MELCHIZEDEK, THE MAN AND THE TRADITION

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Four thousand years ago the Patriarch Abraham, returning from his battle with the kings of the north, met a man named Melchizedek. That meeting is recorded in three verses of Genesis.

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. (Gen. 14: 18-20)

These few lines have attained extraordinary significance in the history of religious thought. They are the primary source of speculation as to Melchizedek’s identity, place of origin, role in the cosmos, and function as priest-king in the Hebrew and Christian tradition.

The question may well be asked: What possible contribution can another study make to a controversy so antiquated and so often stalemated? Simply comparing and contrasting the traditions concerning Melchizedek would have some value for classification and overview. But the focus of this study is the new material that has come to light in the last one hundred and fifty years including archaeological finds like the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi Library and the contributions of Joseph Smith.

Archaeologists have unearthed cities which date to the time of the patriarchs and thus of Melchizedek. Epigraphical finds from that period include laws, letters and royal histories. The Egyptian Exe- cration Texts name cities and rulers throughout Palestine. The story of
Sinuhe, the famed Egyptian refugee, describes the mode of life in Palestine of that day, just as he lived it. Prior to these discoveries scholars would not attempt a history of Israel before the time of Moses. These recent findings have pushed back historical inquiry into the time of the Patriarchs. And so Melchizedek's world can be seen in a fresh, new light.

The present study takes the following form:

First, it examines the world of Melchizedek.

Second, it examines the question, "Who was this Melchizedek?"

Beginning from the few known facts given in the Genesis account we will first consider the theories of kingship during the Middle Bronze Age. In this process, it is important not to superimpose current concepts on ancient history, because kings in one period differed from their counterparts even a short time later. The name Melchizedek itself will be studied and various theories of its denotations and connotations outlined. There follows a discussion of the possible location of Salem, the city of Melchizedek; however, ancient Salem is as difficult to locate geographically as medieval Camelot. Next we will examine the meaning of the title, "God, Most High" ('El 'elyon in Hebrew) especially as this title particularly denotes the god of Melchizedek.

Third, we will turn to the major traditions which have grown up around Melchizedek over the centuries. The traditions of the Jews beginning with the relevant legends will be treated. Early Jewish writers including Philo and Josephus will be cited. In addition, Melchizedek texts emerging from the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls will be discussed. We will trace the changes of Jewish polemic into
the early interface with Christianity when the age-old question of priestly authority led to a confrontation. The Rabbis perpetuated this battle piling midrash upon midrash. We will consider the fact that down through the centuries, Melchizedek's controversial status has diminished. Today he is not, like Elijah, among that select company for whom a chair is left at the Jewish Passover. He has disappeared from present day Judaism as mysteriously as he faded away anciently.

Fourth, the ancient Christian legends about Melchizedek will be discussed. This includes the Nag Hammadi Melchizedek Tractate which is so new that the translation is not yet published. Access to its contents came through the generous cooperation of Professor Birger A. Pearson at the University of California at Santa Barbara who allowed his present working copies to be consulted. We will examine the Christian polemic against the Jews in the writings of the Church Fathers. We will show how Melchizedek, as a type and symbol, entered the Catholic Mass sometime around 400 A.D. and how his place in the Mass inspired Catholic art of this and later periods. Examples of such art, which manifested the current teachings of the church, have been included in this study. Five major ancient works are considered in detail. (For comparative purposes others are included in Appendix C). We also examine the fact that the Reformation brought Melchizedek to center stage again, as Luther and others argued with the Catholic Church concerning the Eucharist, using Melchizedek's role in bringing the bread and wine to Abraham as a focal point.

It is clear that the excitement over Melchizedek has waned in recent centuries. The questions asked frequently in early Christianity
tended to be forgotten as dogma developed, dogma which filled the gaps into which Melchizedek had earlier been projected. Nevertheless, three hundred years after the Reformation, following a steady decline of interest in Melchizedek, Joseph Smith volunteered considerable information concerning this mysterious figure, answering the earlier questions which his own age rarely, if ever, asked.

This study has endeavored to identify common strands in the numerous and varied Melchizedek materials available today. The concluding chapter will undertake that task.
Chapter 2

THE WORLD OF MELCHIZEDEK

Today the history of mankind is often viewed as a gradual ascent from the simple to the complex. The more ancient has been automatically labeled as the more primitive and undeveloped. This philosophy of history when applied to the period of the patriarchs can be very misleading. The twentieth century has provided new access to the civilizations which preceded the patriarchs. The earliest cultures discovered to date have left few decipherable inscriptions. Their modes of life must be pieced together from meager evidence found in artifacts and in the ruins of their buildings. Heretofore some scholars have portrayed Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as cave men. A brief overview of what we now know of the pre-patriarchal peoples will dispel this notion.

The first decipherable texts date to early in the third millennium or roughly a thousand years before the time of Abraham and Melchizedek. These clay tablets trace the rise and fall of several ancient civilizations. Among the most prominent are the Sumerians, the Akkadians, and the Amorites, all of whom were far advanced from the cave.

