

not develop the concept of the relationship of the angelic figure to those in his lot. This aspect is developed more fully in IQS 3:15-4:26 where the Spirits of Truth and Perversity and their relationship to humanity are the subject of an extended teaching.

CONCLUSION

One of the important sources for the background of the Paraclete figure in the Fourth Gospel is the QL's teaching about the angelic leader of the forces of light. Variouslly designated as Spirit of Truth, Prince of Light, Michael, Melchizedek, etc., this angelic figure is presented as both a spiritual force and a personal being whose relationship to the sons of light and whose role in opposition to the powers of darkness parallel the Johannine Paraclete's relationship to the disciples and role in opposition to the world.

The Angel of Light, however, does not fully explain the NT Paraclete. The NT concept of the Holy Spirit had developed considerably beyond Qumran statements about God's holy spirit and influenced the teaching about the Paraclete in John. Moreover, the modeling of the Paraclete on the figure of Jesus and the idea of the Paraclete continuing the presence of Jesus cannot be traced to Qumran teaching about the Angel of Light. Nevertheless, the Paraclete of John is the culmination of a tradition of heavenly advocates among whom the last pre-NT representative is the QL's Angel of Light—Michael—Melchizedek.

CHAPTER 8

MELCHIZEDEK IN HEBREWS 7

After the publication of 11QMelch in 1965, early scholarly opinion favored the view that this text offered an explanation for the speculation about Melchizedek in the NT Letter to the Hebrews. Prior to this time, the consensus had been that this speculation had arisen because of what the OT did not say about the mysterious figure of Gen 14:18-20 and Psalm 110. The author of Hebrews, it was generally argued, was exploiting the silence of the OT on Melchizedek's origin and destiny¹ on the basis of the rabbinical principle referred to by Strack-Billerbeck as "quod non in thora, non in mundo."² The presentation of Melchizedek in 11QMelch as a heavenly redeemer figure, however, opened the possibility that older extra-biblical traditions about Melchizedek were responsible for ideas associated with him in Hebrews 7.

In the *editio princeps* of 11QMelch, van der Woude already suggested that the Melchizedek tradition of 11QMelch influenced the conception of the high priestly office of Jesus in Hebrews.³ This suggestion was later developed by de Jonge and van der Woude⁴ in an article in which they

¹See e.g., C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (EB; Paris: Gabalda, 1953) 2. 208-9; also J. A. Fitzmyer, "Now this Melchizedek . . ." (Heb 7:1), *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (SBL SBS 5; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974) 235-36.

²The principle is applied in this way: Because in the Genesis account no mention is made of Melchizedek's mother, father, or genealogy, and because the beginning of his life and his death are not recorded, none of these actually exists. They do not exist because they are not mentioned in the Torah. See H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1956) 3. 694. The same type of rabbinic argument is referred to by V. Hamp as *typologia e silentio* ("Melchisedech als Typus," *Pro Mundi Vita: Festschrift zum eucharistischen Weltkongress 1960* [Munich: Max Hueber, 1960] 9).

³"Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt," 372-73.

⁴"11QMelch and the New Testament," *NTS* 12 (1965-66) 218-23. For other positions on the relation between 11QMelch and Hebrews and for further discussion of the view of de Jonge and van der Woude, see David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand* (SBLMS 18; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973) 152-53; Y. Yadin, "A Note on Melchizedek and Qumran," *IEJ* 15 (1965) 152-54; A. J. B. Higgins, "The Priestly Messiah," *NTS* 13 (1966-67) 211-39; J. Carmignac, "Le document de Qumrân sur Melchisédeq," *RevQ* 7 (1969-71) 371-78; I. W. Batdorf, "Hebrews and Qumran: Old Methods and New Directions," *Festschrift to Honor F. Wilbur Gingrich* (ed. E. H. Barth and R. E. Cooft; Leiden: Brill, 1972) 28-35; J. A. Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek," *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament*, 253-54; F. Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefs als Schriftausleger* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1968) 139-43; G. Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief* (Gütersloh: Mohr, 1969) 16-32, 135-43.

examined in the light of 11QMelch the statements of Hebrews 7 about the perpetuity of Christ's priesthood and those that seemed to ascribe eternal life to Melchizedek. They concluded from their study that the author of Hebrews regarded Melchizedek as an angelic high priest who was inferior to the Son of God. They did not argue for a direct dependence of Hebrews 7 on 11QMelch, but only stated that 11QMelch presents ideas and traditions that make the argumentation of certain sections of Hebrews more comprehensible.

