and Christ and Aaron (5:1-10). The *third and central section* (5:11-10:39) describes the uniqueness of the priesthood of Christ and the perfection of his crucifixion sacrifice. The *fourth* (11:1-12:13) and *final sections* (12:14-13:25) admonish the hearers to remain faithful and to follow the straight path of the sanctified life.

The sermon's chiasm, reaching its zenith in 9:11 ("But Christ, having-then-come [as] high priest of the good things to come [. . . ]"),<sup>219</sup> is introduced by the indispensable Melchizedek

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<sup>218</sup>He argues that the holy homilist "has written his work with a talent without equal, making use of structuralizing techniques with came to him from his Jewish-Hellenistic education," *Structure and Message*, 19.

<sup>219</sup>Vanhoye's translation, *Structure and Message*, 94.

argument of the seventh chapter.<sup>220</sup> Hebrews 7 clothes Christ in Melchizedek's sacerdotal raiment and Hebrews 8-10 usher him inside the heavenly Holy of Holies via the rent veil of his sacrificial flesh. It is only in chapter 7 that the reader learns how the Messiah can even be a priest--since he is not of the seed of Levi--and why his priesthood and concomitant sacrifice are of greater value than the OT Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices.

As the homilist is wont to do, he leaves tell-tale rhetorical signs along the way to chapter 7 which serve as harbingers of the Melchizedek exposition to come.<sup>221</sup> Already in Heb 1:3,13 the reader is introduced to Psalm 110, the "Melchizedek Psalm," which will serve as the primary OT text in the homily.<sup>222</sup> In Heb 5:6,10 the fourth verse of the psalm is quoted, thus bringing up the subject of Melchizedek.<sup>223</sup> Almost as quickly as Melchizedek is introduced, however, the author sets him aside for a lengthy admonition (5:11-6:20), saying:

[. . .] προσαγορευθείς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀρχιερεὺς κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ. Περὶ οὗ πολὺς ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος καὶ δυσερμήνευτος λέγειν, ἐπεὶ νωθοὶ γέγονατε ταῖς

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<sup>220</sup>C. Spicq urges that Hebrews 7 is the "culminating point of the epistle's argument," *L'épître aux Hébreux* (Etudes bibliques; Paris: Gabalda, 1952-1953), 2:203. He is echoed by Richard Longenecker who argues that "[t]he focal point of and the watershed for the exposition of chapters 1-10, in fact, is the Melchizedekian argument of chapter 7 [. . .]," "The Melchizedek Argument of Hebrews: A Study in the Development and Circumstantial Expression of New Testament Thought," *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Thought*, ed. R. A. Geulich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 172.

<sup>221</sup>Vanhoye, *Structure and Message*, 19-22.

<sup>222</sup>Psalm 110 is cited or alluded to in Hebrews more than any other OT text--fifteen times. See D. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 163-166.

<sup>223</sup>That the homilist references another verse in Psalm 110 besides the first is in itself remarkable. As M. Parsons notes, "Hebrews, so far as we know, was the first in the early Christian community to expand the atomistic use of Ps. 110:1 to include the entire Psalm," "Son and High Priest: A Study in the Christology of Hebrews," *EQ* 60 (1988): 212.

ἀκοαῖς. (5:1-11)

Due to the ambiguity of the relative pronoun, the phrase *Περὶ οὗ* could be understood in different ways.<sup>224</sup> Since, however, "Melchizedek" is the immediate antecedent (5:10) of *οὗ*, as well as the subject taken up again subsequent to the section of paraneasis (6:20-7:28), the phrase is best translated, "concerning whom, [that is, Melchizedek], we have much to say [ . . . ]." Melchizedek, therefore, is the *δυσερμήνευτος* of Heb 5:11, "that which is hard to explain."

Not only has Psalm 110, especially 110:4, prepared the hearer for Hebrews 7, the prevalent priestly and atonement language peppering Hebrews 1-6 has laid the groundwork for the introduction of the Melchizedek theme. Already in Heb 1:3, the twin themes of priestly atonement and heavenly exaltation are joined: "[. . .] καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς [ . . . ]." In 2:17 Christ is first called a "high priest" and reference is made to his work of atonement. In subsequent sections Jesus is called "ἀρχιερέα τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν" (3:1), a "ἀρχιερέα μέγαν διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανοὺς" (4:14), and one called by God, as was Aaron, to the high priestly office (5:1-10).

One might initially suppose that the author also had prepared his hearers for the introduction of the OT figure of Melchizedek into the heart of the sermon by comparing Christ with other OT figures in the first six chapters. Such, however, is and is not the case. Paul Ellingworth has noted a general pattern which emerges in the homily when the author compares OT themes and persons to Jesus.

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<sup>224</sup>If *οὗ* is neuter the author would be referencing the entire subject of the priesthood of Christ; if masculine it would refer to Christ or Melchizedek; see H. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 156-157, n. 17, for various opinions on translation.

In doctrinal passages, where Old Testament individuals or institutions are contrasted with Christ and the new covenant, positive elements of comparison serve largely to establish a *tertium comparationis* in beliefs and assumptions shared by the author and his readers [ . . . ] [C]omparison provides a foundation for contrast, but it is the contrast which matters.<sup>225</sup>

For example, Heb 3:1-6 introduces Moses (v 2), compares Christ to Moses (πιστόν [ . . . ] ὡς καὶ Μωϋσῆς[v 2]), and then contrasts Christ as greater than Moses (πλείονος [ . . . ] δόξης παρὰ Μωϋσῆν ἠξίωται[v 3]). The author follows the same exegetical, homiletical pattern regarding [a] the angels and the Son (Hebrews 1-2); [b] the high priests and Christ (Heb 5:1-5); and [c] OT sacrifices and Christ's sacrifice (Hebrews 9-10). But, as Paul Ellingworth observes, the Melchizedek "square peg" will not fit into this rhetorical "round hole."

Melchizedek alone will not fit into this pattern. As nowhere else in the epistle, there are not two terms in the comparison but three: Melchizedek, Abraham (including Levi and his descendants, 7.5,6,9, and by implication Aaron, v. 11), and Christ. Melchizedek's higher status is contrasted with that of Abraham; Christ's higher status is contrasted with that of Abraham's descendants; but the comparison of Christ with Melchizedek is defined no further than saying that Melchizedek is ἀφωμοιωμένος [ . . . ] τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ, v. 3b, and indirectly by separate statements that both are (eternally) alive (ζῆ, v. 8, of Melchizedek; κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου, v. 16, of Christ).<sup>226</sup>

That Melchizedek is compared with Christ follows the pattern set by the author; that he is not contrasted with Christ breaks the mold.

Of further interest on this same subject is the way in which the author, when he contrasts OT realities with Jesus, demonstrates the superior nature of Christ to the OT figures. In the beginning unit which treats of Christ's priesthood, the author endeavors to demonstrate, first, the

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<sup>225</sup>"Like the Son of God': Form and Content in Hebrews 7,1-10," *Biblica* 64 (1983): 256.

<sup>226</sup>"Like the Son of God,'" 256.

sacerdotal *fidelity* of Christ (Heb 3:1-4:14), and, secondly, the *merciful* nature of his priesthood (Heb 4:15-5:11). As the homilist does so, he utilizes two Pentateuchal characters to serve as Christological foils: Moses in the "faithful section" and Aaron in the "merciful section." It is noteworthy, however, that the argument does *not* proceed along these lines: Moses was faithful but Christ is more faithful, or, Aaron was merciful but Christ is more merciful. *Instead, in both sections in which the comparison is made, it is the heavenly status of Christ as Son which manifests his preeminence over these OT leaders.* It was not that Moses had a paucity of fidelity which relegated him to a position of importance beneath the Son, but that he was a mere human servant. It was not that Aaron had a deficiency in mercy which made him subordinate to Jesus, but that he was "taken from among men," (5:1) and was not the Divine Son addressed in Psalm 2. *Although Jesus, as High Priest, is compared to Moses and Aaron regarding their fidelity and mercy, He is contrasted with them as One who is heavenly and divine.* What is instructive is the fact that in Hebrews 7 the author follows this same method of argumentation in proving the superiority of Melchizedek to the mere mortal Levites. As will be analyzed more closely in Section 2, *although Melchizedek, as priest, is compared to the Levites as one who received tithes, he is contrasted with them as one who is not mortal but "remains a priest forever" and "lives," (7:3,8).* To prove the superior nature of Melchizedek's priesthood, therefore, the homilist proceeds along the same lines as when he proves the superior nature of Christ's priesthood "after the order of Melchizedek."

## **II. The Place and Function of the Melchizedek Argument in the Microstructure of Hebrews 7**

The chapter under discussion--which may once have been an independent midrash--<sup>227</sup> neatly betrays its simple structure via the usage of inclusions: vv 1-3 introduce Melchizedek; vv 4-10 expand on the Genesis 14 account to prove Melchizedek's superiority to the Levitical priests through creative, insightful exegesis; and vv 11-28 continue the discussion by showing the superiority of Christ--who is in the order of Melchizedek--to the OT priests.<sup>228</sup> There is, however, another angle to the structure: vv 1-2 pencil in a skeletal sketch of the historic Melchizedek which is then fleshed out in vv 4-10 to demonstrate his supersession over the Levites and v 3 introduces a tantalizing exegetical picture of Melchizedek extrapolated from Ps 110:4, which is mirrored by Christ in vv 11-28 to prove his supersession over the Levites.<sup>229</sup> Since the centrality of Melchizedek is primarily limited to the vv 1-19, the discussion below will focus on those verses.

#### A. *Hebrews 7:1-3*<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>227</sup>See G. L. Cockerill, *The Melchizedek Christology in Heb. 7:1-28* (Ann Arbor, MI: 1979), 290-307. Joseph Fitzmyer helpfully lists the five characteristics of midrash, all of which are found in this pericope: the "*point de départ* in an OT passage (Gn 14:18-20 implicitly quoted), its homiletical character (here for apologetic purposes), its attentive analysis of the text (the interpretation of the names and explanation of the blessing and tithes), its adaptation of the OT text to a present situation (the priesthood of Christ), and its haggadic character (an elaborative exposé in which the interest is centred on the biblical account rather than on the historical figure as such)," "Now this Melchizedek . . ." (Heb 7:1)," *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), 222.

<sup>228</sup>See Vanhoye, *Structure and Message*, 37.

<sup>229</sup> See Paul J. Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchiresha*, CBQ Monograph Series #10 (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981), 122, for a discussion of this structure.

<sup>230</sup>For a study of how this section of Hebrews has been interpreted historically, see B. A. Demarest, *A History of Interpretation of Hebrews 7, 1-10 from the Reformation to the Present*, BGBE 19 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1976) and "Hebrews 7:3: A *Crux Interpretum*

[7:1] For this Melchizedek, King of Salem,<sup>231</sup> priest of God Most High, after meeting Abraham upon his returning from the defeat of the kings and blessing him, [2] to whom also Abraham apportioned (ἐμέρισεν)<sup>232</sup> a tenth of everything (first [Melchizedek] is translated "King of righteousness" and then also "King of Salem," which is "King of Peace"), [3] without father (ἀπάτωρ), without mother (ἀμήτωρ), without genealogy (ἀγενεαλόγητος), having neither beginning of days nor end of life (μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων), just like<sup>233</sup> the Son of God (ἀφομοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ), [Melchizedek] remains a priest forever (μένει Ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές).<sup>234</sup>

These three verses—a "majestic periodic sentence"<sup>235</sup>—are illustrative of the rhetorical art of the homilist. By carefully culling and presenting specific details from Gen 14:18-20, weaving them together with the language of Psalm 110 (and perhaps another source [see below]), and

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Historically Considered," *EQ* 49 (1977): 141-162.

<sup>231</sup> ~~Salem was commonly~~ understood as Jerusalem. Ps 76:2 places Salem and Zion in poetic parallelism and Josephus, Qumran literature, Targumim, and Philo equate the two. Although other sites have been put forward as possible alternatives, the majority opinion affirms that "Salem" is the more ancient name for Jerusalem. See J. G. Gammie, "Loci of the Melchizedek tradition of Gen 14:18-20," *JBL* 90 (1971): 385-396. See also Chapter 2, Section 1, B, n. 75.

<sup>232</sup>W. Lane comments, "The finite verb ἐμέρισεν, 'he allotted,' is substituted for the verb ἔδωκεν, 'he gave,' in the LXX text to emphasize the fact that Abraham paid a tithe," *Hebrews 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47a (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), 164. This change prepares the way for the argument in Heb 7:4-10.

<sup>233</sup>See P. Ellingworth, "Just Like Melchizedek," *BT* 28 (1977): 236-239 and J. Schneider, "αφομοιω," *TDNT*, 5:198.

<sup>234</sup>P. Ellingworth notes, "It is sometimes claimed that Hebrews uses εἰς τὸ διηνεκές of that which has a beginning but no end, and εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα of that which has neither beginning nor end." After examination of the evidence, however, he rightly concludes that it is "[. . .] more satisfactory to consider the two phrases εἰς τὸ διηνεκές and εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα stylistic variants," *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 359. Thus, the author is making no distinction between the continuous nature of Christ's and Melchizedek's priesthood.