The Sumerian culture arose c. 3000 B.C., ran a splendid course of about a thousand years, then collapsed shortly before Abraham's time. The Sumerian city-states existed in southern Mesopotamia and
were ruled by \textit{priest-kings}. The two most prominent city-states were Erech and Ur. John Bright explains:

The city-state was a theocracy ruled by the god; the city and its lands were the god's estate; the temple, his manor house. About the temple, with its gardens, fields, and storehouses, economic life was organized. The people were the god's retainers, workers on his estate. The earthly head of state was the \textit{lugal}, the king, or the \textit{ensi}, the priest of the local temple who ruled as the representative of the god, the manager of his estate.  

Mystery shrouds the origin of the Sumerians. It is probable that they initiated the irrigation culture of Mesopotamia. Their race and place of origin are uncertain. Scholars disagree on both questions. It is assumed that they introduced writing. This assumption rests on the fact that theirs are the earliest writings thus far unearthed. They lived in humble houses but built great temples and palaces. They raised grain, excelled in arts and crafts, metal-working and gem-cutting. Trade was extended by the use of solid-wheeled carts drawn by asses or oxen. Scribal schools flourished around the temples and provided the library of literature from which proceeded the earliest epics and myths.

The religion of the Sumerians was highly developed. There was a myriad of local gods, each ruling his own city, while belonging to a council comprised of all the gods. The king of the gods was the

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\footnote{1Underlining indicates emphasis by the author, except in the case of foreign words.}
\footnote{2See Map No. 1 Appendix A.}
\footnote{3John Bright, \textit{A History of Israel} (London: SCM Press LTD, 1972), p. 34.}
\footnote{4William F. Albright, \textit{From the Stone Age to Christianity} (Garden City New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p. 149.}
storm god, Enlil. The function of the cult was to serve the gods, ameliorate their anger and thus maintain peace in the land. Earthly laws mirrored the laws of the gods. Earthly peace depended on armistice in the heavens where the gods constantly engaged in power struggles. Victory of one city-state over another signaled the favor and endorsement of Enlil.

The Sumerians were not alone in Mesopotamia. North of them lived a group of Semites known as Akkadians, after their city, Akkad. Sumerian culture was interrupted by an incursion of these Semites c. 2400 B.C. led by Sargon, about whom many legends have grown up. Little is known of his origins but he is credited with creating an empire for the first time in recorded history. His fame continued for hundreds of years as is demonstrated by the two Assyrian kings who later took his name as they marched to conquer, viz. Sargon I (c. 1750 B.C.) and Sargon II (c. 722 B.C.).

Sargon subdued Sumer and his successors ruled nearly all of Mesopotamia. For one hundred and fifty years the Akkadian dynasty flourished. During that time the Sumerian culture was assimilated while the Akkadian language emerged as the dominant tongue and writings of the period chronicle the beginning of its widespread use.

The power of the Akkadian Empire ended when barbarians from the Zagros mountains swept down, invaded the empire and initiated a hundred year period which most scholars characterize as a dark age.

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5 Located just south of Babylon on the ancient course of the Euphrates. See map No. 1, Appendix A.

6 Akkadian is the cuneiform Semitic language of the Babylonians and Assyrians.
These barbarians, called the Guti, paved the way for a renaissance of Sumerian culture which ensued under the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2060-1950). The kings of Ur called themselves "Kings of Sumer and Akkad," seeing themselves heirs of both Sargon and the earlier classical Sumerian culture. Their theory of kingship differed from the old Sumerian stewardship idea. The temple was no longer the government center. The palace replaced the temple and the kings took divine prerogatives to themselves. The founder of the Third Dynasty of Ur, Ur-nammu, is known as compiler of the oldest law code yet discovered.

Next these sedentary cultures were overrun by waves of nomadic western Semites called Amorites (from the Akkadian word Amurru meaning "westerners") who ruled nearly all northern Mesopotamia between 2100 and 1800 B.C. Noth calls them Proto-Arameans. In the patriarchal age the term "Amorite" was applied to all people speaking Northwest Semitic dialects, which included the ancestors of the later Arameans and Israelites. According to some Old Testament passages the Amorites were a Canaanite tribe (Gen. 10:16; Exod. 3:8). They are particularly associated with the mountains. Two Amorite kingdoms are mentioned (Num. 21:13, etc.); Bashan and Heshbon. In Genesis 15:16, "Amorite" is used as a catchall phrase referring to the pre-Israelite peoples of Palestine. The words "Amorite" and "Canaanite" are often used interchangeably. Canaanite, in its earliest application, sometimes

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7 Bright, op. cit., p. 37

referred to merchants or traders, and the land called Canaan was the
crossroads of ancient Near Eastern trade routes. Both words definitely
refer to the people living west of the Jordan. (The term Amorite will
be used throughout this study when referring to that group.)