The view of de Jonge and van der Woude has been contested in a recent monograph by Fred L. Horton, Jr., who does not believe that the Melchizedek of Hebrews 7 is a heavenly or angelic being or that the ideas associated with Melchizedek in 11QMelch are related to the speculation about him in Hebrews 7.⁵ Horton argues that this speculation can be traced to traditions about the originality of Melchizedek's priesthood based on the fact that he is the first priest mentioned in the Torah. Applying the principle "quod non in thora, non in mundo," he reasons that for the Jewish exegete of late antiquity, if there had been a priest before Melchizedek, he would have been mentioned in the Torah.⁶ Traces of this tradition are found, according to Horton, in Josephus' statement that Melchizedek was the first priest of God and the first to build the temple in Jerusalem⁷ and in Philo's ascription of a "self-taught" and "instinctive" priesthood to Melchizedek.⁸

There are problems with Horton's explanation that lead me to disagree with his position. In the first place, the texts of Josephus and Philo do not unquestionably present Melchizedek as the first priest ever. The statement of Josephus in *J.W.* 6 §438 (6.10.1) could just as well mean that Melchizedek was the first to do priestly service in Jerusalem.⁹ Also, Philo used the words *automathēs* and *autodidaktos* in a very particular sense having nothing to do with being the first priest. Rather, the words are commonly used by Philo to indicate the highest level of perfection. The virtue that

⁵*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/London/New York/Melbourne: Cambridge University, 1976) 167-70.

⁶*Ibid.* 152-60.

⁷*J.W.* 6, §438 (6.10.1) *Ho de prōtos ktisas ēn Chananaion dynastēs ho tē patriō glōssē klētheis basileus dikaios. ēn gar de toioutos. dia touto hierasato te tō theō prōtos kai to hieron prōtos deimamenos Hierosolyma tēn polin prosēgoreusen Solyma kaloumenēn proteron.* "Its original founder was a Canaanite chief, called in the native tongue 'Righteous King'; 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."

⁸*De Cong.* 99: *has ho tēn automathē kai autodidakton lachōn hierōsynēn poieitai Melchisedek,* "(the blessings) which Melchizedek, who held that self-taught and instinctive priesthood, gave."

⁹Horton himself (*The Melchizedek Tradition*, 83) admits this as a possible interpretation of the text of Josephus.

Isaac possessed, for example, was "intuitive" and "self-taught" (*Mig.* 29).¹⁰ These objections raise a question about the evidence for the existence of a tradition about Melchizedek being the first priest. In the second place, even if there were traditions contemporary with Hebrews about Melchizedek being the first priest, there is no evidence that the author of Hebrews made use of or even knew of them. The speculation about Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 does not appear to be derived from traditions about Melchizedek being the first priest. Being motherless, fatherless, without genealogy, having no beginning nor end (Heb 7:3) has no relation to being the first priest.

MELCHIZEDEK IN HEBREWS 7

The relationship between the Melchizedek figure of 11QMelch and the speculation about him in Hebrews 7 is still an intriguing question. In what follows, the ideas associated with Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 are examined to determine if earlier traditions about a heavenly Melchizedek influenced the description of him and if the author of Hebrews considered him to be an angelic being.

The comparison between Christ and Melchizedek (Heb 7:1-28) occurs in a section of Hebrews concerned with the high priesthood of Jesus (Heb 4:14-10:31). It is introduced specifically to establish the superiority of Christ's priesthood over the levitical priesthood. The statements about Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 are presented as a midrash on Gen 14:18-20¹¹ with portions of Psalm 110 cited at various points. This midrash, however, introduces traditions and interpretations about Melchizedek that cannot be derived from the OT sources. In addition to the OT texts and other contemporary traditions about Melchizedek, the author's statements revealing his understanding of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, which is identified as being *kata tēn taxin Melchisedek*, should be considered.

The basic story narrated in Heb 7:1-2 is from Gen 14:18-20 which describes the meeting between Melchizedek and Abram after the slaughter of the kings (Gen 14:1-17). The passage in Hebrews includes the OT designation of Melchizedek as *basileus salēm* (MT—*melek šālēm*) and *hiereus tou theou tou hypsistou* (MT—*kohēn lē²ēl^celyōn*). The blessing of Abram by Melchizedek is likewise from the Genesis text as is the giving of the tithe. The author of Hebrews clarifies the ambiguity of Gen 14:20 by mentioning explicitly that it was Abram who gave the tithe to Melchizedek.

¹⁰Cf. also the use of *automathēs* and/or *autodidaktos* in *Ques. Gen.* IV,88; *Mig.* 167; *Fug.* 43; *Conf.* 74; *Mig.* 140; *De Cong.* 36; and particularly *Fug.* 166. Also, see the discussion in Lala Kalyan Kumar Dey, *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews* (SBLDS 25; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975) 46-81.

¹¹See O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 256; also J. A. Fitzmyer, "New Testament Melchizedek . . ." 222-22.

This interpretation reflects the contemporary understanding of this text¹² and along with Melchizedek's blessing of Abram provides the basis for the author's argument for the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek over the levitical priesthood (Heb 7:4-10). The interpretation of Melchizedek's name as "king of righteousness" and the identification of "king of Salem" with "king of peace" in v 2 are not found in the OT texts but correspond to interpretations found elsewhere. Data in Philo and Josephus suggest that *basileus dikaios* was the popular etymology of his name in first century Jewish tradition;¹³ the popular tradition of Melchizedek being a *basileus tēs eirēnēs* is similarly found in Philo (*Leg. All.* 3, 79).