<sup>235</sup>Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 157. For other examples of periodic sentences in Hebrews, see 1:1-4; 2:2-4, 14-15; 3:12-15; 4:12-13; 5:1-3, 7-10.

adding interpretive remarks with messianic relevance, the author has succeeded in giving the reader a "polished example of condensed reference. The writer secures the maximum of meaning with a strict economy of expression."<sup>236</sup> Exquisitely squeezed into one sentence is virtually a self-contained homily.

Heb 7:1-2a is an edited recountal of the events recorded by Moses in Gen 14:18-20. Two items are worthy of note: (1) an artistic, rhetorical alteration and (2) a glaring omission. First, the alteration is in the phrase, "ὁ συναντήσας Ἀβραάμ ὑποστρέφοντι ἀπὸ τῆς κοπῆς τῶν βασιλέων," (v 1). The LXX of Gen 14:17 records the King of Sodom, *not Melchizedek*, going out to meet Abraham; Melchizedek simply appears on and disappears off the scene.<sup>237</sup> The homilist has restructured the language of the account to present Melchizedek as the central and only king involved in his retelling of the encounter with Abraham.<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, not only has Melchizedek taken the regal center stage, as Theo De Kruijf points out, Abraham too has drifted into the background: "[W]hereas in Gen 14 Abraham is the main character and Melchizedek plays a secondary part, in Hebr 7 Melchizedek is put to the front and Abraham's role is a subordinate one."<sup>239</sup>

The second item worthy of note is the omission of the ἄρτους καὶ οἶνον ("bread and

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<sup>236</sup>Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 165.

<sup>237</sup>Gen 14:17, "ἔξηλθεν δὲ βασιλεὺς Σοδομῶν εἰς συνάντησιν αὐτῷ μετὰ τὸ ἀναστρέψαι αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῆς κοπῆς τοῦ Χοδολλογομορ καὶ τῶν βασιλέων τῶν μετ' αὐτοῦ [. . .]."

<sup>238</sup>As Lane says, "The attribution of ὁ συναντήσας, 'the one meeting,' to Melchizedek helped focus the argument on the central figure in the account [. . .]," *Hebrews 1-8*, 163. See also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 188, and Theo de Kruijf, "The Priest-King Melchizedek: The Reception of Gen. 14:18-20 in Hebrews Mediated by Psalm 110," *Bijdragen 54* (1993): 401-402.

<sup>239</sup>"The Priest-King Melchizedek," 402.

wine") with which Melchizedek refreshed Abraham and his men. This is, indeed, the only action missing in Hebrews' retelling of the story. Why omit this detail? Although some have opined that its omission must adumbrate a disapproval of a typological, sacramental rendering of Melchizedek's bread and wine,<sup>240</sup> others argue more persuasively and contextually that the mention of *a gift from Melchizedek to Abraham* would have confused--if not weakened--the argument that *Abraham here gifts Melchizedek* to prove the latter's superiority.<sup>241</sup> An understanding of Melchizedek's bread and wine as typological of the Eucharist--a typological treasure mined by patristic exegetes--is hardly precluded by its omission here.<sup>242</sup>

A two-fold etymological treatment of Melchizedek's name and title is added in v 2b. In an almost parenthetical manner, the homilist notes that Melchizedek's name means "King of

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<sup>240</sup>See I. Hunt, "Recent Melchizedek Study," *The Bible in Current Catholic Thought*, ed. J. L. McKenzie (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962), 31-32 and P. E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 241. Hughes and others *wrongly* assert that Luther completely rejected any typological, sacramental understanding of Melchizedek's bread and wine. In his 1535 commentary on Psalm 110, however, Luther says, "The text says nothing about a sacrifice which Melchizedek made for himself, but that he brought food and drink to those people. *In the same manner* Christ also ordained the holy sacrament of His body and blood in the bread and wine for Christians, in order that they should come together to eat and drink--not to sacrifice it [. . .], *Psalms II*, Luther's Works, American Edition, vol. 13 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 313 (emphasis mine).

<sup>241</sup>Ellingworth observes that the omission of these words can be explained by "the author's reluctance to represent Melchizedek as appearing to serve Abraham, or even giving him something in exchange for the tithe," *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 355. See also Ellingworth, "Like the Son of God," 261.

<sup>242</sup>See P. F. Cremin, "According to the Order of Melchisedech; Melchisedech, a type of the Eucharist," *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 53 (1939): 487-500, and G. T. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conception of the Priesthood of Melchisedech: An Historico-Exegetical Investigation* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1951), 108-123, for thorough investigations into the patristic interpretation of the bread and wine as typological of the Eucharist.

Righteousness" and his title of King of Salem means "King of Peace." This self-imposed "red herring," although ostensibly distracting attention from the main point, actually serves the Christological purpose of showing Melchizedek to be a proleptic embodiment--by name and title--of the Messianic One who would incarnate righteousness and peace (Jer 23:15; Is 4:5; Zech 9:10; Mic 4:5). In Melchizedek, Abraham met the "now" of the "not yet" Messiah.

The third famously difficult verse of this chapter exudes mystery.

[ . . . ] without father (ἀπάτωρ), without mother (ἀμήτωρ), without genealogy (ἀγενεαλόγητος), having neither beginning of days nor end of life (μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων), just like the Son of God (ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ), [Melchizedek] remains a priest forever (μένει Ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές).<sup>243</sup>

Nothing in the homily has prepared the reader for the description of Melchizedek found here.

The sheer grandeur of the language gives one pause. Harold Attridge refers to verse 3 as a "rhetorical flourish, marked by isocolon, asyndeton, alliteration, assonance, and chiasm."<sup>244</sup> The verse is enveloped in the shroud of mystery. What do these epithets of Melchizedek mean? Are

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<sup>243</sup>More than a few scholars have detected the traces of a hymn to Melchizedek in 7:3, with the third verse inserted by the author of Hebrews to "Christianize" the lyrics. The four lines would read as follows.

ἀπάτωρ ἀμήτωρ ἀγενεαλόγητος,  
μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων,  
ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ,  
μένει Ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές.

Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936), 259, 261-263, initiated the argument that a hymn lays behind Heb 7:3. The following scholars argue quite cogently for a hymnic background to this verse: G. W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews: Translation, Comment and Conclusions*, Anchor Bible 36 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), 117,121; M. de Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, "11QMelchizedek and the NT," *NTS* 12 (1966): 319; and Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 352-354. On the other hand, Attridge, *Hebrews*, finds the arguments for a hymnic base "quite unconvincing," 189.

<sup>244</sup>*Hebrews*, 189.

they to be taken literally or symbolically? What do they tell us about the relation of Hebrews to other first century texts?

The *sui generis* description of Melchizedek ascribes the following qualities to him: He is (1) fatherless (ἀπάτωρ); (2) motherless (ἀμήτωρ); (3) without genealogy (ἀγενεαλόγητος); (4) and having no beginning of days or end of life (μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων). The first two epithets, ἀπάτωρ and ἀμήτωρ, were commonly used in mythological texts to describe gods and goddesses who have "entered into life without father or mother."<sup>245</sup> In other texts describing human beings they sometimes denote orphans, foundlings, and bastards.<sup>246</sup> Philo employs ἀμήτωρ in his allegorical treatment of Sarah, who symbolizes virtue in her "motherless" state.<sup>247</sup> Scholarly attempts to demonstrate the homilist's dependence on Greek mythological texts<sup>248</sup> or Philo<sup>249</sup> for ἀπάτωρ and ἀμήτωρ, however, remain unconvincing.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>245</sup>Gottlob Schrenk, "ἀπάτωρ," *TDNT* 5:1020.

<sup>246</sup>See, e.g., Herodotus 4.154 and Euripides *Ion* 109,837. Schrenk, "ἀπάτωρ," 1019.

<sup>247</sup>Philo writes in *Rer. div. her.* 62, "But this is not the case with virtue, that is with Sarah; for she has not but a male offspring, being borne only of God who is the father of all things, being that authority which has no mother. 'For truly,' says Scripture, 'she is my sister by my father's side, but not by my mother's [Gen 20;12].'" See also *Ebr.* 61; *Quaest. in Gen.* 4.68 and 4.145; and *Vit. Mos.* 2.210.

<sup>248</sup>Jerome Neyrey, "'Without Beginning of Days or End of Life' (Hebrews 7:3): Topos for a True Deity," *CBQ* 53 (1981): 439-455.

<sup>249</sup>See James Thompson, "The Conceptual Background and Purpose of the Midrash in Hebrews VII," *NT* 19 (1977): 209-223, for an argument that stresses the Philonic influence on the author of Hebrews.

<sup>250</sup>Ronald Williamson has presented overwhelming evidence to prove that the author of Hebrews was in no way directly dependent upon Philo and his writings. See *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ALGHJ 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

Of much greater interest and relevance for Hebrews is the use of such (or similar) language in contemporary Jewish works to describe the God of Israel and his angel Iaoel (Apoc. Ab. 17:9) and Melchizedek himself (2En 71). In the Apocalypse of Abraham, the angelomorphic figure, Iaoel, teaches Abraham a hymn which the patriarch is to recite to YHWH. The song begins with a string of divine attributes:

[8] Eternal One, Mighty One, Holy El, God autocrat  
 [9] self-originate, incorruptible, immaculate,  
 unbegotten, spotless, immortal,  
 [10] self-perfected, self-devised,  
*without mother, without father, ungenerated,*  
 [11] exalted, fiery,  
 [12] just, lover of man, benevolent, compassionate, bountiful,  
 jealous over me, patient one, most merciful.<sup>251</sup>

Since the Apocalypse has been preserved only in an Old Slavonic translation, and was likely originally penned in Hebrew in the first century A.D., determining an exact correspondence with the language of Heb 7:3 is impossible.<sup>252</sup> The correspondence in the meaning of the words, however, is striking. Not only is God described as "without mother" and "without father," the Slavonic word *bezrodñe*, translated here as "ungenerated," probably is equivalent to the Greek ἀγεννητος or ἀγενεαλόγητος.<sup>253</sup> The latter word, ἀγενεαλόγητος, is used in Heb 7:3 to describe Melchizedek.<sup>254</sup> Thus, in two first century texts, Hebrews and the Apocalypse of Abraham, the

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<sup>251</sup>Translation from *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1.697, (emphasis mine).

<sup>252</sup>OTP, 1.682-683.

<sup>253</sup>OTP, 1.697, note g.

<sup>254</sup>Attridge, *Hebrews*, noting the occurrence of these three epithets in the Apocalypse of Abraham, comments, "The combination is close to that used here [in Heb 7:3] and a string of epithets in such hymnic material *may have inspired their use in Hebrews*," 190, n. 54 (emphasis

three epithets--without father, without mother, and without genealogy--are used, respectively, to designate Melchizedek and God with His angel Iaoel.<sup>255</sup>

As was discussed in the Chapter 3, in *2 Enoch* Melchizedek is a *Wunderkind* who has no father, is conceived miraculously in the womb of an aged and sterile woman, and delivers himself from the corpse of his "mother" Sopanim shortly after her demise.<sup>256</sup> His incredible conception and birth were accompanied by even more remarkable signs: he was a physically precocious child (71:18), had the "badge of priesthood on his chest" (71:19), and blessed the Lord (71:18). God designates Melchizedek to be the "head of the priests in another generation," (71:33). Although Melchizedek in *2 Enoch* is not specifically designated as "without father" or "without mother," the former is a certainty and the latter is a virtual reality. Therefore, the first two epithets used to describe Melchizedek in Heb 7:3, ἀπάτωρ and ἀμήτωρ, find their most appropriate analogy in the contemporary Jewish works, the Apocalypse of Abraham and *2 Enoch*.<sup>257</sup>

The third quality of Melchizedek posited in Heb 7:3 is that he is ἀγενεαλόγητος ("without

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mine).

<sup>255</sup>See Charles Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, AGJU 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 142-144, for a discussion of the relationship between the angel Iaoel (=Yahoel) and YHWH. Gieschen urges that the exalted description of Yahoel be understood within the larger matrix of angelomorphic traditions. Such traditions describe divine mediators, such as Yahoel, as distinct from YHWH yet bearing many of his characteristics and titles, as well as performing divine actions in his stead.

<sup>256</sup>The text of *2 Enoch* can be found in *OTP*, 1.102-213.

<sup>257</sup>In 11QMelch, it is assumed that the heavenly redeemer Melchizedek is without father and without mother since he is an angelic figure and most likely to be identified with Michael. See Chapter 3, Section I.C.

genealogy"). This adjective was likely coined by the homilist since it has been found in no other Greek literature prior to Hebrews.<sup>258</sup> He employs similar language in 7:6, "[. . .] but this one [Melchizedek] who is not deriving descent (ὁ δὲ μὴ γενεαλογούμενος) from them [i.e., the Levites] collected tithes from Abraham and blessed the one having the promises." The verb γενεαλογούμενος is a hapax in the NT, but occurs once in the LXX, in 1 Chron 5:1, to designate the transferral of the benefits of the first-born from Reuben to the sons of Joseph. In both Heb 7:3 and 7:6 "Melchizedek's lack of genealogy is not relative, but absolute, and he has no observable human relationships."<sup>259</sup> It is not merely that Melchizedek lacks the proper Levitical pedigree to serve in a sacerdotal capacity; rather, he is without a human pedigree, literally ἀγενεαλόγητος. The connection between this attribute ascribed to Melchizedek in Heb 7:3 and the same attribute ascribed to the God of Israel and his angel Iael in the Apocalypse of Abraham 17:10 has been noted above.