Among Amorite personal names in this time are Abram, Jacob,
Laban, Benjamin. The Mari archives, the Egyptian execration texts,
and the Tale of Sinuhe all color in the picture of the Amorites. These
texts prove that trade was widespread and caravans of merchants moved
freely across the ancient trade routes. There were great roads from
Ur to Haran to Palestine and thence to Egypt.\(^9\) Hammurabi, the great
lawgiver was an Amorite. J. A. Thompson assumes Abraham to be an
Amorite chieftan.\(^10\) The earliest culture of Mesopotamia and Canaan
did not grow up gradually from seed to fruit but emerged through
successive invasions and migrations. The ebb and flow of empire
replacing empire leads to the conclusion that Israel's ancestors
emerged as part of one of these incursions. In the Biblical narrative
Abraham's journeys are traced from Ur to Haran through Canaan
to Egypt and back. As the evidence for the Patriarch's having been
among the Amorites builds, Bright's statement adds a fascinating
concept when he says:

\[\ldots\text{ were our eyes but sharp enough, we might discern among them [Amorites] \ldots as a part of the same general movement, the figures of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.}\]

\(^9\) See Map No. 1, Appendix A.

\(^10\) J. A. Thompson, The Bible and Archaeology (Grand Rapids,

\(^11\) Bright, op. cit., p. 44
surely is portrayed as having made a bad decision. Abraham retained
the mobility to rescue Lot after he had been carried away captive.
Abraham owned no land with the notable exception of a burial cave
which he purchased. Kathleen Kenyon characterizes the Amorites of
the Bible as having

... arrived in Palestine c. 2300 B.C. as nomads and
destroyers of a preexisting urban civilization. For perhaps
four centuries they lived there, leaving little behind them
except their dead in the tombs upon which so much labour was
expended.\(^{13}\)

Interestingly, Abraham bought a burial cave.

Though a detailed description of a meal which Abraham and Mel-
chizedek could have shared is impossible (beyond the bread and wine
they did share), following is a partial catalog of the food and
drink known to have existed then.

Meat was used sparingly in their daily diet. The exception to
this rule was the entertaining of important guests when a goat or
lamb was slaughtered. The ultimate guest required the killing of the
fatted calf as we recall much later from the parable of the Prodigal
Son and the instance of Abraham's "calf tender and good" which he
ordered killed for his "three men" guests who appeared suddenly near
his tent (Gen. 18). That meal gives many insights into the food of
the day. Abraham reveals an ancient recipe as he tells Sarah to
"make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make
cakes upon the hearth." Abraham then took butter and milk with the
calf and served them.

\(^{13}\)Kathleen Kenyon, *Amorites and Canaanites*, (London: Oxford
In Deuteronomy 26:5 Israel recalls her distant origins corroborating Bright's suggestion: "A wandering Aramean was my father . . . ."

To focus Melchizedek and the world in which he moved a closer look must be taken at Abraham's way of life since our fleeting historical glance at Melchizedek is that significant moment when he met Abraham as he returned from battling the kings of the north. What of the day-to-day life of that period? What did the people eat? What did they wear? How were their tents or homes furnished? Did they have only what they and their people could produce or did they barter for other goods? Many of these questions can be answered by searching the Old Testament narrative, by examining the habits of the people as uncovered by archaeologists, and by noting ancient customs retained by those living antiques, the Bedouins.12

Abraham's way of life is characterized in the Bible as semi-nomadic, traveling through unsettled lands in a period of many migrations, dividing a grazing area with Lot, living in a tent, and abiding by tribal laws. He traveled from water to water; from grazing area to grazing area with his herds of sheep and goats. Returning from Egypt, a rich tribal chief, with livestock, silver and gold, he was also able to raise from his household a fighting force of over three hundred men. He camped near towns, never settling into one. If he raised any crops it was in a limited way (Gen. 26:12 tells that Isaac "sowed in the land." One might expect the successive generation to become more settled on the land). Lot settled near Sodom but

Sarah's bread refers to an unleavened bread or cake. The women ground grain (barley or wheat) into a coarse meal between two stones, salt and water were kneaded in, and the cakes were cooked on sticks over hot coals or on hot flat stones. Little wood was available to the shepherd so more often dried dung was used for fuel.

Hunting may have contributed meat to their meals. Animals of the period were the stag, the gazelle, fallow-deer and roe deer. Vegetables that were available were onions, leeks, lentils, chickpeas and beans. Also there were "bitter herbs" and parsley, cress and garlic. Many birds of prey are mentioned as unclean in Leviticus 11, but other Biblical birds mentioned for food are the dove, the quail, and partridges which were found in the mountainous areas and along the river banks where the nomads wandered.

The mention of honey is associated with the Promised Land. Wild honey, found in the rocky outcroppings of the desert, must have been a welcome addition to unleavened cakes or warm milk.

The "land of milk and honey" identifies the basic food of the wandering Amorite shepherd: milk. With many sheep and goats he drank more milk than water. Genesis mentions milk from ewes, cows, and asses. It was stored in leather bottles where the heat soon soured it. Butter was made by shaking a skin with sticks. A kind of yogurt was utilized for movable food storage just as Bedouins of today carry their excess milk in this form to avoid spoilage.

Wool was traded for figs, pomegranates, grapes, olives, and melons with settled farmers. Some wealthy and powerful shepherds may have had regular watering places where they left a few men to harvest
small crops and keep cattle. Although much wine is mentioned in the Old Testament it seldom appears in the Patriarchal narrative (a notable exception: the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek). Wine was the city dweller's drink.