Psalm 110 serves a different function in Hebrews. Unlike Gen 14:18-20, which the author uses to narrate concepts and events related to the identification of Melchizedek, Ps 110:4 is used to establish the type of priesthood possessed by Jesus. This priesthood is repeatedly described in Hebrews in the words of Ps 110:4 as being a priesthood *kata tēn taxin Melchisedek* (5:6; 5:10; 6:20; 7:11; 7:15; 7:17; 7:21). The phrase *kata tēn taxin Melchisedek*, however, by itself does not offer any clear understanding of the relationship between the priesthood of Melchizedek and that of Jesus. It is the Old Greek translation of the equally mysterious Hebrew phrase *al dibrāī malkī-sedeq* of the MT of Ps 110:4.¹⁴ A clue to the author's understanding of *kata tēn taxin Melchisedek*, however, occurs in a paraphrase of the expression in 7:15, *kata tēn homoiotēta Melchisedek*, "according to the likeness of Melchizedek."¹⁵ This paraphrase suggests that no technical meaning was attached to *taxin*, but only that the author understood there to be a resemblance between the two priesthoods.

This resemblance is spelled out in 7:15-16: Jesus is "in the likeness of Melchizedek" because, like him, he has become a priest not by the legal requirement of genealogical succession but by the power of his indestructible life (*kata dynamin zōēs akatalytou*), that is, through his resurrection. That the resurrection is meant is indicated earlier in Heb 5:5-6 by the author's joining of Ps 110:4 with Ps 2:7¹⁶ which in the NT is invariably related to the resurrection of Jesus.¹⁷

In the light of Heb 5:5-6 it is evident that the author joined the

¹²E.g., both 1QapGen 22:17 and Josephus, *Ant.* 1.10.2 (§181) maintain that it was Abram who gave tithes to Melchizedek.

¹³See J. A. Fitzmyer, "Now this Melchizedek. . .," 229-31; also Josephus, *Ant.* 1.10.2 (§181); *J.W.* 6.10.1 (§438) and Philo, *Leg. All.* 3, 79.

¹⁴For a summary of the discussion about the Hebrew phrase *al dibrāī*, see J. A. Fitzmyer, "Now this Melchizedek. . .," 225-27, esp. n. 18.

¹⁵H. Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief* (HNT 4/3; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1913) 62; C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2, 192; Fitzmyer, "Now this Melchizedek. . .," 226-27.

¹⁶See M. M. Bourke, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," *JBC* 2, 393.

¹⁷J. Dupont, "Filius meus es tu," *RSR* 35 (1948) 522-43; E. Lövestam, *Son and Savior*

resurrection of Jesus with his eternal priesthood "in the likeness of Melchizedek."

5:5 *Houtōs kai ho Christos ouch heauton edoxasen genēthēnai archierea, all' ho lalēsas pros auton: huios mou ei sy, egō sēmeron gegennēka se*

5:6 *kathōs kai en heterō legei:*

sy hiereus eis ton aiōna kata tēn taxin Melchisedek.

5:5 So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

Thou art my son, today I have begotten thee (Ps 2:7)

5:6 As he says also in another place,

Thou art a priest for ever,

according to the order of Melchizedek. (Ps 110:4)

The link is again established in Heb 5:8-10: Jesus was designated by God a priest *kata tēn taxin Melchisedek* when he had been "made perfect" or "qualified"¹⁸ and had become the source of eternal salvation. According to the author of Hebrews, then, the indestructible life (7:15-16) that Jesus possesses because of his resurrection is the way in which the priesthood of Jesus resembles that of Melchizedek. This indestructible permanent quality is expressed in Heb 7:23-25 in a comparison between the levitical priesthood and that of Jesus: Death prevented the levitical priests from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever his priesthood is unique and permanent.

Such statements about the priesthood of Jesus also give some indication of the way in which the author of Hebrews viewed Melchizedek and his priesthood. If Jesus arose as priest in the likeness of Melchizedek because of the power of his indestructible life, then a similar indestructible eternal life must be attributed to Melchizedek. Heb 7:3 and 7:8 provide the corroboration of this argument: each ascribes to Melchizedek eternal life.