The final attribute ascribed to Melchizedek in Heb 7:3 is that he is μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων ("having no beginning of days or end of life").<sup>260</sup> That he is μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν was already implied in the first three attributes. He who is without father, mother, or genealogy has either never existed or exists without beginning of days. What is new is that he is μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων. This quality, coming at the pinnacle of this exalted description of Melchizedek, serves as the primary basis for comparison and contrast in the verses that follow.

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<sup>258</sup>See Friedrich Büchsel, "ἀγενεαλόγητος," *TDNT* 1 (1964): 665.

<sup>259</sup>Attridge, *Hebrews*, 190.

<sup>260</sup>Attridge, *Hebrews*, observes, "The antithesis of ἀρχ- and τελ- stems is a favorite of our author. Cf. 2:10; 3:14; 12:2," (190, n. 57).

That this priest is μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων allows the author to claim that Melchizedek μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές ("remains a priest forever," Heb 7:3; cf. Ps 110:4) and that, unlike the dying Levites, he ζῆ ("lives," Heb 7:8). It is also the quality which links Melchizedek typologically with Christ ("ἄφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ," Heb 7:3), "who, not according to the Law of a fleshly commandment became [a priest], but according to the power of an indestructible life (κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου)," (Heb 7:16). Just as Melchizedek has no end of life but lives on, thus remaining a priest forever, so Christ has received the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek because of his indestructible life.

After painting this verbal portrait of Melchizedek with such intriguing colors, the author takes the next step in comparing him to Jesus. He says this exalted priest is "ἄφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ." The verb ἀφωμοιόω, a hapax in the NT, is often represented as implying the subordination of Melchizedek to Christ. Kobelski, for example, states, "[The phrase ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ] serves the very deliberate purpose of subordinating Melchizedek to Jesus [ . . . ] [T]he greatness of Melchizedek described in the passage is tempered by the statement that he is only the resemblance of someone greater [ . . . ]"<sup>261</sup> This conclusion, however, attributes more weight to the verb ἀφωμοιόω than is allowable. As Paul Ellingworth has argued, ἀφωμοιωμένος is correctly translated by the simple phrase "just like."<sup>262</sup> A straightforward comparison is made between Melchizedek and the Son of God--no more, no less.

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<sup>261</sup>*Melchizedek and Melchiresa*, 124. See also Jonge and van der Woude, "11QMelchizedek and the NT," 321, n. 4; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 166; and Fred Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 156.

<sup>262</sup>"Just Like Melchizedek." See also Schneider, "ἀφωμοιόω," 198.

Neither Melchizedek nor the Son of God, *by the simple verb alone*, is said to be greater or lesser than the other.

The final phrase of Heb 7:3 is the linchpin between the messianic prophecy of Psalm 110:4 and the use of Melchizedek in the Christological argumentation of Hebrews. Melchizedek, it is said, μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές, ("remains a priest forever"). The homilist, in declaring the never-ending priesthood of Melchizedek, is alluding to Ps 110:4, which says to the Messiah, "עַל־דְּבָרָתִי מִלְכִּי־צְדָק" (LXX: σὺ εἶ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισεδεκ). The priesthood of the Christ is said to be לְעוֹלָם, "eternal."

What, one might ask, is the connection between the eternal nature of the Messiah's priesthood and his priesthood עַל־דְּבָרָתִי מִלְכִּי־צְדָק ("according to the order of Melchizedek")? The author of Hebrews answers, "Both are eternal." Paul Kobelski comments:

The tradition of Melchizedek's eternal life could also have been derived from an interpretation of Ps 110:4a that accorded an eternal priesthood to the Davidic king addressed in the psalm. In the course of time, the phrase ["you are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek"] may have led to speculation about why Melchizedek's name should be associated with the eternal priesthood. From such speculation may have emerged a Melchizedek whose own priesthood was eternal and to whom eternal life was attributed. His sudden appearance to Abram in Genesis as a priest of El Elyon without any recorded ancestors would only have fostered this type of thinking.<sup>263</sup>

Melchizedek, therefore, presented as a type of the Messiah in Psalm 110, is described by the author of Hebrews as a partaker of and sharer in the reality of the Messiah's eternal priesthood. Because the author of Hebrews sees Melchizedek's priesthood and person as eternal, as well as the Messiah's person and priesthood "in the order of Melchizedek" as eternal, Melchizedek is the

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<sup>263</sup> *Melchizedek and Melchiresa*, 124.

ideal OT personage through which to present his high priestly Christology.

Having reviewed Heb 7:1-3 to understand better the unusual language used there to describe Melchizedek, the question now arises: Is the reader to understand this unprecedented description of a figure from the OT literally or symbolically? Did the author actually mean what he said or should his bold words be mitigated? In dealing with such questions, three schools of thought have emerged: (1) those who understand the Melchizedek epithets symbolically, regarding them as an argument from the silence of the Genesis narrative; (2) those who understand the epithets as a literal description of how the homilist viewed Melchizedek; and (3) those who understand the epithets as a literal description of how others in the first century milieu, *but not necessarily the author of Hebrews*, viewed Melchizedek.

Those who regard the epithets symbolically offer a very simple explanation, which may be paraphrased as follows: Since Melchizedek's father, mother, genealogy, birth, and death are unrecorded in Scripture, the author of Hebrews uses this opportunity of silence to make of Melchizedek a type of Christ.<sup>264</sup> This hermeneutical harvesting of the silent fruit of Scripture, it is argued, was prevalent in the first century, being practiced, for instance, by the rabbis and Philo.<sup>265</sup> Strack-Billerbeck have latinized this exegetical argument from the silence of Scripture with the phrase, "*Quod non in thora, non in mundo*," (i.e., "What is not in the Torah, is not in

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<sup>264</sup>Examples of modern commentators who belong to this school of thought are the following: Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 158-172; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 136-138; Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 248-250; and S. J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, NT Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 189-190.

<sup>265</sup>For instances of Philo's use of the *argumentum ex silentio*, see, e.g., *Det.* 48 and 178; *Ebr.* 61.

existence." ).<sup>266</sup>

The weaknesses of the arguments put forward by those who regard the epithets symbolically have been noted by various scholars. M. J. Paul has cataloged several reasons why the author of Hebrews did not use the "*Quod non in thora, non in mundo*" argument, some of which bear closer scrutiny than others.<sup>267</sup> Kobelski, drawing from his study of 11QMelch, offers the following analysis:

The attribution of eternal life to Melchizedek involves more than the argument from silence, which Strack-Billerbeck formulated as "*quod non in thora, non in mundo.*" The evidence in QL of Melchizedek as [Elohim]--a heavenly redeemer, the statement in Heb 7:8 that *it is testified* of Melchizedek that he lives (*martyroumenos hoti zē*), and the possibility that אֱתֵּהּ כִּהֵן לְעוֹלָם [עַל־דְּבָרָתִי מִלְּפִי־צֶדֶק:] of Ps 110:4 led to a tradition about Melchizedek himself living [לְעוֹלָם] are elements that make the argument from silence an insufficient explanation.<sup>268</sup>

Charles Gieschen, in his chapter on the early evidence of an angelomorphic Christology in Hebrews, reinforces the argument of Kobelski.

Fred Horton, and others who follow his position, see the statement that Melchizedek lacks a genealogy to be the result of an argument from the silence of Gen 14.18-20, such as is found in Philo and Rabbinism. The testimony of Psalm 110, however, "silences" this argument since it shows a highly developed

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<sup>266</sup>*Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*, vol. 3 (Munich: Beck, 1956), 694-695. For a helpful caveat concerning the uncritical employment of Strack-Billerbeck in NT exegesis, see Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1962): 8-10.

<sup>267</sup>Paul's fifth argument is especially noteworthy. He criticizes the Latin summary of the Jewish argument from silence as only doing "partial justice to the rabbis," for "they [i.e., the rabbis] always study a person or a matter and look for earlier or later mention, but they never conclude to the nonexistence on account of the fact that the person or matter is not mentioned at all in Scripture [ . . . ] Therefore, the Latin summary of Strack-Billerbeck is only partly correct," "The Order of Melchizedek," 206.

<sup>268</sup>*Melchizedek and Melchiresha*, 123.

understanding of Melchizedek which greatly influenced the author of Hebrews. The exegesis of Psalm 110 probably also impacted a first century CE document like *2 Enoch* 69-73, which is anything but "silent" about Melchizedek's genealogy: it testifies that Melchizedek is an angelomorphic figure without human genealogy. The exalted status of Melchizedek is also visible in the Qumran fragment 11QMelch, which portrays him as a divine priest-king who will wage the eschatological battle against Belial and the sons of darkness. Furthermore, it is probable that Hebrews drew on the rich Jewish traditions regarding the angelic liturgy in heaven, some of which have priestly angels offering bloodless sacrifices for sinners.<sup>269</sup>

These criticisms of the *argumentum ex silentio* position are essentially twofold: (1) The speech of Psalm 110, not the silence of Genesis 14, was the impetus behind the homilist's description; and (2) other, extrabiblical Melchizedek texts in the first century milieu describe the priest-king with similar language. The burden of proof must be placed upon those who take the *argumentum ex silentio* approach; although we do *not* have extant evidence of first century B.C. or A.D. exegesis of the Melchizedek pericopes being interpreted with the *quod non in thora, non in mundo* device, we *do* have evidence of those pericopes being interpreted in ways which--to a greater or lesser extent--are echoed in Hebrews. Exegetes should pay less attention to what Genesis 14 does *not* say about Melchizedek and more attention to what Psalm 110 and others in the theological climate of the first century *were saying* about him. Not what is *missing* in Genesis 14 but what is *present* in Psalm 110 and non-canonical texts holds the hermeneutical key to unlock the Melchizedek argument of Hebrews 7.

The second manner of interpreting Heb 7:1-3 understands the epithets as a literal description of how the homilist viewed Melchizedek. Representative of those who hold this position is Kobelski.

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<sup>269</sup> *Angelomorphic Christology*, 310.

The author of Hebrews in all probability regarded Melchizedek as a heavenly being, an [elohim] (as 11QMelch would put it). He may even have understood the "historical" meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek in Genesis 14 as the appearance of an angel to Abraham, but very little, if any, actual importance is attached to Melchizedek's angelic status, nor is his angelic status exploited in the comparison with the priesthood of Jesus. In speaking of Melchizedek in Hebrews, it is probably more accurate to speak of a heavenly Melchizedek rather than an angelic Melchizedek as he might appear to be in 11QMelch and 4QAmram. In the Qumran writings, Melchizedek's position as head of the angelic and earthly forces of light and as the chief opponent of Belial points to his heavenly status as the angel Michael. This is not present in Hebrews, however, which portrays him as a heavenly eternal being, but not as an angel.<sup>270</sup>

The use of a tradition that regarded Melchizedek as a heavenly figure, the avoidance of any indication of his being an angel, and the reminder that he resembles the Son of God suggest that the author of Hebrews considered Melchizedek to be superior to the angels but inferior to the Son of God. Melchizedek, then, would occupy a position between the angels of Hebrews 1 and 2 and the Son of God in chap. 7.<sup>271</sup>

In a foundation study of 11QMelch, the scholars Jonge and van der Woude come to a similar conclusion. They argue that rather than explaining Heb 7:1-3 as a argument from silence,

[i]t seems much easier to assume that the author really meant what he wrote. On the evidence of 11QMelch the most plausible inference is that he regarded Melchizedek as an (arch-)angel, who appeared to Abraham long ago. The ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ does not imply a limitation to the description in Scripture, but seeks to emphasize the subordination of the (arch-)angel Melchizedek to the pre-existent, heavenly Son of God.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>270</sup>*Melchizedek and Melchiresa*, 126.

<sup>271</sup>*Melchizedek and Melchiresa*, 127.

<sup>272</sup>"11QMelchizedek and the NT," 321. A. J. Bandstra argues similarly: "But would not the statements in Hebrews 7:3,8 make more sense if the author of Hebrews understood Melchizedek to be an (arch) angel? If this were the case it would make it possible to take at face value the description of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:3,8 and to understand the thrust of the passage to be the subordination of Melchizedek, the angel, to the pre-existent heavenly Son of God even though his priesthood was of a higher order than that of Levi," (*Heilsgeschichte and the Melchizedek in Hebrews*," *CTJ* 3 (1968): 40.

Although less forthright than the scholars cited above, Attridge intimates a similar opinion as to the homilist's conviction of Melchizedek's heavenly status.