The clothing of the period can be compared to the similar clothing of semi-nomads of today. The need for protection against the elements is identical. The materials available for clothing are the same: animal skins or wool. Men's clothing differed from women's. The man wore three pieces of clothing: the saq cloth (loin cloth), woven of wool; a tunic made of a square of cloth falling from neck to calves and fastened over the left shoulder, woven of variegated colors of wool and often embroidered; and the mantle which was the outer garment, also woven of wool with holes for head and arms. The mantle was used for both coat and cover, and was wrapped around the body for sleeping at night. (This may have been made of animal skins in earliest times.) Some kind of head covering must have been worn. It would probably follow the design of modern Bedouins and Arabs who wind cloth around their heads to protect against heat and sun. The women's clothes differed in fullness and in brightness of color. Women wore veils. (See Gen. 24:65-67. Where Rebekah carefully veils herself to go out to meet Isaac in the fields.) In many other instances, they did not wear veils (Gen. 29:9-11. Rachel at the well). Perhaps the veiling of the face was part of a religious rite like marriage. There is no reason to judge that all women wore veils continually. Sandals were worn by both men and women. They were constructed with soles of wood, reed, or palm bark with leather pieces to hold them on. Genesis 14:23 speaks of a shoe latchet as the very
smallest thing which Abraham has covenanted not to take as booty.

Their clothing protected the semi-nomad shepherd and his family from the sun's heat in summer, the rain's wetness in winter, and the cold of the desert night year round. Their home and only further protection against the elements was the tent. Animal skins were used in earliest times. By Abraham's time tents were sewn of woven wool, dark brown, rough textured and strong. It was held up by several poles between four and six feet high and pegs fastened it to the ground. The tent's size would depend on the family's size and wealth. The Bible describes many small tents rather than one enormous one. Certainly transport of many smaller units would be more efficient, particularly since these were donkey and not camel caravans. Bedouins keep a tent for each family unit in the extended family. The tent is the gift of the family to the new bride and is thereafter her property. There were two distinct parts in the tent separated by a heavy curtain. The front section belonged to the man and the rear portion, kept closed and protected from strangers, belonged to the women and children. It may have been that in polygamous families each wife had her own tent. The descriptions in Gen. 31:33 mention separate tents for Jacob, Rachel, Leah, and for two servants. (cf. Gen. 24:67)

The furnishings of the tent were simple. Skins, reed mats or woolen rugs covered the bare ground. Here they sat to talk or eat. Food was served from a large, round platter into which all dipped with their hands. Skin bottles, which retained the shape of the animal, held water, milk, or oil. After the tail and feet were cut off of the goat or other animal, then the skin was sewn and the whole was made waterproof by coating it with pitch. The neck was the spout, and
and was tied closed with cord. The lamps they used were small, oval, clay cups with a lip made by pinching together a part of the rim. Oil was burned and flax, hemp or hollow rush was used for a wick. Their flour mill, mentioned earlier in connection with bread making, was composed of a slab of very hard stone like basalt, slightly concave and a flat, smaller stone which was pushed back and forth to grind the grain. It was hard physical work for the women to grind enough flour for each meal's bread or cake.

Genesis 47:1-6 describes Jacob's clan coming to Egypt with flocks and herds. Verse three records their answer to Pharaoh's query concerning their occupation, "... Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers." Later in that same sequence (verse 6) Pharaoh tells Joseph if any of them have experience to make them rulers over his cattle.

Abraham's sheep were probably Oves Laticaudatae (wide-tailed sheep), a kind that exists in Palestine today. Gaubert describes them.

Certain passages of Genesis and Leviticus inform us of the characteristics of this caudal appendix which contained a large proportion of fat. . . . the tail, which was extremely fatty, was made of adipose tissue capable of providing the body with water during those periods when the beast could not be taken to a drinking place. It is a huge and rather inelegant organ which may weigh anything up to about twenty pounds. . . . Sheep or ram's tail, down the ages, was often brought to the altar of Yahweh to be offered as a sacrificial gift. The fat from these tails was also used in cooking and provided the oil for lamps. Hence the "fat of rams" did not refer to the fat of obese sheep.

The sheep were rarely entirely white or entirely black. They were pied, which means a mixture of black and white. Men of Biblical times saw omens in the odd coloring and were intrigued by it (Jacob and Laban dividing their flocks is one example. Gen. 30:32-43).

The flocks were shepherded along a regular circuit. The Bedouins have such routes today which they call the il-rah or "tribal road" where unwritten grazing rights have existed for centuries. Occasionally the need to pass over another clan's dira or "exclusive pasture" requires permission from that clan's chief and may require payment. After receiving permission, an escort is provided by the chief whose dira is to be crossed. If permission is not granted a small war may erupt and the dira's boundaries may be changed to accommodate the new owner, if the winner is the encroaching clan. Abraham and Lot decided on boundaries for their diras (Gen. 13:8-12).