Heb 7:3 has long been a disputed verse in studies of Hebrews:¹⁹

*apatōr, amētōr, agenealogētos
mēte archēn hēmerōn*

¹⁸The translation "make perfect" is not satisfactory here because it is usually understood too exclusively in a moralist, ascetic sense. The Greek verb *teleioō*, as it is used here, seems to have an institutional connotation. In the Old Greek translation of the OT, it is used to describe priestly consecration, translating the Hebrew phrase "to fill the hands," i.e., "to put into office as priest" (see Exod 29:9; 29, 33, 35; Lev 16:32; 21:10; Num 3:3). See M. M. Bourke, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," *JBC* 2, 385. In addition G. Dellling, "teleioō," *TDNT* 8 (1972) 79-84; M. Dibelius, "Der himmlische Kultus nach dem Hebräerbrief," *Botschaft und Geschichte. Gesammelte Aufsätze von Martin Dibelius* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1956) 2, 160-76; T. Häring, "Noch ein Wort zum Begriff teleioun im Hebräerbrief," *NKZ* 34 (1932) 386-89; O. Moe, "Der Gedanke des allgemeinen Priestertums im Hebräerbrief," *TZ* 5 (1949) 161-69.

¹⁹See e.g., B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (3d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1903) 174; H. Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief*, 659; G. Sieser, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 182-84; J. Moffatt

mete zōēs telos echōn
aphōmoiōmenos de tō huiō tou theou
meni hierēus eis to diēnekes.

Without father, without mother, without genealogy,
 Having neither a beginning of days
 Nor an end of life,
 But resembling the Son of God
 He remains a priest continually.

Since the commentary of O. Michel,²⁰ v 3 has commonly been interpreted as a poetic, hymnic composition, possibly composed prior to Hebrews and presenting extra-biblical traditions about Melchizedek.²¹ Among the poetic elements may be cited the parallelism of the elements, the repetitive alpha-privatives, the chiasm *archēn hēmerōn—zōēs telos*, and the alliterative *mēte . . . mēte . . . meni*. Van der Woude and Fitzmyer followed Michel in considering the composition to be a four-line construction:

apatōr, amētōr, agenealogētos
mēte archēn hēmerōn, mēte zōēs telos echōn
aphōmoiōmenos de tō huiō tou theou
meni hierēus eis to diēnekes.

Fitzmyer questions whether the last two lines could possibly antedate Christian times, since there seems to be a reference to Jesus, the Son of God (*tō huiō tou theou*).²² Theissen²³ also sees four lines of earlier traditional hymnic material about Melchizedek but considers *mēte archēn hēmerōn* and *mēte zōēs telos echōn* to be originally two lines and *aphōmoiōmenos de tō huiō tou theou* to be the interpolation of the author of Hebrews.

Because of the poetic character of v 3, which suddenly appears in the context of the recounting of the Genesis story, I agree with those who consider it to be earlier traditional material that the author has incorporated into the midrash on Melchizedek. I agree, moreover, with Theissen who thinks *aphōmoiōmenos de tō huiō tou theou* is a modification of the original meaning of the lines that should be attributed to the author of Hebrews. In its present context, v 3 is crucial to the development of the author's argumentation. It announces themes such as Melchizedek's lack of genealogy, his life without beginning or end, and his perpetual priesthood.

A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews (ICC 40; New York: Scribners, 1924) 92; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 136-38; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 259, 261-63.

²⁰*Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 259, 261-63.

²¹See e.g., J. A. Fitzmyer, "Now this Melchizedek. . .," 236; M. de Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, "11QMelch and the New Testament," 318-21; G. Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief*, 20-28.

²²"Now this Melchizedek. . .," 236, n. 48.

²³*Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief*, 21.

Both the Genesis story and the traditions recorded in v 3 form the basis of the author's argument for the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood to the levitical priesthood, but it is v 3 that actually furnishes the material for the comparison with Jesus.

Theissen attributes more than v 3 to the earlier traditional hymn, which he reconstructs from chap. 7 as follows:²⁴

houtos ho Melchisedek (7:1)
apatōr, amētōr, agenealogētos (7:3)
mēte archēn hēmerōn (7:3)
mēte zōēs telos echōn (7:3)
kata dynamin zōēs akatalytou (7:16)
meni hierēus eis to diēnekes (7:3)
hothen kai sōzein eis to panteles (7:25)
dynatai tous proserchomenous (7:25)
pantote zōn eis to entygchanein hyper autōn (7:25)
hosios, akakos, amiantos (7:26)
kechōrismenos apo tōn hamartōlōn (7:26)
kai hypsēloteros tōn ouranōn genomenos (7:26)

This (is the one called) Melchizedek
 (He is) fatherless, motherless, without genealogy.

He has neither a beginning of days
 Nor an end of life.

According to the power of an indestructible life
 He remains a priest forever.

He is for all time able to save
 Those who draw near.

Always living to intercede for them
 (He is) holy, blameless, unstained

Separated from sinners
 And exalted above the heavens.

Theissen's reconstruction of a complete hymn is highly questionable and requires too much cutting and pasting of the text of Hebrews to be a convincing hypothesis. The third and fourth stanzas do not generally betray the same poetic elements as Heb 7:3; and stanzas four to six, and in particular *kechōrismenos apo tōn hamartōlōn*, apply more naturally to Jesus in the text of Hebrews than to Melchizedek.²⁵ Nevertheless, it is a

²⁴*Ibid.* 20-28.