There is [ . . . ] something suspicious about our author's reticence and, particularly when he refers to the "life" Melchizedek is attested as possessing (vs 8), he presses literary observations to the breaking point. His argument there makes little sense if the Melchizedek whom Abraham encountered were not greater than the patriarch precisely because of the unlimited life attributed to him. It seems likely, then, that his exposition of Gen 14 is not simply an application to a figure of the Old Testament of attributes proper to Christ, but is based upon contemporary speculation about the figure of Melchizedek as a divine or heavenly being. While lack of parentage, genealogy, and temporal limits are predicated of Melchizedek to evoke the character of the true High Priest, they are qualities probably applicable to the ancient priest as the author knew him.<sup>273</sup>

The exegetical arguments documented above are persuasive to a point, but not wholly convincing. On the one hand, they rightly demonstrate that the Melchizedek epithets are intended by the author to be taken as a literal description of the priest-king; they must not be mitigated and downplayed by the *quod non in thora, non in mundo* hermeneutical device. They also convincingly reveal the similarities and possible connections between the Melchizedek of Hebrews and the "Melchizedeks" of other first century texts.

On the other hand, the arguments have not sufficiently demonstrated how the author could hold such a view of Melchizedek without undermining and contradicting his foundational argument in Hebrews 1 concerning the superiority of the Son of God over all created beings, in particular, angelic beings. If the homilist himself believed Melchizedek were an angel or arch-

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<sup>273</sup> *Hebrews*, 191-192. In his excursus on Melchizedek, Attridge reinforces his statements quoted here: "The inspiration for Hebrews' treatment of Melchizedek probably derives from one or another of these speculative trends, one that saw Melchizedek as an angelic defender of Israel (Qumran) or as an exalted, possibly angelic, heavenly priest (Philo?, 2 *Enoch*, 3 *Enoch*, Nag Hammadi). In neither case are the parallels exact and exhaustive, but they do indicate contexts in which the 'eternal life' of Melchizedek would be more than literary conceit," 194.

angel who appeared to Abraham long ago, then his argument in Hebrews 7 would be in serious friction with that in Hebrews 1. Some ostensibly cut this Gordian knot by claiming that ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ of vs. 3 subordinates the angelic Melchizedek to Christ. As has been demonstrated above, however, such an argument attributes greater force to ἀφωμοιωμένος than is meet and right.<sup>274</sup> By using ἀφωμοιωμένος the homilist is only saying Melchizedek is "just like" the divine Son. The exegetical waters are muddied further, if, as Kobelski argues, the homilist himself views Melchizedek not as an angelic being but another type of heavenly being, as the heavenly-redeemer figure in 11QMelch. What other type of heavenly beings are there which are not angelic? Therefore, although the arguments above are persuasive, they are so only to a point. They finally raise more troubling exegetical and theological questions than they adequately answer.

The third interpretive approach understands the epithets of Heb 7:3 as a literal description of how *others* in the first century milieu, *but not necessarily the author of Hebrews*, viewed Melchizedek. Like the second interpretive approach, those in the third reject the argument from silence as an unnecessary dulling of the homilist's sharpened vocabulary. Unlike the adherents of the second approach, however, those in the third offer the following caveat: *The homilist, although speaking in a manner which may be falsely construed as an acceptance and affirmation of this description of Melchizedek, nowhere either embraces the veracity or discloses the mendacity of the Melchizedek epithets; he offers a deliciously ambiguous testimony about this mysterious, sacerdotal king. The author intended the hearers to understand this*

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<sup>274</sup>See above, n. 262.

description of Melchizedek, which echoes and reflects some of the other speculation about Melchizedek present in the cultural context, *as a literal description of how others in their theological milieu understood Melchizedek*. When he paints this verbal portrait on the canvas of the hearer's mind, he utilizes the hues and tones of his culture's ideas *without affirming or denying that they are orthodox hues and tones*.

Two objections to this view must be addressed: First, if the author of Hebrews himself did not believe Melchizedek to be in actuality a heavenly being, does not this fact undermine the argument of the homilist concerning Melchizedek's superiority? One must initially give a positive answer to this question, but with one warning: the same objection can be raised regarding the argument from silence. That is to say, if the homilist is indeed using an argument from silence—that Melchizedek *truly did* have a mother, father, genealogy, birth, and death but Scripture simply does not mention them—must not one concede that the actual existence of these also undermines the author's argument? If, however, neither the homilist nor the recipients of his sermon considered the ontological truth of the description in Heb 7:3 a *sine qua non* of the argument, then the inclusion of this unusual description of the priest-king would not have undermined but rather fortified their belief in Melchizedek's superiority.

The second objection is this: Would not this then be the only place in the Scriptures where an inspired author utilizes non-canonical traditions or beliefs to advance his argumentation without necessarily endorsing the validity of the traditions? No, it would not. The primary example is in 2 Tim 3:8, where Paul says, "Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men oppose the truth [. . .]." These names of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses are not recorded in the OT Scriptures; rather, they were the names *ascribed* to

the men by later Jewish tradition, as evinced in a pseudepigraphical work entitled *Jannes and Jambres*.<sup>275</sup> Paul neither affirms nor denies that these were the actual names of the magicians; instead, he utilizes a common non-canonical tradition as an example for Timothy. Similarly, the author of Hebrews utilizes a common non-canonical tradition about Melchizedek as a catechetical tool to further his exposition of the high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ in the "order of Melchizedek."

Several scholars who hold, to varying degrees, the tenets of the third interpretive approach describe the intentions of the author and the impetus behind his inclusion of Melchizedek in the homily. John C. McCullough, for instance, after surveying numerous Melchizedek traditions, comments, "The story of the various efforts at interpreting the Melchizedek tradition is, therefore, for the most part the story of communities seeking to gain more widespread acceptance for their distinctive views and practices by appealing to tradition which was universally accepted and venerated."<sup>276</sup> Whether the Melchizedek tradition recorded in Hebrews was "universally accepted and venerated" is a moot point, but that the homilist appealed to it to "gain more widespread acceptance" for his understanding of Christ's high priestly ministry is certainly true. Similarly, Richard Longenecker, who holds that the addressees of Hebrews probably had some connection to Qumran, argues that the author of Hebrews employed "circumstantial expression" to connect with his hearers. That is, the authors of the NT

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<sup>275</sup>This text can be found in *OTP* 2.427-442. The names of these magicians are also mentioned in one of the documents among the Dead Sea Scrolls (*Damascus Document* 5.18-19).

<sup>276</sup>"Melchizedek's Varied Role in Early Exegetical Tradition," *Near East School of Theology Theological Review* 1/2 (1978-1979): 63.

expressed their convictions in terminology suited to the interest, appreciation, and understanding of their audiences, discovering that the various cultural situations and ideological environments they confronted often caused them to refine the terms of that message so as better to convey its truth--and sometimes supplied them with certain vehicles of expression that could be appropriately employed in their proclamation.<sup>277</sup>

As applied to Hebrews, the author, in addressing people who probably accepted Melchizedek as some sort of angelic being, hesitantly and partially agrees "with his addressees as to the nature of Melchizedek in order that he might go on to draw such comparisons and contrasts between Melchizedek and Christ as to enhance the superiority and supremacy of our Lord's high priesthood and priestly ministry."<sup>278</sup> Paul Ellingworth adds further clarity to this argumentation.

What, then, is the answer to Tholuck's question? Is Melchizedek in Hebrews "alongside Christ" or "subordinate to him"? The question is one which the author of Hebrews never raises, so any answer to it must contain elements of speculation. The speculation is at its maximum if we are required to think of Melchizedek as a being distinct from but co-equal with Christ. The overwhelming weight of the epistle's theology, not to mention the rest of New Testament tradition, is against such a supposition, and the language of Heb 7,3 does not require it. The theory of an implicit identification of Melchizedek and Christ is less alien to the epistle, but the evidence, as we have suggested, falls short of the conviction, and the theory itself appears to arise from a desire to impose on the material a neater theological pattern than it in fact possesses. If Tholuck had been able to put his question directly to the author of Hebrews, the author would no doubt have chosen the second alternative: Melchizedek is subordinate to Christ. Yet this is not what the author is saying on his own initiative, even by implication. *The author appears to be addressing readers acquainted with biblically-based, non-Christian speculation about Melchizedek, and what he is saying to them may be paraphrased as follows: "You find Melchizedek a great and fascinating figure, and you are right. He reminds us Christians of the Son of God himself. He is in any case greater than Abraham and everything which Abraham inaugurated. Thus Scripture itself points to something (sic) higher, and incidentally even older, than the old dispensation*

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<sup>277</sup>"Melchizedek Argument of Hebrews," 181.

<sup>278</sup>"Melchizedek Argument of Hebrews," 182.

*which is now superseded in Christ.*"<sup>279</sup>

The arguments of those who adhere to the third interpretive approach, therefore, are exegetically, theologically, and rhetorically the most convincing and most faithful to the biblical text. Furthermore, these arguments fully take into account the influence that contemporary traditions about Melchizedek, such as those recorded in non-canonical literature, doubtlessly exerted on the language utilized by the homilist. At the same time, the integrity of the sermon's argument is kept intact by disavowing that the homilist himself espoused facts about Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 which would have contradicted his argument in Hebrews 1.

#### ***B. Hebrews 7:4-10***

The foundation having been laid now by a recountal of the episode recorded in Gen 14:18-20 (vv 1-2a), a parenthetical etymological observation concerning the messianic, typological significance of Melchizedek's name and title (v 2b), and an exalted description of how others viewed Melchizedek (v 3), the Hebrews homilist now explores theretofore uncharted exegetical territory to demonstrate from Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek that the greater of the two proleptically proves the superiority of Christ to all Abraham's seed.

[4] You observe how great this one [is],<sup>280</sup> to whom Abraham (even the patriarch!)<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>279</sup>"Like the Son of God," 262, (emphasis mine).

<sup>280</sup>Translations differ in supplying the implied verb as present ("You observe how great this one [is]"; e.g., RSV, NRSV) or past ("You observe how great this one [was]"; e.g., KJV, NKJV, ASV, NAS, NIV). Since in 7:8 the author says Melchizedek "lives," perhaps the best translation is in the present tense.

<sup>281</sup>Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, comments, "The designation of Abraham as 'patriarch' is important to the argument that follows: it is because Abraham is the patriarch of the race that a comparison can be made between him and the Levitical priesthood and Melchizedek through

gave a tenth of the spoils. [5] And the ones who are of the sons of Levi, [who] are receiving the priesthood,<sup>282</sup> have a tithe from the people according to the Law, those who are their brothers, although they have come forth from the loins of Abraham; [6] but this one who is not deriving descent from them collected tithes from Abraham and blessed the one having the promises.<sup>283</sup> [7] And without any dispute the inferior is blessed by the superior. [8] And under these circumstances tithes are received by men who are dying, but in the other case by the one of whom it is testified that he lives [ζῆ]. [9] And, so to speak,<sup>284</sup> through Abraham even Levi who receives tithes has paid tithes; [10] for he was yet in the loins of the father when Melchizedek met him.

Of especial significance in interpreting Heb 7:4-10 is the realization that "the events in Genesis have been read from the perspective of the eschatological reality they prefigured."<sup>285</sup> The 110th messianic psalm fulfilled in the enfleshment, sacrifice, and exaltation of the Divine Son is the hermeneutical scalpel with which the preacher dissects the text of Genesis as well as the hermeneutical spectacles through which he examines it. Psalm 110, fulfilled in Jesus, asks *and* answers the questions of Genesis 14.

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him. The ancestor embodies, symbolizes, and represents the whole group of his descendants. Abraham is not simply an individual, but a representative figure in this context. By using the term 'patriarch,' the writer prepares for the conclusion of vv 9-10 that Levi paid a tithe to Melchizedek through his father (πατηρ), Abraham [ . . . ]," 168. What Lane and others do not mention is the possible contrast the author alludes to through the use of πατριάρχης in reference to Abraham, and ἀπάτωρ and μήτε ἄρχην (v 3) in reference to Melchizedek.

<sup>282</sup>The Torah stipulated that, although the Levites collected the tithe from the people, the former also had to give a "tithe from the tithe" to the Aaronic priests. "It must be to this second or priestly tithe, taken from the Levites, that the author of our epistle is here alluding," F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. T.L. Kingsbury (Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1978 reprint), 340-341.

<sup>283</sup>Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, points out the chiasmus in 7:6, "δεδεκάτωκεν/ Ἄβραάμ || τὸν ἔχοντα τὰς ἐπαγγελίας εὐλόγηκεν", 365.

<sup>284</sup>Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, notes that the phrase, ὡς ἔπος εἶπεν ("so to speak"), which occurs only here in the NT, was used by other Greek authors to "limit a startling declaration or to soften a sweeping statement," 158.

<sup>285</sup>Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 166.

The attention in vv 4-10 is primarily directed toward Melchizedek's reception of tithes from Abraham as proof of the former's greatness. To use a syllogism, one might summarize the various elements of the argument in vv 4-10 as follows:

MAJOR PREMISE: Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham;  
MINOR PREMISES: Melchizedek, a *foreigner*, tithed Abraham;  
Abraham was *not bound by Law* to give tithes to Melchizedek;  
All Levites gave tithes *through Abraham* who was the patriarchal  
embodiment of his descendants;  
Levites *tithe but die*; Melchizedek *tithes but lives on*;  
Melchizedek, the greater, *blessed* Abraham, the lesser;  
THEREFORE: The priesthood of Melchizedek is greater than the Levitical  
priesthood.