Wool was used for weaving the tent and for their clothing. The women were kept busy with the small, portable distaffs they carried, spinning as they walked from place to place. Camp only meant an opportunity to weave what had been spun that day. Wool was the basis for barter between the shepherds and the city dwellers. Bales of wool were traded for grain, pottery, metal utensils, and weapons.

An ancient Egyptian wall painting c. 1900 B.C. at Beni Hasan is the only likeness extant of a group of Semitic nomads. The accompanying inscription gives their chief a Semitic name, Abisha (which could be translated "Father of the upright or faithful.") They wear bright, many-colored tunics; the men wear sandals, the women a kind of high shoe; they have goats and use donkeys for carrying merchandise and children; they carry spears, clubs, bows and arrows as weapons;
Illustration No. 1

Illustration No. 2

one man carries a lyre-like instrument; a water bag is slung over another's shoulders, the men wear beards and hair cropped while the women's hair is long and held around the forehead with a headband. Here we have the only picture of nomads at the time of Abraham, and interestingly enough, it documents many of the features mentioned above.

The wandering Semites' life style is a background for examining the mode of life of the citizen of a city-state, or a Melchizedek. Egyptian records show that nearly all of western Palestine and southern Syria were covered with city-states by late 1900 B.C., while Trans-Jordan remained tribal. No permanent unification of these many small units existed. They were a far cry from empire. Some shuffling of boundaries followed local skirmishes but no one took command of the entire territory.

One of the important sources of information on life in the cities is the archaeologist. Kathleen Kenyon reports on houses of the period in Jericho.

... a closely built-up area of rather small buildings, with narrow streets ascending the slope of the mound in a series of shallow cobbled steps, streets such as those that could be found in many old Palestinian towns today. The houses lining these streets often had single rooms unconnected with any other part of the buildings on the ground floor, closely resembling the single-roomed shops in the bazaars today. Other of the ground-floor rooms were for storage, and in some of these were found jars full of calcined grain ... one of these storerooms with jars full of grain ... contained twenty-three grinding querns, a number that could not have been for domestic use, and must indicate that this

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was a corn miller's establishment. ... On the upper stories were the industrial establishments and the living quarters, as is the case today.\textsuperscript{16}

The houses were constructed of sun-dried brick built on low foundations of irregular stones. In addition to the small crowded structures uncovered by Miss Kenyon in Jericho there was the so-called courtyard house type: individual rooms which were irregularly arranged around a small court on three sides or sometimes only on two sides. The houses had flat roofs supported by wooden beams which ran parallel to one another over the individual rooms. The beams were covered with sticks and the sticks with a watertight clay. There was a wooden stairway set alongside the building to gain access to the roof. This roof was used for drying flax, for sleeping during the hot season, as a guest room, or to support an upper storey. Many rooms facing the court had only pillars on the court side rather than a complete wall.\textsuperscript{17}

Every house had a hearth. It was usually in a corner and consisted of a shallow hole around the edge of which a circle of stones was set. A wood fire was lighted in the center and cooking pots were set on the stone edge. ... For baking bread. ... they had simple ovens which stood either in the court of the house or else outside in front of the house.\textsuperscript{18}

The ancient houses often had large round stone structures for grain storage. The women used the same hand mills as the shepherds. In addition, some larger stone rotating mills have been found indicating that someone must have specialized.

\textsuperscript{16}Kenyon, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 73-74.

\textsuperscript{17}Noth, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 153-54.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 160
From tombs of the period Miss Kenyon pieces together more of their life style. (The tomb furnishings give proof of their belief in an after-life.) Food was found in tombs. Some of the same items mentioned above viz. pomegranates, grapes, whole or jointed sheep, drink, (shown by empty skin bottles left after their contents had evaporated). Nearly always there was a basket containing toilet equipment; flasks of oil or perfume, wooden combs, wooden boxes with bone inlay, wooden dishes, bowls, juglets, and small boxes. The rich had beds with wooden frames supporting a string network. There were some stools but more often the whole family lay or sat on rush mats. Found most often was a long narrow table with two legs at one end and one leg in the middle of the other designed to stand on an uneven floor. The small, simple oil lamps mentioned above have been found in great numbers in excavations. There was also a supply of pottery used for storing liquids, for drinking and for cooking. The rich had alabaster juglets for ointments, or cosmetics imported from Egypt. Moulded glass also came from Egypt. Ivory was used for decoration, inlaid in wooden furniture or carved into combs or pins to hold garments together. Bronze and precious metals were crafted into necklaces, earrings, armbands, headbands, and anklets. Metal pins were used like the ivory ones. There were metal mirrors and decorative objects.

Palestine in this period was, as far as archaeological and historical evidence goes, a country of city-states under some distant and intermittent control from Egypt, but not unified. The states

19 Kenyon, op. cit. pp. 75-76.
were probably often at war among themselves (Gen. 14). The evidence of town defenses certainly suggests this.

These fortified cities were each the seat of a ruling family who were largely independent of their neighboring cities and were not committed to any but temporary alliances with them. Each city might have several dependent villages nearby. There was the palace and within it, the mighdal ("fortress" in Hebrew) was a fortress within a fortress to which all might retreat and which could be defended as a last resort.