²⁵The last three lines of Theissen's reconstructed hymn (cf. Heb 7:26, *hosios, akakos, amiantos/kechōrismenos apo tōn hamartōlōn/kai hypsēloteros tōn ouranōn genomenos*) also

useful attempt at a reconstruction because it illustrates how naturally statements made about Jesus in 7:16, 25, 26 follow from the traditions recounted about Melchizedek in Heb 7:3.

There are two separate strands of tradition entering into this midrash on Melchizedek. Each views Melchizedek differently and uses the elements of the tradition in different ways. The first, based on Gen 14:18-20, is outlined in Heb 7:1-2 and is interpreted in 7:4-10 for the purpose of establishing the superiority of Melchizedek to the levitical priests. The second is found in Heb 7:3 and is used in 7:11-28 to identify Jesus as a priest "according to the likeness of Melchizedek." The author's line of argumentation in the second part is supported by appeal to Ps 110:4: *sy hierus eis ton aiōna kata tēn taxin Melchisedek*. In Heb 7:8-10, elements of the Genesis tradition overlap those of Melchizedek's lack of genealogy and his life without beginning or end.

It is this second strand that is of particular concern here. Verse 3 records of Melchizedek that he is motherless, fatherless, and without genealogy; there is no beginning or end to his life; he resembles the Son of God; he remains a priest forever. The statement about Melchizedek's lack of genealogy has usually been explained as an elaboration of the silence of Genesis on Melchizedek's origin. Lacking the all-important genealogy of a priestly family sets Melchizedek apart from the levitical priests and makes him a "type" of Jesus who also lacks the genealogy of priestly ancestors.

In a recent monograph on the relation between Philo and Hebrews, Lala Kalyan Kumar Dey argues that for Philo, not to have a genealogy is to be greatly praised—the person so exalted has a list of virtues associated with him, not ancestors. Dey speculates that this phenomenon occurs also in the thought of Hebrews, which presents Melchizedek as being without a genealogy, interprets his name in terms of a virtue—"righteous king," and attributes immortality to him. Likewise drawing on analogies from the thought world of Philo, Dey shows that in Philo, to be "motherless" is to have no part in creation, to belong to God alone, to share in God's immortal and perfect nature.²⁶ The relation between Philo and Hebrews is

appear to be a composition with poetic features such as alliteration, parallelism and a chiasmic arrangement in the second and third lines. It is difficult to speculate on the relation of this to the poetic composition in 7:3. Is Theissen partially correct in seeing these verses as originally part of a larger hymn with 7:3? Were 7:3 (without *aphōmoïomenos de tō huiō tou theou*) and 7:26 originally part of a hymn in honor of Jesus and his priesthood? Did the author of Hebrews consciously fashion this description of Jesus in 7:26 on the pattern of an earlier hymn about the priesthood of Melchizedek, which he used in 7:3?

²⁶The *Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews*, 189-91, esp. n. 4; see also p. 130. Among the texts of Philo cited by Dey to support his position are *De Vita Mosis* 2,210; *Ques. Gen.* IV, 145 and IV, 68. Moreover, to be "fatherless and motherless" are attributes of Greek divinities. See H. Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief*, 58; C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* 2, 183; also O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 261.

still a debated point,²⁷ but if 7:3 is actually part of an earlier tradition about Melchizedek, the possibility of similar realms of thought being operative here does not depend on the resolution of the Philo-Hebrews debate. Dey's explanation offers one possible solution for understanding the import of the references to Melchizedek's being without mother, father, or genealogy. For the author of Hebrews, who makes so much of the immortality of Melchizedek (see Heb 7:3b; 7:8; 7:15-16, etc.), it is likely that "motherless, fatherless, and without genealogy" signified the transcendent character of Melchizedek in addition to providing the basis for statements made about the nature of Jesus' priesthood (7:11-17).

The most important element in the tradition recounted in 7:3 for the development of the author's argumentation is that Melchizedek has neither a beginning nor an end of days. This is used to establish the superiority of Melchizedek to the mortal levitical priests (7:7-8) and is the focal point of the comparison between Jesus and Melchizedek (7:16). When it is said of Jesus that his priesthood is like Melchizedek's because it is based on the power of his indestructible life, the implication is clearly that "the power of an indestructible life" should be attributed to Melchizedek also.

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 ²*lwhym*—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 ²*th kwhn l^cwlm* ²*l dbrty mlky-šdq* of Ps 110:4 led to a tradition about Melchizedek himself living *l^cwlm* are elements that make the argument from silence an insufficient explanation.