The details of the Genesis story sketched in vv 1-2a are now fleshed out and punctiliously examined for theological significance. The conclusion, though not made explicit, is that when Abraham and Melchizedek came face-to-face years ago in the shadows of a military victory, all of Israel--including all of Israel's priests--came face-to-face with the one who foreshadowed the victorious Christ. The πατριάρχης (v 4) received the blessing and gave the tithe to the one who is ἀπάτωρ and μήτε ἀρχήν (v 3); those priests who have fathers, mothers, and genealogies, while still in the loins of their progenitor gave sacrificially to the one who is ἀπάτωρ ἀμήτωρ ἀγενεαλόγητος; those priests who receive tithes plus the curse of mortality pay tithes to the one who μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων; those priests who are to utter the Aaronic blessing over the people received the blessing from the one who, according to their Law, is unauthorized to bless.

Heb 7:8 invites closer scrutiny. It is critical in not only establishing Melchizedek's superiority to the Levitical priesthood, but also in tightening the typological bond between Melchizedek and Christ. Verse 8 reads, "[. . .] καὶ ὧδε μὲν δεκάτας ἀποθνήσκοντες ἄνθρωποι

λαμβάνουσιν, ἐκεῖ δὲ μαρτυρούμενος ὅτι ζῆ, ("And under these circumstances tithes are received by men who are dying, but in the other case by the one of whom it is testified that he lives"). This description of Melchizedek hearkens back to that given of him in verse 3, that he is μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων ("having neither beginning of days nor end of life"). More importantly, however, it points forward to the same argument used later in the chapter to establish Christ's superiority to the Levitical priesthood. As the argument proceeds, one hears,

[15] καὶ περισσότερον ἔτι κατάδηλόν ἐστιν, εἰ κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ ἀνίσταται Ἱερεὺς ἕτερος, [16] ὃς οὐ κατὰ νόμον ἐντολῆς σαρκίνης γέγονεν ἀλλὰ κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου. ("[15] And even more is it yet obvious, if according to the likeness of Melchizedek another priest arises, [16] who, not according to the Law of a fleshly commandment became [a priest], but according to the power of an indestructible life.").

[23] καὶ οἱ μὲν πλείονές εἰσιν γεγονότες Ἱερεῖς διὰ τὸ θανάτῳ κωλύεσθαι παραμένειν· [24] ὁ δὲ διὰ τὸ μένειν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἀπαράβατον ἔχει τὴν Ἱερωσύνην· ("[23] And, on the one hand, many in number became priests because by death they were prevented from continuing [in office], [24] but He [i.e., Christ], on the other hand, because He remains forever, has the priesthood which is nontransferable.").

The author, in his continued catechesis, argues that Christ's priesthood is better than that of the Levites because their priestly funerals prompted a perpetual number of sacerdotal ordinations, while Jesus perpetually possessed the priesthood "according to the power of an indestructible life" (7:16) and because he "remains forever," (7:24). This is the exact argument the homilist used relative to Melchizedek in 7:8, namely, that the tithe-collecting Levites die but the tithe-receiving Melchizedek "lives." As was explained above, throughout the homily, when the author wishes to demonstrate the superiority of Christ to OT figures, he does not resort to showing Christ's moral superiority to them. Rather, he contrasts their earthly and thus temporal status with Christ's heavenly and thus eternal status. Melchizedek alone will not fit into this pattern.

Conversely, Melchizedek and Christ are *both* shown to be superior to the Levites by virtue of the unending life they possess and the indefatigable mortality to which each and every Levite must eventually succumb.

### C. *Hebrews 7:11-19*

[11] If, therefore, fulfillment were through the Levitical priesthood (for the people have been given the Law upon the basis of it), what need would there yet be for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek and not to be said according to the order of Aaron? [12] For a changing of the priesthood of necessity also [requires] a change of the Law. [13] For the One concerning whom these things are said has partaken of a different tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar; [14] for it is obvious that out of Judah our Lord has sprung up (*ἀνατέταλκεν*),<sup>286</sup> to which tribe concerning priests Moses said nothing. [15] And even more is it yet obvious, if according to the likeness (*ὁμοιότητα*)<sup>287</sup> of Melchizedek another priest arises, [16] who, not according to the Law of a fleshly (*σαρκίνης*)<sup>288</sup> commandment became [a priest], but according to the power of an indestructible life. [17] For it is witnessed, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek." [18] For, on the one hand, the setting aside happens of the previous commandment due to its weakness and uselessness--[19] for the Law brought nothing to fulfillment--and, on the other hand, [there is] the introduction of a better hope through which we draw near to God.

The first Melchizedek, whose description and function have been elaborated upon in vv 1-10, now quickly fades into the background as the Second and True Melchizedek comes to the

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<sup>286</sup>"The use of the unusual term *ἀνατέταλκεν*, 'was descended,' to indicate that Jesus was descended from Judah may convey the hint of a royal messianic reference. There is no evidence in classical Greek, the LXX, or the papyri for the use of *ἀνατέλλω* to denote descent from a certain family. The verb is used in the LXX, however, for the rising of a star or the sprouting of a branch in contexts that have been traditionally recognized as messianic (e.g., Num 24:17; cf. Jer 23:5 [ . . . ])," Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 182.

<sup>287</sup>Compare with 7:3b.

<sup>288</sup>"The adjective *σαρκίνης*, describing the commandments, adds a new and quite pejorative connotation. Used elsewhere in the New Testament only in Paul, it is a common classical formation, meaning 'fleshy, composed of flesh.' It is thus an even more vivid and concrete term than *σαρκικός*, 'carnal, fleshly,' which also appears frequently in Paul and as a variant reading here," Attridge, *Hebrews*, 202.

fore. Vv 4-10 demonstrate the *greatness* of the Melchizedek priesthood through an exegesis of Genesis 14 and vv 11-19 (and 20-28) demonstrate the *weakness* of the Levitical priesthood through a detailed exegesis of Ps 110:4.

Divinely woven into the very warp and woof of the Levitical priesthood was an indelible flaw: It could never provide fulfillment (τελείωσις). If it could have, the oracle of Ps 110:4 would never have been uttered; a future, messianic, priesthood after the order of Melchizedek would never have been prophesied. Undergirding the rhetorical question of verse 11 is the conviction that

[t]he law and the priesthood belonged together for the simple reason that, since the law, representing the divinely ordered standard of conduct and character was universally broken (cf. Rom. 3:9-23), there was a continuous necessity for the ministry of expiation and reconciliation which the Levitical priesthood provided, even though imperfectly.<sup>289</sup>

The Levitical priesthood, so intimately associated with the genesis and ongoing liturgical life of covenantal, sacrificial law, was purposefully provisional. The death knell of the Levitical priesthood resounded every time Psalm 110 was chanted.

Heb 7:13-14, on the one hand, show negatively how Jesus the Priest was unlike the Levites. The Law required all sacerdotal servants to have come from the loins of Levi, and, more particularly, from the loins of Aaron. Christ, however, was from the tribe of Judah. For the Virgin-born Son of Mary to serve at the altar there must of necessity be a metamorphosis of the Mosaic Law; indeed, the Law not only had to undergo a change (μετάθεσις; vs. 12), it had to become obsolete (πεπαλαίωκεν; 8:13) and a new and better covenant introduced (7:22; 8:6-13).

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<sup>289</sup>Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 256.

Heb 7:15-19, on the other hand, show positively how Jesus was a priest like unto Melchizedek. The excellency of His priesthood was manifested in the fact that κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ ("according to the likeness of Melchizedek") He possessed it κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου ("according to the power of an indestructible life," vv 15-16). The words ὁμοιότητα and ζωῆς echo similar language employed in the previous sections: Melchizedek is ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ ("just like the Son of God," 7:3) and it is witnessed that he ζῆ ("lives," 7:8). Melchizedek was fashioned so as to *image the Son* who manifested himself in the *image of Melchizedek*. As Gieschen observes, reflecting upon the common language of "likeness" in Heb 7:3 and 7:15, "This reciprocal relationship between Melchizedek and Christ can be summarized as follows: Melchizedek *was made like* the (Firstborn) Son, thus the (fleshly High Priest) Christ *is according to the likeness of* Melchizedek."<sup>290</sup>

### **III. The Melchizedek Tradition in Hebrews Compared and Contrasted with other Texts**

#### ***A. Comparison with Genesis 14 and Psalm 110***

In the sundry texts reviewed in this thesis in which Melchizedek plays a prominent or ancillary role, the degree to which the OT texts of Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 have helped to shape and form Melchizedek's role therein has varied. The above exegesis of Hebrews 7 has amply demonstrated the centrality of both Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 in the homilist's argumentation.

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<sup>290</sup> *Angelomorphic Christology*, 308.

A comparison of all the descriptive elements of Melchizedek given in Genesis 14 with those found in the exposition of Genesis 14 in Hebrews 7 reveals that the author included every element but one, the bread and wine.<sup>291</sup>

**Genesis 14:17-20**

- (1) Abraham's defeat of the kings (v 17)
- (2) The name Melchizedek (v 18)
- (3) King of Salem (v 18)
- (4) The Bread and Wine (v 18)
- (5) Priest of God Most High (v 18)
- (6) The Blessing (vv 19-20)
- (7) The tithe (v 20)

**Hebrews 7:1-10**

- (1) Abraham's defeat of the kings (v 1)
- (2) The name Melchizedek (v 1)
- (3) King of Salem (v 1)
- (5) Priest of God Most High (v 1)
- (6) The Blessing (v 1)
- (7) The tithe (v 1)

A similar comparison of Psalm 110 with Hebrews 7 reveals that nearly every word of Ps 110:4 is unpacked by the author of Hebrews in his Melchizedek exposition. As David Hay comments, "[V]irtually every syllable in the psalm verse is probed for significance."<sup>292</sup>

**Psalm 110:4**

- (1) "YHWH has sworn and will not repent"
- (2) "'You [are a] priest"
- (3) "'forever"
- (4) "'according to the order"
- (5) "'of Melchizedek"

**Hebrews 7**

- (1) "YHWH has sworn and will not repent" (vv 20-22)
- (2) "'You [are a] priest" (vv 11-14)
- (3) "'forever" (vv 15-19)
- (4) "'according to the order" (v 15)
- (5) "'of Melchizedek" (vv. 1-19)

***B. Comparison and Contrast with Second Temple Texts and Angelomorphic Figures***

In the previous chapter, the following texts and ancient authors were perused to ascertain the place and significance of the Melchizedek traditions which they record: 11QMelch, 2 *Enoch*, Philo, and Josephus. Some of these texts have been referenced in the course of this

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<sup>291</sup>See above, Section II.A, for a discussion of this one missing element.

<sup>292</sup>*Glory at the Right Hand*, 146. See also Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 180.

chapter as *examples* of recorded Jewish traditions about Melchizedek, which traditions--*but not necessarily those texts*--influenced the author of Hebrews in his portrait of Melchizedek. This is in accordance with the thesis of this work, namely, that "[t]he biblical portrait of Melchizedek in Hebrews was influenced by the employment of typology within the OT and the presence of Jewish traditions about Melchizedek in the theological milieu of the first century B.C. and A.D." This thesis neither assumes nor asserts that the author of Hebrews was directly acquainted with these specific texts. He may have been or he may not have been. The parallels between Hebrews and these other Jewish texts are analogical not genealogical. That is to say, when the author of Hebrews, the authors of 11QMelch and 2 *Enoch*, and Philo and Josephus wrote of Melchizedek, they were, in all likelihood, not drawing directly upon one another but upon the common, demotic Melchizedek traditions which circulated in the first century Jewish culture. These Melchizedek traditions, though they differed from one another to varying degrees, also shared several similarities, as evinced by the commonalities between the five Jewish authors under review. The comparisons made below, therefore, indicate that the author of Hebrews was aware of and acquainted with the variegated Jewish Melchizedek traditions of the first century but not necessarily aware of and acquainted with the texts of 11QMelch, 2 *Enoch*, Philo, and Josephus.

When comparing Hebrews, therefore, with these other four authors and texts, what commonalities regarding Melchizedek are discernable? First, Hebrews, 11QMelch, and 2 *Enoch* describe Melchizedek with language which adumbrates or explicates his heavenly, angelic status. As is seen in the summaries, although the specific images and epithets employed in the three texts vary, the trio harmoniously evoke a sense of Melchizedek's other-worldliness and

celestial qualities.

**Hebrews**

He is without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. He is just like the Son of God in that he abides a priest forever.

**11QMelch**

He is an angelomorphic redeemer who leads the angelic armies, descends from heaven to usher in Yom Kippur, to provide atonement for the sons of light, to crush Belial, and to restore freedom to the true Israel.

**2 Enoch**

He is conceived within an aged, sterile woman; has no father; delivers himself from his mother's corpse; is a precocious child; is born with the badge of priesthood on his chest; and is designated by God as the leader of the priests of the future.