A wall was an assumed necessity. It was usually built of a strong and high stone foundation with sun-dried bricks completing the structure. The Bronze Age showed a preference for city walls with steeply sloping outsides to foil enemy attempts to breach the wall. For similar reasons of defense, there were normally only one, or at most two gates. During this period the city gates were tower-shaped insets in the wall, several stories high with a direct gate entrance flanked by two guard rooms, one behind the other on either side. The gate area with its inner chambers and open space facing the city side of the gate was the only extensive free space in the otherwise cramped city where the citizens could assemble. So the public life of the city took place here. Here the market was set up. Here legal transactions were judged by the king or the elders of the city.

In such cities, the original builder of its wall limited the city's size. Though some citizens spilled over the walls, building their houses outside, the only real safety was inside. As a result the cities were cramped and restricted. They could not really expand. Daily work of that day did not bring commuters into the city as in our
time but just the reverse was true. Men left the city in the morning to return in the evening. The cities served as refuge from enemies and storage for harvest but the farm lands were without the city walls. These were tiny cities by our standards. Jebusite Jerusalem covered an area of less than 1,300 by 325 feet. Shechem was about 750 by 500 feet in area and had a population of around 3,000. Middle Bronze Hazor was the exception covering 3,600 by 2,100 feet.\(^{20}\) (Iron Age Hazor was more normal in size: 1300 by 500 feet and was located on the southern corner of the tel.)

In the time of Melchizedek a city was not located at a place merely to overlook the sea or command a fine view of Mount Hermon! Critical needs dictated location. The first was water. Palestine is a thirsty land so this limited the number of sites at once. Defense was a prime consideration so a hill or at least a spot not easily approached was desirable. These needed to be fertile land nearby to raise crops or graze cattle. Access to the trade routes was a decided asset. Imagine how difficult it was to find all of these favorable conditions in one site. The important cities of the day can easily be located with these requirements in mind. In fact, archaeologists use these clues to identify future digs.

The occupations of the city people were also oriented toward the basic need for food and clothing, like their shepherd counterparts. However the city afforded further productive development and specialization. There were fig groves, olive orchards and grape vineyards. There were olive presses for extracting oil and wine presses for

\(^{20}\)Ibid., p. 147
extracting grape juice. Both were located near the crop and consisted 
of large stone basins. For pressing olives a heavy stone was used, 
but the people trampled the grapes with their feet. Threshing required 
no special structure. A level spot of ground near the field, exposed 
to the wind for winnowing was all that was needed. 

Basketry, carpentry, metallurgy, and pottery craftsmen plied 
their trades during the Bronze Age. Most weaving was done in the 
household but some professionals wove specialties like fine, white linen. 

Trading was a common activity in a Bronze Age city. In daily 
life, barter of farm products was the medium of exchange. Metal 
was weighed in payment for purchases just as we would use coinage. 
This money metal in bars filled the treasuries of temples and palaces. 
(Abraham returns from Egypt with gold and silver, likely in this form.) 

The Tale of Sinuhe throws light on this period. It tells of an 
Egyptian official c. 1960 B.C. who fled Egypt taking refuge with an 
Amorite chieftain in Syria. The narrative describes the favorable 
conditions in Palestine at the time, a far cry from the primitive 
life style assigned the Patriarchs prior to this discovery. He 
describes the fertile oasis where he lives and the tribal customs of 
the people. He writes of the living conditions in some detail. 

I was clad in fine linen and anointed with oil of the 
finest quality; I slept in a bed; . . . I had a house. 
. . . It was a good land, figs were in it and grapes. It 
had more wine than water. Plentiful was its honey, abundant 
its olives. Every fruit was on its trees. Barley was there, 
and emmer (hard, red wheat). There was no limit to any 
cattle. . . .21 

21 James B. Pritchard (ed.) Ancient Near Eastern Texts (Princeton: 
The earliest cultures of the fertile crescent were not primitive at all. The Sumerians, Akkadians and Amorites all produced thriving civilizations with craftsmen and artisans who left us ample archaeological evidence of their skill and level of development. The same can be said for the Middle Bronze Age of which Abraham and Melchizedek were a part.

The picture shifts only slightly. There is still a high order of civilization. Amorite semi-nomads like Abraham traveled the ancient highways and small city-states were governed by kings, like Melchizedek. Meek tells us:

The period around 1750 B.C. was a most unsettled one in the Near East, with a multitude of little states in continual conflict with one another and frequently changing status. How unsettled it was is shown by the letters excavated at Mari, one of which, addressed to the King of Mari, reads as follows, 'There is no king who is powerful on his own. Ten to fifteen kings follow Hammurabi, king of Babylon; a like number Rim-Sin, king of Larsa; a like number Ibal-pi-el, king of Eshnunna; a like number Amut-pi-el, king of Qatqa, while twenty kings follow Yarim-Lim, king of Yamkhat.'

It was time of influx and change. The nomads wandered through the thinly populated area from Shechem to the Negev through the central mountain range, east of the Jordan River called the King's Highway. They didn't wander into fertile, northern Palestine, the Jordan Valley or the Plain of Esdraelon. This interior land was in the hands of tribal chiefs some of whom were settling down to become feudal lords.