In 11QMelch, Melchizedek's leadership over the angelic forces of light, his presence in the heavenly court to mete out the judgments of God, and reference to him as ²*lwhym* are evidence of his transcendent character and provide the basis for attributing eternal life to him. When Heb 7:8 argues for Melchizedek's superiority over the mortal levites on the basis of testimony that he lives, the implication is that there is a written or oral tradition that supports this contention.²⁸ Though 11QMelch suggests itself as an example of such an earlier tradition, there are no ideological or verbal parallels between it and Hebrews that would intimate the dependence of Hebrews on 11QMelch.

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

²⁷Compare e.g., the work of Dey with that of R. Williamson (*Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Leiden: Brill, 1970]), who argues that the influence of Philo on Hebrews is negligible.

²⁸Compare the use of *martyreō* in 7:17 where the testimony is provided by Ps 110:4.

time, the phrase ³th kwhn l^cwlm ^cl dbrty mlky-šdq (*kata tēn taxin Melchisedek*—Old Greek) 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. Unfortunately, the evidence to support this line of reasoning is scant; but there are a few indications that such a development took place. In Hebrews 7:3 the phrase *meni hierous eis to diēnekes* attributes to Melchizedek the eternal priesthood that Ps 110:4 attributes to the Davidic king. Ps 110:4 never actually attributed an unending priesthood to Melchizedek; rather, the eternal priesthood is referred there to the Davidic king, a priesthood that is *kata tēn taxin Melchisedek*. Heb 7:3d testifies that Melchizedek's priesthood was regarded at least in this tradition as unending; from a tradition such as this, "eternal life" itself may have been attributed to Melchizedek. 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). In the MT, Ps 110:4 associated the idea of an eternal priesthood with the name of Melchizedek; the textual history of this verse suggests that its meaning was always a problem. The puzzling ^cal dibrāfi of the MT was translated in the Old Greek version of the OT by *kata tēn taxin*, in the Vulgate by *secundum ordinem*, and in the Peshitta by *badmūteh dē Melkîzēdek* (cf. Heb 7:15). The fact that each of these translations means something different would seem to indicate that the precise meaning of the verse was not understood. It would seem to be a verse that could lend itself to speculative interpretations.

The phrase *aphōmoiōmenos de tō huiō tou theou* in Heb 7:3 should in all probability be attributed to the author of Hebrews. Even though it occurs in the midst of what is evidently an earlier tradition about Melchizedek, it serves the very deliberate purpose of subordinating Melchizedek to Jesus. In Heb 4:14 Jesus is called the great high priest, the Son of God (*ton huion tou theou*).²⁹ The sonship of Jesus is an important theme in Hebrews (see Heb 1:2; 1:5 [bis]; 1:8; 3:6; 5:5; 5:8). The only other conceivable meaning for *huios tou theou* would be "angel," but that meaning is excluded by the context and the use of the definite article with *huios tou theou*. By inserting this phrase, two things are accomplished: (1) the greatness of Melchizedek described in the passage is tempered by the statement that he is only the resemblance of someone greater, and (2) that

²⁹See also, Heb 6:6; 10:29 and the reference in 7:28 to the Son who was made perfect forever.

he is at the same time exalted by being compared with the Son of God. Though Melchizedek is great, the Son of God is greater.³⁰

The final phrase of Heb 7:3, *meni hierous eis to diēnekes*, in its original context was a paraphrase of Ps 110:4, which applied to Melchizedek the eternal priesthood ascribed there to the Davidic king. In its present context, however, it is dependent upon the preceding phrase, *aphōmoiōmenos de tō huiō tou theou*, and relates the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek to his resemblance to the Son of God. This apparently contradicts the argument of the rest of the chapter, which declares Jesus to be a priest in the likeness of Melchizedek and not the reverse. As will be suggested below, the insertion of *aphōmoiōmenos de tō huiō tou theou* to qualify Melchizedek's eternal priesthood and to subordinate him to Jesus serves a very deliberate purpose in Hebrews.

How then did the author of Hebrews conceive of Melchizedek? In the first place, he made use of the traditions of Gen 14:18-20 and presented a "historical" figure who met Abraham and blessed him and who was given a tenth of Abraham's possessions. He used this tradition to argue for the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood to the levitical priesthood. In the second place, the author recounts a tradition in Heb 7:3 that cannot be traced to biblical sources and that presents Melchizedek as an eternal figure with an eternal priesthood. This tradition is used in Heb 7:8 to support the argument based on Genesis for the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood; but, more importantly, it demonstrates the way in which the priesthood of Jesus resembles the priesthood of Melchizedek; both are based on the power of an indestructible life, not on the legal requirement of family descent.³¹

It has been argued that the comparison between Jesus and Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 is similar to the comparison between the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries in Hebrews 9.³² The implication of the argument is that Jesus corresponds to the "type" and Melchizedek to the earthly "antitype." It seems to me, however, that if there is any similarity in the argumentation used by the author of Hebrews, the terms of the comparison are (1) the eternal priesthood of Jesus and Melchizedek and (2) the temporary, limited priesthood of the mortal levites, who were obliged to repeat constantly the sacrificial offerings (see 7:8, 23-25, 27). The purpose of the comparison with Melchizedek is to establish the eternity of Christ's priesthood by grounding it in a biblical source (Ps 110:4) and in a tradition about a biblical figure (Heb 7:3).