The Christians who received Hebrews doubtlessly were acquainted with some version(s) of the tradition of Melchizedek as an angelic being. They were aware of what others in their culture were saying about this ancient priest-king and were intrigued by what they heard. If Heb 7:1-3 is an altered form of a hymnic or catechetical source, they may have been familiar with it before the homilist included it in his sermon.<sup>293</sup> The author of Hebrews deftly utilized what his addressees knew about Melchizedek to expand their knowledge of Christ.

The second commonality is that Hebrews, *2 Enoch*, Philo, and Josephus concentrate mainly on Melchizedek's sacerdotal functions, with 11QMelch intimating his priestly office but primarily focusing on his militaristic duties. In Hebrews, Melchizedek is the priest whose priesthood supersedes that of the Levites and typologically foreshadows the priesthood of the Messiah. In *2 Enoch*, Melchizedek is born from a priest's wife, has the badge of priesthood on his chest, is clothed by the brothers Noah and Nir in sacerdotal raiment, eats the holy bread, and is designated by God "the head of the priests in another generation," (71:34; Recension A). Philo

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<sup>293</sup>See discussion above, Section II.A, regarding Heb 7:1-3 as possibly stemming from a hymnic or catechetical source.

refers to Melchizedek as God's own priest, who as a priest is even the Word [λόγος] (*Leg. All.* III.79,82); whose priesthood is as αὐτομαθῆ ("self-taught") and αὐτοδίδακτον ("instinctive") (*Congr.* 99); and who is not just a priest but the high priest of the most high God (*Abr.* 235). Josephus describes Melchizedek as the first priest in Jerusalem who was also the first to build a temple there (*Bell.* VI.438); furthermore, he was made a priest of God because he was, by common consent, a righteous king (*Ant.* I.180). In 11QMelch, Melchizedek most likely is the priest who will provide atonement on Yom Kippur (2:7-8) and who would have assumed a priestly role in Qumran angelology. The author of Hebrews, therefore, while not ignoring Melchizedek's regal status (7:1-2) but concentrating almost exclusively on Melchizedek as priest, not only furthers his high priestly Christology, he follows the pattern of other first century authors as well.

The third commonality is that both Hebrews and *2 Enoch* conceive of a Mediator who is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, though for Hebrews that Mediator is Christ while for *2 Enoch* the Mediator is Melchizedek himself. Gieschen has helpfully noted this commonality and other parallels between the Melchizedek traditions in *2 Enoch* and Hebrews:

Both documents draw on traditions beyond Genesis 14 to present Melchizedek as an exalted priestly mediator. Both accent the eternal nature of Melchizedek as a priest and not just his so-called priestly line. Both are very deeply concerned with the question of purity from sin and deliverance from evil; this question is central to their ideologies. Both have a deep respect for the role that the office of priest plays in this deliverance from sin. Both have a view of the Levitical priesthood as extremely degenerative. Finally, both use Melchizedek because they want to go outside the Levitical priesthood in offering a solution for evil and sin. Therefore, *2 Enoch provides us with very important evidence of the type of Melchizedek*

*traditions that influenced Hebrews.*<sup>294</sup>

Gieschen proceeds, however, rightly to indicate that "Melchizedek is the mediator in 2 Enoch, but Jesus is the mediator of Hebrews."<sup>295</sup> Melchizedek's role in Hebrews is ministerial not magisterial, penultimate not ultimate; "[t]he use that is made of Melchizedek in [Heb] 7:1-10 is *thoroughly christological*."<sup>296</sup> His purpose in Hebrews is similar to that of John the Baptist in the Gospels: to point to the Messiah incarnate.

The fourth commonality also pertains to Hebrews and 2 *Enoch*. It was alluded to above in the quote from Gieschen: both texts describe Melchizedek as one without father and without end of life, thus accenting his eternal nature. It is also highly probable that the author(s) of 2 *Enoch* understood Melchizedek to be without a mother since Sopotan did not conceive him through any sexual relations and died before delivery, necessitating that the *Wunderkind* exit the womb on his own initiative. If so, then in both texts Melchizedek is not only ἀπάτωρ but also ἀμήτωρ. The two traditions also bear witness that he is without end of life. Hebrews 7:3 does so explicitly, saying he is "[. . .] μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων [. . .]" while 2 *Enoch* records that Gabriel<sup>297</sup> rescues the priestly child from the Deluge, taking him to the hidden paradise of Eden, where he will be kept until he returns to establish a line of priests in the future (71-72).

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<sup>294</sup>"The Different Functions of a Similar Melchizedek Tradition in 2 *Enoch* and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals*, eds. C.A. Evans and J.A. Sanders, JSNTSS 148 (Sheffield Academic Press), 378, emphasis mine.

<sup>295</sup>"Different Functions," 379.

<sup>296</sup>Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 171 (emphasis mine).

<sup>297</sup>The (longer) J Rescension attributes this action to Michael.

The fifth commonality involves the etymology of Melchizedek's name and city. Hebrews 7:2), Josephus (*Ant.* I.180), and Philo (*Leg. All.* III.79) make reference to the commonly accepted etymological meaning of מֶלְכִּי־צֶדֶק or Μελχισέδεκ as "righteous king" or "king of righteousness." The author of Hebrews and Philo also point out that king of Salem means "king of peace." Philo, in *Leg. All.* III.79, comments both of the meaning of Μελχισέδεκ and king of Salem.

Melchizedek, too, has God made both king of peace [βασιλέα τε τῆς εἰρήνης], for that is the meaning of "Salem," and His own priest (Gen. xiv.18). He has not fashioned beforehand any deed of his, but produces him to begin with as such a king, peaceable and worthy of His own priesthood. For he is entitled "the righteous king," [βασιλεὺς δίκαιος] and a "king" is a thing at enmity with a despot, the one being the author of laws, the other of lawlessness.

All three of the authors make little more than a passing reference to these etymologies. That they *do* record them, however, lends further credence to the idea of shared Melchizedek traditions in the first century milieu.

The sixth and final commonality between all five texts is that their authors go beyond what the OT Scriptures say in their description of Melchizedek. The description of Melchizedek in Heb 7:3 cannot have been inspired merely by OT accounts. Similarly, the authors of 11QMelch and 2 *Enoch*, although clearly prompted by Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 to speak of Melchizedek, are not constrained by the description of him therein. Philo believes Melchizedek to be a manifestation of the *Logos* (*Leg. All.* III.82) whose priesthood was "self-taught" and "instinctive" (*Cong.* 99). Josephus, too, in his retelling of Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek, adds a number of embellishments to the account (*Bell.* VI.438). With the exception of Josephus, none of these authors only supplied creative details to spice up their

respective historical recitations of the story. Rather, their departures from and additions to the OT portrait of Melchizedek are striking because of the way in which Melchizedek's person and office are amplified to heavenly proportions.

These six comparisons between Hebrews, 11QMelch, *2 Enoch*, Philo, and Josephus establish, therefore, the existence of a common matrix of Melchizedek traditions from which each of the authors drew their own distinctive treatment of the priest-king. These Jewish Melchizedek traditions in the theological milieu of the first century B.C. and A.D. influenced the author of Hebrews, especially in the mysterious picture painted by his words of Heb 7:3. By using these words he expected his readers, familiar as they doubtlessly were with some of these Melchizedek traditions, to understand that he described how others in their culture viewed Melchizedek and how this priest could help them better to understand the place of Jesus Christ.

The contrasts between the place and purpose of the Melchizedek tradition in Hebrews with the same in other texts has already been implicitly noted in the above comparisons. Two broad and important contrasts, however, are particularly to be noted.<sup>298</sup> First, as was discussed above in the third comparison, in Hebrews the priest who provides purification and deliverance from sin is Jesus Christ while in 11QMelch and *2 Enoch* that priest is Melchizedek. Melchizedek in Hebrews is an exegetical means to a Christological end. Once he serves his

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<sup>298</sup>Gieschen, "Different Functions," 379, discusses three "serious differences" between the Melchizedek traditions of *2 Enoch* and Hebrews: (1) the central mediator figure in *2 Enoch* is Melchizedek, whereas in Hebrews he is Christ; (2) *2 Enoch* has a "degenerative view of postdiluvian history," whereas "Hebrews maintains the salvific value of history as Jesus fulfills the old covenant and initiates the new in history and long before the end of time"; (3) and in *2 Enoch* Melchizedek will provide the "mysterious deliverance and purification from evil in the future," whereas in Hebrews the self-sacrifice of the sacerdotal Christ has won salvation for all time.

purpose in the homiletical argumentation, his name is dropped. Second, in Hebrews, Jesus the Priest has already come and provided atonement, while in 11QMelch and 2 *Enoch*, Melchizedek had not yet come to grant purification and to provide redemption. Hebrews views the whole OT as pointing to Christ by its inherent inability to provide the salvific *telos* intended by God. In Christ and only in Christ is salvation accomplished "once for all"—the occurring refrain of Hebrews (7:27; 9:26,27,28; 10:10). The effects of His redemptive act of sacrifice, now accomplished, flow into the present and future. In 11QMelch and 2 *Enoch*, however, salvation, purification, and redemption will occur in the future when the priest Melchizedek appears.

#### **IV. Reasons for the Inclusion of the Melchizedek Tradition in Hebrews**

This chapter has demonstrated that the Melchizedek tradition recorded in Hebrews is vital to the argumentation of the author as he seeks to lead his readers to a greater awareness of the high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ. Despite Melchizedek's paramount importance, however, the question remains, "Why did the homilist choose Melchizedek?" To answer that question adequately, one must assess influences from within Hebrews, within the broader religious culture, and within the OT.

Two impetuses for the inclusion of Melchizedek in Hebrews are discernable within the homily itself. First, the author's frequent use of Psalm 110 made it necessary for him to address the fourth verse of the psalm, in which Melchizedek is mentioned. Psalm 110 is quoted or alluded to sixteen times in Hebrews (1:3,13; 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:3,8,11,15-17,21,24-25,28; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2), more than any other OT text.<sup>299</sup> Though he is commenting only on Ps 110:4,

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<sup>299</sup>Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*, 163-166.

David Hay's metaphor is applicable to the whole psalm, "Indeed, the psalm verse seems an indispensable arrow in the author's quiver, and a prod to his thought as well as a tool of persuasion."<sup>300</sup> Since the author introduces Psalm 110 in his first chapter as foundational scriptural evidence of the priestly Messiah's exalted status, and since verse 4 speaks explicitly of the Messiah's sacerdotal identity, it behooved him also to include an explanation of what the Messiah and Melchizedek share in common. The second impetus within Hebrews is that the author needed to show both the continuity with and supersession of the Messiah's priesthood in relation to that of the Levites. The homilist does not disavow that the OT Levites, in particular the high priests, were types of the Messiah (5:1-10). The sacerdotal ministry of the Messiah is in typological continuity with them. His priestly ministry, however, also supersedes that of the Levites. To demonstrate this supersession the author builds his argument of Melchizedek's superiority to the Levites and then shows how Christ the Priest, being in the order of Melchizedek, is superior to them as well.

The second impetus has its origin in the OT itself. The way in which the author of Hebrews appropriated and applied the OT stories, persons, and incidents reveals that he viewed the OT through a typological lens. He read the OT from a Christological perspective, finding types and shadows of Christ divinely woven into the fabric of OT cloth. One such type was Melchizedek.

Before preceding to summarize the Melchizedek typology in Heb 7:1-10, it may be useful to engage the opinions of two scholars who have come to different conclusions than those about to be presented. G. W. H. Lampe, although espousing the "reasonableness of typology" *per se*,

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<sup>300</sup>*Glory at the Right Hand*, 144.

has rejected Melchizedek typology as anything but reasonable for the believers of today. He writes,

As an *argumentum ad homines*, it is true, Melchizedek is a significant type of Christ. He is a priest-king, he is king of peace, and he can be shown (by a far-fetched process of reasoning) to be superior to the Levitical priesthood. The writer's use of this type can teach us much about his own thought and his own understanding of the Person of Christ; but except as an apologetic argument directed to a particular class of readers in a particular situation it lacks force. There is no clear correspondence between the type and fulfillment, and no genuine historical recapitulation of a single pattern of the divine activity. The point that Melchizedek is a figure of Christ as the eternal priest rests upon a piece of sheer allegorizing about his lack of genealogy, and the idea that in Abraham the ancestor of the Aaronic priesthood, Levi, paid tithes to this type of the eternal priest depends upon fantasy. The correspondence here is unreal, useful as the point may have been in anti-Jewish controversy.<sup>301</sup>

Lampe errs in three fundamental ways. First, he fails either to discern or to interact with the fact that the author of Hebrews was *building upon an already established typological tradition*. The conviction that Melchizedek was a type of the coming Messiah was first recorded not in the latter half of the first century A.D. *but when David wrote Psalm 110*. Admittedly, the author of Hebrews certainly fleshes out the skeletal typology found in the psalm, but he does *not* create a type *ex nihilo*. Second, Lampe insists that the *continuing validity* of a type depends upon its *continuing persuasiveness*; it "lacks force" today, ergo, it is of no particular use. By this line of reasoning, Paul might say, the foolishness of the cross "lacks force" as well! Validity is not established or maintained by the way in which the audience receives the type, but by its fidelity to the biblical witness. Third, Lampe's other arguments ("no clear correspondence"; no "genuine

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<sup>301</sup>G. W. H. Lampe, "The Reasonableness of Typology," *Essays on Typology* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1957), 34. It is interesting to note that, in the same volume, K. J. Woollicombe embraces Melchizedek as an example of "historical typology," "The Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology," 67.

historical recapitulation"; the presence of "sheer allegorizing") would shackle the biblical author to Lampe's own criteria for typology. As scholarly discussion has shown, it is debatable as to whether there is a clear definition of what exactly constituted typology for biblical authors.<sup>302</sup> Thus, to say this or that type of the NT does not dovetail with the *definition of typology* is to engage in anachronism that unfairly judges the NT writer by the criteria of today.