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23 See Map No. 1, Appendix A.
Some of these tribal chiefs became kings in the cities. This has been defined as a dimorphic structure by M. B. Rowton. Dimorphic describes an interaction between nomadic and sedentary, between tribe and state. In Mari, the king functioned both as the head of a territorial state and as the chief of the tribal confederation. The Mari state was dimorphic as were Babylon and Eshunna. In these instances the nomadic half gradually diminished in importance.

In the second millennium B.C. the dimorphic chiefdom was a tribal confederation centered in a town. The idea of a king wearing two crowns and integrating two types of societal units is compelling. (Was this kind of metamorphosis occurring in Melchizedek's kingdom?)

Chapter 3

WHO WAS THIS MELCHIZEDEK?

What kind of king was Melchizedek? The Mari letter quoted above reduces the likelihood that he was king over a large territory like that of David or Solomon. Perhaps the descriptions of Saul's reign come closer to describing the kingship of Melchizedek. Could he have been a tribal leader who had recently settled on his own dira but had not become completely sedentary? An examination of kingship during the patriarchal and pre-patriarchal era will help clarify the possibilities.

Kings in ancient times played dominant roles in the trade and commerce of their people. The priest king was also a merchant prince who let contracts to the trader or damkar. Canaanite kings and their Jewish successors were heavy traders in olive oil and grain.¹

Kenyon, taking an archaeologist's view, speculates that the Amorites arrived in Palestine c. 2300 B.C. as nomads, destroying a previously urban civilization. Later, an amalgamation of these nomads with what was left of the urban civilization resulted in the Canaanite culture. She maintains that, "This way of life had a strong power of survival. It absorbed many new influences, such as that of a superimposed warrior aristocracy who surrounded the towns which they

controlled with defences on a new plan. 2 Her views are parallel to Rowton's in allowing for the gradual settlement of the nomads, with their chiefs becoming kings, defenders of their people: a "warrior aristocracy". It is not hard to see Abraham in this role and, though we have no Biblical record of Melchizedek's having ever fought, we will see later how other writings and traditions envision him as a strong commander of a righteous army.

In his book, Kingship and the Gods, Frankfort contrasts the Hebrew kings with both the Egyptian Pharoah who was thought to be god incarnate and the rulers of Mesopotamia who were esteemed as the chosen servants of the gods. He describes a more primitive monarchy in which "we find a hereditary leader whose authority derived from descent and was originally coextensive with kinship." 3 He asserts that the tribesman recognized the bond of blood alone. He maintains that the king was not the leader in the cult. This, however, evokes disagreement from other scholars who argue that the kinship so highly prized by the Hebrews extended all the way back to their god whom they revered as actual father of their race. The king, who was a father figure to the tribe, became the natural leader of the cult. G. Ernest Wright adds another dimension when he speaks of the king's having been "adopted as God's son or anointed [messiah] to protect the


people from their enemies and to secure the social order in righteousness." Most such statements concerning kingship make reference to the time of the Monarchy and the rule of David and Solomon. Does David's kingship hark back to an ancient king [Melchizedek]? David's choice of Jerusalem as his capital points toward that ancient tradition and his appointment of Zadok as chief priest could have been a move to consolidate the tribes under a common priesthood. David's acknowledgment of Zadok prompts Rowley's suggestion that: "David was doing no more than Abraham before him."5 Later, David himself sacrificed before the Ark, wore an ephod or priestly garment and consecrated his own sons as priests. (I Chron. 15:27). It seems plausible that he was following an ancient tradition which paired priest with king and was looking back over his shoulder a thousand years to Melchizedek.6

6 NOTE: Zadok, the priest whom David elevated, echoes the name sdq at the time of the monarchy. He, it is, who anointed Solomon with oil at the time of his coronation. (I Kings 3:9) After the exile of Abiathar, Zadok became chief priest of the Jerusalem temple. David surely had reason for making Zadok his priest. The idea of Zadok's having been in Jerusalem on David's arrival is intriguing. The name sdq has an interesting history in Jerusalem beginning with Melchizedek, through Adoni-ze'dek king of Jerusalem in Joshua's time.

Certainly neither Abraham nor David would have turned aside to a pagan priesthood. It is possible to accept Zadok's direct lineage from Levi as given in the record (though a scribal error is probable) locate him at Jerusalem at the time of David's conquest, a genuine priest of the line of the "fathers" and then search at length the mystery of his reason for being there. Very little can be asserted positively about Zadok, yet his name is carried forward for centuries. His descendants became the dominant priestly family in Jerusalem, the priests of the Temple. The Zadokite priesthood was still a major concern of the Qumran community nearly a thousand years later.
Using the Old Testament pre-Ugaritic material and the Ras Shamra texts, Engnell in his landmark study, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* presents the most complete picture of kingship in the Near East. In arriving at his basic premise he quotes Professor Hooke who states that the myth and ritual patterns of Canaan "... suggest that the Hebrews, when they settled in Canaan, found there the main elements of the ritual whose centre was the figure of the divine king." In other words, when Abraham the Hebrew arrived in Canaan he found Melchizedek, the King. Engnell cites Pedersen's assertion that:

... what could not have been known is the fact that a Canaanite town had a temple cult of so elaborate a design, so fresh and alive. We have been accustomed to consider Canaanite civilization as something secondary, a jumble of casual loans from the neighboring ones. Now we see that just as they have had an age-old independent type of language, they have also had an elaborate worship controlled by the local king and with its own typical and original features.