³⁰See M. de Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, "11QMelch and the New Testament," 321.

³¹M. M. Bourke, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," *JBC* 2.393.

³²F. L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition*, 161.

There are no statements in Hebrews that the priesthood of Jesus is superior to the priesthood of Melchizedek as there are statements that the earthly sanctuary is but a copy of the true one in heaven (8:5; 9:23-24), that the new covenant supersedes the old (8:6-13), and that the sacrifices of the new covenant, which brought eternal redemption (9:11-15), are superior to the sacrifices of the old (9:6-10), which could not "perfect the conscience of the worshipper." It is clear, however, that the priesthood of Jesus, like the priesthood of Melchizedek, is superior to the levitical priesthood because it is *eternal* (7:8, 15-17, 23-25, 26-28) and pertains to the heavenly sphere. For the author of Hebrews, the transitory realities of earth are characterized by impermanence and imperfection (e.g., levitical priesthood [7:23, 27-28; 9:25-26; 10:11]; old covenant [8:7-13]; sacrifices of the old covenant [8:9-10; 9:25-26; 10:1-4]; earthly sanctuary [9:6-9, 11]); but permanence and perfection mark the realities of the heavenly sphere (e.g., priesthood in the likeness of Melchizedek [7:11-17, 24, 26-28]; new covenant [8:10-12; 9:15; 10:15-18]; sacrifices of the new covenant [9:23-28; 10:12-14]; heavenly sanctuary [9:11-12, 24]).³³ The attribution of "eternity" to Melchizedek and his priesthood (7:3, 8, 15-16) sets him apart from the earthly realities and places him in the heavenly sphere.

The author of Hebrews in all probability regarded Melchizedek as a heavenly being, an *ʾlwhym* (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,³⁴ but very little, if any, actual importance is attached to Melchizedek's angelic status in Hebrews. It is never directly stated that Melchizedek is an angel, 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 4Q^cAmram. 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.

Actually Melchizedek is regarded in Hebrews as a "historical/heavenly" figure. Both aspects are important to the author of Hebrews. How Melchizedek's status is transferred from the historical to the heavenly is never developed nor even hinted at in Hebrews. The background of the heavenly Melchizedek may lie in his portrayal as an angel in 11QMelch, but there is little awareness of this exhibited in Hebrews. If the author of Hebrews knew of the tradition of the angelic Melchizedek he certainly

³³See M. M. Bourke, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," 390.

³⁴See M. de Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, "11QMelch and the New Testament," 321; also above, pp. 51-52.

played it down. The reason for this may lie in Hebrews 1 and 2 where Jesus' superiority over the angels is firmly established. If the author had emphasized the angelic nature of Melchizedek in chap. 7, he would have been undermining the position he argued for earlier when he exalted Jesus far above the angels. Instead, he is content to hint at Melchizedek's heavenly status and to remind his readers that in spite of Melchizedek's greatness, he is still subordinate to the heavenly Son of God (*aphōmoiōmenos de tō huiō tou theou*—Heb 7:3).³⁵

It may be this very resemblance to the Son of God that indicates how the "historical/heavenly" Melchizedek is to be regarded. Jesus is the only other figure in Hebrews who can be said to be "historical" and "heavenly," and the superiority of Jesus over the angels is firmly established in Hebrews 1 and 2. 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:

11QMELCH AND HEBREWS 7

At the present time, 11QMelch is the only preserved pre-NT writing that clearly presents Melchizedek as a heavenly being, an *ʾlwhym*. It is natural, then, to look to this document for information on the background of the Melchizedek figure in Hebrews 7. Unfortunately, 11QMelch offers little, if any, direct evidence of its having been used in the portrayal of Melchizedek in Hebrews.

11QMelch and Hebrews 7 present Melchizedek differently. In 11QMelch, Melchizedek is above all God's warrior and judge. He is the one who leads the heavenly forces of light against the powers of darkness at the end of time. In Hebrews, Melchizedek is, first of all, the eternal priest whose priesthood is likened to that of Jesus. There are no traces in Hebrews of the military or forensic images that characterize 11QMelch. Hebrews, on the one hand, appeals directly to the biblical evidence about Melchizedek; the preserved portions of 11QMelch, on the other hand, do not even allude to the biblical sources regarding Melchizedek.³⁶ Two conclusions are possible: (1) either the author of Hebrews was not aware of the Melchizedek traditions of 11QMelch or (2) he knew of these traditions but used them in such a way as to make of Jesus a redemptive figure superior to the heavenly Melchizedek. In other words, if he was familiar

³⁵M. de Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, "11QMelch and the New Testament," 321.