Leonhard Goppelt, well-known for his classic work on typology, also denies Melchizedek typology. He states,

Though many have considered Melchizedek as a type of Christ, these statements [in Heb 7:1-10] are scarcely sufficient grounds for doing so (there is no connection between Jesus and Melchizedek in redemptive history) or for considering him as the incarnation of Christ as the Gnostics did. Hebrews is content with the relationship of Melchizedek to Christ that is assured by Ps 110:4 and the silence of the narrative in Genesis. Jesus is a high priest like Melchizedek.<sup>303</sup>

Goppelt, to whom much thanks is due for his laudable accent of the unquestionable centrality of typology in the NT, must nonetheless be questioned here. Unlike Lampe, who does *not* deny Melchizedek typology *per se*, only its continuing validity, Goppelt does not even admit that Melchizedek is a type. His reason for denial (there is "no connection between Jesus and Melchizedek in redemptive history") is odd, unless he does not see Melchizedek as an historical figure. Does not Melchizedek's place in the Pentateuch--not to mention the psalter--place him into the midst of redemptive history? Is not his appearance linked inextricably with Israel's most

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<sup>302</sup>R. M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical ΤΥΠΟΣ Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 93-94; D. L. Baker, *Two Testaments: One Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 251-253; and L. Goppelt, "τυπος," *TDNT*, 8:246-259.

<sup>303</sup>L. Goppelt, *Typos: Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. D. H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 164.

famous ancestor? Goppelt, like Lampe, argues wrongly because he does not acknowledge that the author of Hebrews was using pre-existing typology. If, as Goppelt affirms, "Hebrews is content with the relationship of Melchizedek to Christ that is assured by Ps 110:4," *then Hebrews must be content with Melchizedek as a type!* Both Lampe and Goppelt go astray for they begin with the roof in the Melchizedek typological house (Hebrews) and not the foundation (Psalm 110); they fail to deal adequately with the precedent set by OT typology.<sup>304</sup>

When the author of Hebrews, therefore, evoked Melchizedek's name in his typological presentation of Christology, he was continuing the tradition of OT interpretation of Melchizedek.<sup>305</sup> Genesis 14 established Melchizedek's historical identity and Psalm 110 established his typological identity *vis-a-vis* the Messiah.

In what ways was Melchizedek a type of the Messiah? First, Melchizedek was an acknowledged priest of YHWH although he was not of the Levitical bloodline. Indeed, as Hebrews avers, he was "without genealogy," (7:3). Thus Christ also was designated by God as

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<sup>304</sup>For an explanation of the OT precedent for the use of typology, see Chapter 2, Section III.

<sup>305</sup>Both F. L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition*, 161, and B. A. Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, Studies in Antiquity & Christianity (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 111, speak rather oddly about Christ being the type and Melchizedek being the antitype. Horton avers, "Actually, I would hold that the author [of Hebrews] thinks of Christ as the type and Melchizedek as the antitype," 161. He explains, "We gain an understanding of Christ's priesthood, the eternal heavenly priesthood [i.e., the type], by understanding the features of the earthly perpetual priesthood of Melchizedek [i.e., the antitype]," 161-162. This, however, is to befuddle the issue by a *misusage of terminology*. "Typology," as commonly employed and understood, is not concerned with the distinctions between ever-present heavenly and earthly realities, but with historical persons, events, etc. which correspond in some way to a future person, event, etc. Although the author of Hebrews may have used the *Greek* terms *τυπος* and *αντιτυπος* to describe what Horton calls in *English* "types," so as not to confuse the argumentation, more felicitous vocabulary should have been chosen by those who wish to speak of the earthly and heavenly realities.

the true High Priest although "[. . .] the One concerning whom these things are said has partaken of a different tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar; for it is obvious that out of Judah our Lord has sprung up, to which tribe concerning priests Moses said nothing," (7:13-14). Second, Melchizedek's superiority to the Levitical priests is implicitly but unquestionably proven in his encounter with Abraham—he who bore Levi in his loins (7:4-10). So Christ too, who is in the order of Melchizedek, is superior to the Levites. Third, the etymological meaning of Melchizedek's name ("king of righteousness"), office, and city ("king of peace") have messianic connotations. Fourth, his coterminous holding of both the regal and sacerdotal offices foreshadows Christ as both Priest and King. And fifth, his unending priesthood corresponds to the unending priesthood of the One who has sat down at the right hand of God.

Finally, the third impetus for the author's inclusion of Melchizedek came from within the broader religious culture. Contemporary Melchizedek traditions, such as those recorded in 11QMelch, 2 *Enoch*, Philo, and Josephus, afforded him the opportunity to speak in a "religious dialect" about Melchizedek which was familiar to his hearers without affirming or denying the veracity of such speculation. Furthermore, the content of those traditions was amenable to the Christological goal for which the author was striving.

Three factors, therefore, influenced the author's choice of Melchizedek: the content of the Hebrews itself, the typological precedent set by the OT, and other Melchizedek traditions in the culture. The result was that the author employed Melchizedek as a splendid tool of Christological catechesis. The homilist was able to catechize his hearers regarding the surpassingly great sacerdotal ministry of Jesus by reference to one whom others in their culture held to have a great sacerdotal ministry as well, namely, Melchizedek. If the author would have

downgraded Melchizedek, he would have downgraded Christ. If he would have corrected the Melchizedek traditions he was echoing, he would have weakened his argument. Therefore, by leaving the riddle of Melchizedek's true identity unsolved, Christ was exalted, Christology was taught, and Abraham's children were led to an even greater realization of what it means to say that in Melchizedek the Church has a foretaste of the Priest to come.

## V. Summary

The book of Hebrews, a rhetorical work of art, is structured in such a way that the seventh chapter is the essential linchpin between the content of the first part of Hebrews--the establishment of Christ's preeminence as Son--and the second part--His work of priestly atonement as the Sacrifice *par excellence*. The Melchizedek tradition expounded in Hebrews 7 draws not only upon Genesis 14 and Psalm 110, but is also influenced by other Melchizedek traditions, such as those recorded in 11QMelch, 2 *Enoch*, and the literature of Josephus and Philo. In the author's exalted description of Melchizedek in Heb 7:3, he uses language which literally describes how others in the theological milieu of the first century viewed Melchizedek. His purpose is to demonstrate the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood and thus Christ's superiority to the Levites as well, since He is designated by God as a priest "in the order of Melchizedek." Melchizedek serves a penultimate purpose in Hebrews; he points solely to Christ.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## CONCLUSION

The research in this thesis has demonstrated that the biblical portrait of Melchizedek in Hebrews was influenced by the employment of typology within the OT and the presence of Jewish traditions about Melchizedek in the theological milieu of the first century B.C. and first century A.D. Both biblical and extrabiblical traditions about Melchizedek have been perused, compared, and contrasted. The growth of these traditions, beginning with Genesis 14 and extending into the medieval era, has been traced and documented. Motivations prompting the inclusion of Melchizedek in these texts have also been suggested.

In this concluding chapter, we will summarize and further develop the research of this thesis relative to three areas of major hermeneutical importance for exegetical studies of Melchizedek: the roots of typology within the OT, the impact of extrabiblical literature on biblical authors, and the relationship vis-a-vis Melchizedek and Christ in Hebrews.

### I. Typology within the Old Testament

Typology is the study of the historical and theological correspondences between biblical events, persons, and institutions which serve as examples or patterns for future events, persons, or institutions.<sup>306</sup> Because the historicity of the biblical narrative is central to and essential for typological exegesis, this method of interpretation circumvents many of the pitfalls into which

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<sup>306</sup>Adapted from D. L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of the Theological Relationships Between the Old and New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1991), 195.

allegorical exegesis tumbles. Typology, unlike allegory, is not infatuated with that which is esoterically cloaked beneath the raiment of words, but is devoted to that which is manifestly present in historical reality. The historical and theological correspondences between a type and its fulfillment (i.e., its antitype) are founded upon and graciously demonstrate the consistency of God's actions toward mankind in the economy of salvation.

When one inquires into the origins of typological exegesis, a finger is ordinarily pointed in the direction of NT authors. K. J. Woollcombe, for instance, in his essay, "The Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology," comments,

When [. . .] Professor Manson states that typology, considered as a method of handling the Old Testament, was not devised by the Christians but was already practised in Judaism, he does less than justice to the complexity of the problem. The methods of handling the Old Testament which were already practised in Judaism, were allegorism and the study of the fulfilment of prophecy. *Historical typology, as defined above, came into existence with Christendom.*<sup>307</sup> Its character, as a method of writing, was of course determined by the character of prophecy, and its character, as a method of exegesis, by the character of the study of prophecy. It was also considerably influenced by allegorism. When St Paul wrote that Adam was a figure (τύπος) of him that was to come, he was saying something substantially new.<sup>308</sup>

Was St. Paul, indeed, "saying something substantially new"? Did historical typology come into

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<sup>307</sup>Woollcombe defines historical typology as "the establishment of historical connexions between certain events, persons or things in the Old Testament and similar events, persons or things *in the New Testament*," 39, (emphasis mine). Of course, when the New Testament belongs to the essence of one's definition of typology, then historical typology cannot come into existence without Christendom! Perhaps, however, Woollcombe has in mind a broader definition he has suggested: "Typological exegesis is the search for linkages between events, persons or things *within the historical framework of revelation* [. . .]," 40, (emphasis his). See *Essays on Typology*, Studies in Biblical Theology, G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1957), 39-75.

<sup>308</sup>"Biblical Origins," 40, (emphasis mine).

existence with Christendom? This thesis has answered with a firm negative.<sup>309</sup> We have demonstrated that typology did *not* begin with the New Testament. Rather, the NT apostles and evangelists continued the typological exegesis already practiced by OT writers. The OT provided the imprimatur and established the pattern of typological exegesis, while NT writers perpetuated the practice .

The research presented in Chapter 2, Section III, which explored the genesis of typology within the OT, focused especially upon individuals within the OT who served as types of later individuals or groups within the OT. These typical individuals were divided into three groups: the person-type, the office-type, and the action-type. The impetus behind much of this research was the question, "What prompted David to evoke Melchizedek's name when he penned Psalm 110?" We found that Melchizedek fit within the definitional parameters of an office type. That is, Melchizedek was an individual whose functions in his office corresponded to or set the pattern for those carried out by one who would fill his office in a later period, namely, the Messiah. Some of the characteristics of Melchizedek which may have attracted David to use him as a type of Christ are: the etymological meaning of Melchizedek's name ("king of righteousness"); the meaning of Salem ("peace"), where Melchizedek reigned as king and served as priest; his dual-office as king and priest; his blessing of Abram; and his collecting a tenth from Abram. It is also possible that curious "blanks" in Genesis 14, which to later generations were suggestive of Melchizedek's angelomorphic status, may have already stimulated interest in Melchizedek during David's lifetime, thus prompting the psalmist to link him to the Messiah in Psalm 110.

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<sup>309</sup>See especially Chapter 2, Section III.

In Chapter 4, Section IV, reasons were discussed for the inclusion of Melchizedek in the argument of Hebrews. Of central importance was the place of Melchizedek in the Christological typology of the OT, evinced in Psalm 110. When the author of Hebrews included Melchizedek in his Christological catechesis, he was continuing the tradition of OT typological interpretation. He found in Melchizedek, as David had also found, an ancient priest-king whose person, office, and functions foreshadowed the Messiah. Therefore, this thesis has demonstrated the foundation of typology within the OT, described typical individuals within the OT, and explored one example of a typical individual whom both David and the author of Hebrews employed as a type of the Christ.

A fundamental datum of confessional Lutheran hermeneutics is that the principles of the interpretation of the Scriptures must be derived from the Scriptures themselves. No interpretive method foreign to the Scriptures may be imposed upon them without violation of the divine truth which the Spirit has inscribed therein. That the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures, however, means not only that the Bible answers the questions which the Bible poses; it also means that the Scriptures record how biblical authors themselves interpreted other biblical writings. This is so because, with the exception of Moses, all biblical authors built upon the foundation already laid by earlier writers. *All post-pentateuchal writings, therefore, are also exegetical writings. They are inspired, inscripturated exegesis.*

God uses this inspired, inscripturated exegesis to teach the readers of His Word how His Word is interpreted and expounded in a manner pleasing to Him. It is no platitude to affirm that the Scriptures teach us how to engage in exegesis. It is rather an invitation to be taught by those exegetes who were taught by the Spirit and by the Incarnate Word. It is an exhortation to

eschew innovation and espouse tradition. Upon the basis of the research presented in this thesis concerning the roots of typology within the OT, it follows, therefore, that if the Church is to remain faithful to the biblical witness, she must continue to affirm not only the appropriateness of typological interpretation, but also its centrality in the Scriptures as a key interpretive method of discerning God's salvific actions on mankind's behalf. Typology, therefore, is a *donum Dei*, a gift of God, bestowed by the Father, inspired through the Spirit, pointing to the Incarnate Son, in whom all the divine promises find fulfillment.

## **II. The Importance of Extra-biblical Literature about Melchizedek in the Interpretive Task**

In the century prior to and coincident with the composition of the books comprising the NT, many other Jewish authors were engaged in literary activity. They produced histories, wisdom literature, testaments, liturgical documents, letters, commentaries, legal texts, apocalypses, and many other genres of literature, some of which are extant in toto, others of which we only possess fragments. Most of the works remain anonymous, though some ascribe authorship to ancient personages, others belong to the oeuvre of well-known writers such as Philo or Josephus, and still others are productions of religious communities such as the Essenes of Qumran. The vast numbers of such texts reveal an intensely literary society.

These extra-biblical compositions are marked by diversity and commonality. On the one hand, the texts are indicative of a non-monolithic religious society. The Pharisees and Sadducees, with which NT readers are well-acquainted, were not the only two Jewish parties vying for attention during the first century. Prior to the destruction of the Herod's temple in A.D.

70, there existed many Jewish factions and sects, all bending the ear of the populace this way or that. On the other hand, there were features of these groups which united them in a bond of commonality, despite their idiosyncracies. Shared features in the literature they produced reveals that a cross-pollination of ideas and traditions occurred amongst the various groups. The images they used in their writings, the biblical texts upon which they commented, the OT personages which attracted their attention: these commonalities are readily visible in the literature of the day.

There is ample evidence to suggest and prove that the authors of the NT were familiar with some of this literature, or at least the ideas, teachings, and traditions evinced therein.<sup>310</sup> A major purpose of this thesis was to prove that one NT author, the writer to the Hebrews, was acquainted with and influenced by Jewish traditions about Melchizedek. Some of these traditions are recorded in 11QMelch, 2 *Enoch*, and the writings of Philo and Josephus. These four texts, originating at different times, from different geographical locations, and from different authors, bear witness to a widespread interest in Melchizedek, an interest which the author of Hebrews--or at least his addressees--shared.

The Melchizedek of the Qumran document, 11QMelch, is a heavenly, angelomorphic redeemer, who appears in the final jubilee of world history with an army of angelic soldiers to defeat and punish Belial and the sons of darkness, while providing emancipation and victory for the sons of light. Evidence from 11QMelch and other Qumran literature supports the argument that the Essenes equated Melchizedek with the archangel Michael. In 2 *Enoch*, Melchizedek is a

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<sup>310</sup>A brief scan of the references and allusions to extra-biblical literature in the NT provided in Appendix IV of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* of Nestle-Aland is enough to convince one that the parallels cannot be merely fortuitous.

antediluvian, sacerdotal *Wunderkind* who is born to an elderly, sterile woman named Sopanim, who dies shortly before the child delivers himself from the womb. God promises Nir, the priestly husband of Sopanim, that through Melchizedek He will renew the priesthood after the Deluge. In the writings of Philo, Melchizedek is described as a "king of peace" and "righteous king," who was a manifestation of the Logos. His priesthood was "self-taught" and "instinctive." Josephus, as does Philo, calls Melchizedek a "righteous king," a Canaanite chief, who founded Jerusalem, built a temple there, and was the first (in Jerusalem?) to engage in priestly duties.

As the descriptions of Melchizedek given in these four texts or authors were compared with the description of Melchizedek in Hebrews, the conclusion was reached that there existed a common matrix of Melchizedek traditions from which each of the authors drew their own distinctive treatment of the priest-king. This thesis leaves unanswered the question of whether or not the author of Hebrews was *directly* acquainted with the specific texts of 11QMelch, 2 *Enoch*, Philo, and Josephus. Rather, we have argued that the relationship between Hebrews and these other texts is analogical not genealogical. The author of Hebrews was aware of and acquainted with the various Jewish traditions about Melchizedek but not necessarily aware of and acquainted with the specific extra-biblical texts mentioned above.

The evidence that the author of Hebrews was influenced by these Jewish traditions regarding Melchizedek is especially evident in Heb 7:3, where Melchizedek is described as one without father, without mother, with genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life; like the Son of God, he remains a priest forever. As the author used these pregnant epithets to describe Melchizedek, he assumed that his hearers would understand that he described how others in their culture viewed Melchizedek. By using language and imagery about Melchizedek with which his

hearers were familiar, he hoped to show them how this ancient priest could aid them in their understanding of the supersession of the great High Priest Jesus Christ over all Levitical priests. Therefore, the extra-biblical traditions about Melchizedek, which have been examined in this thesis, provide valuable exegetical insights which illuminate the otherwise rather obscure argumentation of the author of Hebrews in chapter seven. Acquaintance with these traditions especially aids modern readers of Hebrews to discern how Melchizedek--as commonly perceived in the first century culture--foreshadowed the sacerdotal ministry of the Messiah whose priesthood, like that of Melchizedek, is eternal. When the reader views the Melchizedek section of the homily in light of the cultural traditions about Melchizedek circulating in the first century milieu, the clarity of the homily is greatly enhanced.

This last sentence could be generalized to affirm the following hermeneutical truth: When the reader of the Bible views the Scriptures in light of the cultural traditions recorded in extra-biblical texts produced in and around the first century B.C. and first century A.D., the clarity of these Scriptures is greatly enhanced. At issue is the inestimable importance of context in the interpretation of the Scriptures. Just as words divorced from their context are easily misconstrued and misrepresented, so entire literary texts divorced from their cultural context are easily misunderstood. The biblical authors and the people whom they addressed were steeped in the culture and--in many cases--the literature of their times. So it is in every generation. That which people experience, read, hear, see, and learn in their culture colors, either consciously or unconsciously, the manner in which they communicate. Because the writers of the Scriptures did not speak out of a vacuum but from a definite culture, it behooves the modern interpreter of the Bible to become thoroughly acquainted with the extant texts which shed light on that culture.

Biblical interpretation is impoverished without the richness of these writings.

How is biblical interpretation, in particular, NT interpretation, enriched by extra-biblical writings? In at least eight different ways, these Jewish writings ameliorate one's understanding of the NT.<sup>311</sup> *First*, the complete connotative and denotative meanings of certain NT Greek words are apprehended more readily when viewed within the broad spectrum of noncanonical literature. *Second*, the syntax employed by NT authors and certain idiomatic phraseology are clarified when compared with similar usage elsewhere. Often, the Greek syntax and peculiar manner of speaking are the result of Semitic influence. By comparing the Greek of the NT with the Hebrew or Aramaic of noncanonical writings (or the Greek of the LXX) of the same time period, one is better prepared to grasp the author's true intent. *Third*, noncanonical literature assists one in understanding more clearly the meaning of certain concepts found in the NT. For example, in three sections in the NT, reference is made to the mediation of the angels at the giving of the Sinai covenant (Acts 7:38,53; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2). Although the OT does not record such angelic mediation, later Jewish tradition did (see *Jub.* 1.27,29; 2.1; 5.1-2,6,13; 6:22; 30.12,21; 50:1-2,6,13; *Josephus Ant.* 15.5.3; *Philo Som.* 1.141-143; *Abr.* 115; and *T. Dan* 6.2). The reader of the NT, cognizant of this concept, is made aware of that tradition which the NT author simply assumes. *Fourth*, extra-biblical literature informs the reader of the NT about the history of the Jews from the time of Malachi to the birth of Jesus. Knowledge of the history of the tumultuous centuries between the return of the Jews from Babylon and the birth of the Messiah is indispensable for understanding the mind set and mood of the Jewish people living in

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<sup>311</sup>These eight ways are taken from Craig E. Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 3-6.

the first century A.D. Similarly, a *fifth* benefit of this Jewish literature is that it informs the modern reader of the historical, social, and religious context at the time in which the NT was penned. The impact of the politics, wars, schisms, sects, and other cultural realities of the first century is crucial hermeneutical knowledge. *Sixth*, since virtually all of the Jewish writings of this period were effected by the OT, these texts often explain—directly or indirectly—how the OT was interpreted and applied by authors contemporary with Jesus and the NT apostles and evangelists. In this thesis, several of these Jewish texts provided crucial insights into the interpretation of Melchizedek in Hebrews. *Seventh*, the hermeneutical approaches of the various authors of noncanonical literature are often paralleled in the NT. Recognizing these parallels helps the reader of the NT to follow the exegetical argument more closely. Finally, the *eighth* benefit of noncanonical literature in NT interpretation is that it provides clues into which books the Jews considered canonical, and which they did not.

The value of extra-biblical literature in the exegetical task must never be downplayed by appeal to the teaching of *sola scriptura*. One never reads and interprets the Bible apart from a cultural context. The most appropriate contextual lens through which to view the Scriptures is the cultural context in which they were written. The noncanonical literature of that time introduces the reader to that culture and informs him concerning it. *The sola of sola scriptura is concerned with the end result of exegesis, that is, the formulation of doctrine based solely on the Scriptures. It is not concerned with the interpretive process leading up to that end result.* Since God has worked salvation and inspired writers within specific historical contexts, the biblical exegete must drink deeply from the well of that history and those cultures in which God has accomplished His work.

### III. The Relationship vis-a-vis Melchizedek and Christ in Hebrews

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews endeavors to secure the fidelity of his hearers to Jesus Christ, the great High Priest. To accomplish this task homiletically, he skillfully and rhetorically weaves together exhortation and Christological doctrine, all of which is designed to convey the message that in and through this Priest, everything necessary for holiness before God has been attained. The author's concerns imply that his hearers were being wooed--or perhaps compelled--to apostatize to the temple, altar, and sacrifice of Judaism, all of which had been bankrupted when the Incarnate temple sacrificed Himself on the altar of the cross. The primary theme of the homilist's argumentation is that, in Jesus Christ and the new covenant inaugurated by Him, the old covenant and all its cultic appurtenances have been superseded, thus being rendered of no salvific value.

Especially in Hebrews 7, the author proves that the priestly ministry of Jesus is superior to the Levitical ministry of the old covenant. He proves this, however, not by a simple comparison and contrast between Jesus and the Levites. Rather, he initially demonstrates the superiority of Melchizedek to the Levites. Then, having shown the Levites' inferiority relative to Melchizedek, he shows that same inferiority relative to the One who is a "priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek," (Ps 110:4). Jesus, the author says, "arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ ἀνίσταται Ἱερεὺς ἕτερος)," (Heb 7:15) and Melchizedek "just like the Son of God, remains a priest forever (ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ, μένει Ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)," (Heb 7:3).

That there exists some type of relationship between Christ and Melchizedek is clear. Before that relationship can be defined, however, one must wrestle with the enigmatic identity of

Melchizedek. This thesis dealt extensively with Heb 7:3, a key verse in the debate over Melchizedek's identity. Based upon the exegetical and extra-biblical evidence presented, the conclusion was reached that the author of Hebrews, in 7:3, provided a *literal* description of how *others* in the first century milieu, *but not necessarily the author of Hebrews himself*, viewed Melchizedek. Throughout his discussion, the author never affirms or denies that the epithets of Heb 7:3 are true. This silence has left many a reader nonplussed. The impetus behind the author's reticence, however, is obvious when one considers the end result of either affirmation or denial. If the author would have affirmed the veracity of the description, he would have posited the existence of a heavenly, angelomorphic being whose inferiority to, superiority to, or equality with Christ would have been ambiguous. If he would have disclosed the falsity of the description, he would have seriously weakened his argument. Therefore, he leaves the question, "Who *really is* Melchizedek?" unanswered.

Despite this conundrum of Melchizedek's true identity, the relationship between Christ and Melchizedek, as described in Hebrews, is not without clarity. Melchizedek is an OT "John the Baptist," pointing ahead with his typological finger to the Priest of God, who takes away the sin of the world in the sacrifice of Himself. He who was a priest before Levi, to whom Levi paid tithes through his great-grandfather Abraham, foreshadows that One whose priesthood overshadows that of the Levites. He whose name means "king of righteousness" serves to highlight that One who is the true, eternal king of righteousness. He who ruled as king of Salem, that is "king of peace," held an office similar to that One whose kingdom of peace is not of this world. He who demonstrated his superiority to Abraham by blessing him prepared the way for that Seed of Abraham through whom all nations are blessed. He who was described by some as

"without father, without mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life," is like unto that One who is the Son of Mary yet the eternal Son of the Father, who is characterized by "the power of an indestructible life," (Heb 7:16). Therefore, in the traditions about his person, offices, and functions, both those established in the Scriptures and many of those believed in the first century culture, Melchizedek mirrored the reality of that One who is a Priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. He was a foretaste of the Priest to come.

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