³⁶For other minor differences in the Melchizedek figures of 11QMelch and Hebrews, see I. W. Batdorf, "Hebrews and Qumran," 31-32.

with the traditions of 11QMelch, he "corrected" them in his comparison of Melchizedek and Jesus in Hebrews 7.

In any case, it would seem impossible to establish that Hebrews in chap. 7 drew directly upon the traditions of the heavenly Melchizedek of 11QMelch. Perhaps all that can be said is that both writings present a heavenly Melchizedek, but differ considerably in emphasis and perspective.

Although no relationship between the Melchizedek of 11QMelch and the Melchizedek of Hebrews 7 can be established beyond their attribution to each of a heavenly character, there are many points of comparison between the figure of Melchizedek of 11QMelch and *Jesus* in Hebrews.³⁷ The redemptive action performed by Melchizedek in 11QMelch and Jesus occurs in the final age (11QMelch 2:7; Heb 1:2); each is referred to as "god"³⁸ (11QMelch ^l*whym*—2:10, 16, 24-25; Heb 1:8—*theos*); each is an exalted heavenly figure (11QMelch 2:10-11; Heb 1:3-4; 7:26; 8:1). Melchizedek's freeing of the captives who were under the dominion of Belial (11QMelch 2:2-6) closely resembles the activity of Jesus in releasing those subject to bondage (Heb 2:14-15); each is involved in a rite of expiation (11QMelch 2:5-8; Heb 9:11-28).³⁹ The activity of Melchizedek as a redeemer figure in 11QMelch is described in the same general language as the work of Jesus in Hebrews: each defeats the enemies of God (11QMelch 2:9-15; Heb 2:14-15) and brings salvation for humanity (11QMelch 2:13-25; Heb 9:11-12; 9:15). Of course, there are many significant differences in the interpretation of the redeemer figures and in the manner in which the redemption is accomplished; however, the broad lines along which the figures operate are similar.⁴⁰

These similarities suggest at the very least that the descriptions of the redemptive activity of Jesus in Hebrews and Melchizedek in 11QMelch were part of a complex of ideas associated with the common understanding of salvation and the heavenly redeemer figure. In terms of a salvation that was yet to come, 11QMelch presents Melchizedek as a figure who "embodied" the people's hopes for a definitive release from the bondage of evil;

in terms of a salvation that has been accomplished, Hebrews presents Jesus as the one who actually brought about this release. The description of Melchizedek and his activity in 11QMelch could be viewed as a pre-figuration of Jesus and his saving activity in Hebrews, if some relation between the texts could be established. 11QMelch exposes and clarifies the background from which NT concepts such as the description of Jesus' activity are drawn. It seems impossible to determine whether or not the author of Hebrews was familiar with or even knew of 11QMelch; in any case, he was certainly familiar with a tradition about a heavenly redeemer figure and made use of its elements in the description of Jesus.

If the author was aware of 11QMelch, then the playing down of the heavenly aspects of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 and the corresponding emphasis on the biblical traditions about him may be explained by the need to put Jesus and Melchizedek in a proper perspective. He is content merely to suggest Melchizedek's heavenly status and immediately thereafter to remind the reader that Melchizedek is subordinate to Jesus by describing Melchizedek as *aphōmoiōmenos de tō huiō tou theou*. Had Melchizedek's heavenly status been emphasized in the manner of 11QMelch, a rival figure to Jesus would have been introduced. The author of Hebrews, it seems, had a very limited purpose in introducing the heavenly Melchizedek in chap. 7. He wished to show (1) that the priesthood of Jesus was superior to the levitical priesthood and (2) that the priesthood of Jesus was eternal. He made use of earlier traditions about the historical/heavenly Melchizedek only insofar as they served this purpose.

³⁷This has also been noticed by Horton (*The Melchizedek Tradition*, 167-68).

³⁸See also J. A. Emerton, "Melchizedek and the Gods: Fresh Evidence for the Jewish Background of John X.34-36," *JTS* 17 (1966) 399-401.

³⁹In addition to several of the similarities mentioned above, Horton also points out the relation between the sabbath rest in Hebrews and the final jubilee (sabbath of sabbaths) in 11QMelch (p. 167).

⁴⁰It is possible that CG IX,1 from Nag Hammadi identifies Melchizedek with Jesus (see Birger A. Pearson, "The Figure of Melchizedek in the First Tractate of the Unpublished Coptic-Gnostic Codex IX from Nag Hammadi," *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of the International Association for the History of Religion* [Supplement to *Numen* 31; Leiden: Brill, 1975] 200-8). In this text, Melchizedek is a heavenly redeemer figure and appears in contexts related to sacrifices and baptism and in contexts concerned with warfare against the cosmic forces of wickedness. Pearson believes that in CG IX,1 as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Jesus is interpreted in terms of earlier Melchizedek speculation.

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MELCHIZEDEK AND MELCHIREŠA^c

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