Again we meet the god-son = father-king relationship. The king is often called the son of the god. The Ben Hadad dynasty of Damascus is a good example; *ben* meaning son, and *Hadad*, the name of the god. Sometimes this goes even farther and the king is the god (like the Pharoahs). Scholars struggle with this point. It might be resolved by assuming the king to be an example of the righteousness of the god, a kind of crown prince, who cared for the welfare of his subjects and was only once removed from the God; resulting in a kind of

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8 Ibid. p. 76.

9 Ibid. p. 87.
grandfather God image. Since the god was seen as ancestor of the
tribe (strictly anthropomorphic) the idea that each of the Kings'
subjects also had a Father-child relationship with their deity might
have emerged at this time.Engnell cites examples of priestly
kings from Sidon, Tyre and Moab. He quotes Cook who maintains:

The kingship tends to centralize religion . . . the
king controls temple and cult . . . he prays and sacrifices
on behalf of the people in peace and in war; and in all
crises he consults the god, the oracle or the sacred symbols.
His privileges are primarily that he may fulfill his duties.

Engnell continues by saying that although we know a few details about
the externals of the cult we have little insight into the concepts
which underlie the ritual practice. One interesting concept which
he cites from Amarna describes the king as a giver of light:

I have looked here and I have looked there,
but there was no light.
But when I looked upon the king my lord,
there was light.

Another idea in the same texts is that the king grants life, even
eternal life. Thus he becomes a messianic figure parallel to the
Melchizedek found in the Qumran materials. (See below)

John Bright speaks of ancient kingship in terms of stewardship;
God was the ruler and the king was his steward. The tradition was
held that kingship had come down from heaven at the beginning of time.

Deede's essay divides god into father-god and son-god, using
an example a Syrian seal belonging to Asher-Shemi, the Amorite de-
picting a double-headed king-god as at the same time old and young.
Engnell, p. 84.

Ibid. p. 91.

Ibid. p.

John Bright, A History of Israel, (London: SCM Press LTD)
1972, p. 34
The king was not absolute in authority. His power was dependent on the sanction of divine election. Much of the characterization of a king as father, steward, caretaker, or servant of his people, has been lost through the ages.

What can be learned from Melchizedek's name?

T. J. Meek agrees with many scholars when he asserts, "... personal names with ancient peoples invariably reflect their religious beliefs..."^14

A compound name like Melchizedek presents an immediate problem: is it simply a proper name or does it combine the connotations of an epithet? Most unabbreviated Semitic names in antiquity form a sentence. These sentence-names have been shown by H. Ranke to contain a vow or prayer to a god or a statement of belief connected with a god.^15

Some have resolved the problem by going to an early text to see whether Melchizedek was written as one word or two. But who decides? It would seem to revert to a scribal decision and would not necessarily help in interpretation. One word would certainly opt for the proper name.

Melchizedek's name is an ancient Canaanite formulation which finds parallels in the Old Testament like Adoni-zedek and Abi-melech. Other kings in the ancient Near East bore similar names like a

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Babylonian king c. 1600 B.C. with the Amorite name, Ammi-Saduqa
("Saduq is my kinsman"). A significant parallel is to the name Sargon.
The Akkadian spelling of the name is Sarru(m) Ken ("the King is just or legitimate"). Speiser calls Melchizedek the "Canaanite counterpart of Sargon." 16

Theophoric names were common during this period and El and Yahweh frequently appear in Old Testament literature as components of names. If Melchizedek is divided into its two Hebrew elements, mlk and sdq, there is an immediate and apparent problem in identifying the theophoric name. Which element is the divine name? Although mlk is commonly "King" it is known as a divine name in Ugarit, Mari, and Assur. Melchizedek could mean "Mlk (a god) is righteous (upright)."
A god Molech is mentioned as a deity to whom humans were sacrificed. In the Valley of Hinnom, just southwest of Jerusalem, at a place known as Topheth ("firepit" in Syriac) just such sacrifices took place (II Kings 23:10). A god Muluk is mentioned in the tablets from Mari c. 1700 B.C. 17 Again, mlk literally means "king" in Hebrew, while mlki means "my king". Mlk may have been an epithet or title joined to the word sdq [which means "righteous(NESS)"]. 18 The letters sdq are known to have been used without special reference to a deity, probably as an epithet meaning "upright," e.g. the name Ahi-suduq found on the


18 The most common translations are: "My king (is) righteous" or "King (of) Righteous(NESS)".
Aleppo seal.\textsuperscript{19} $\text{sdq}$ has also been identified as a deity\textsuperscript{20} in the area of Canaan. Hence two divine names may make up the name Melchizedek. In Joshua 10:1 reference is made to "Adonïizedek, king of Jerusalem" who calls for aid from the nearby kings including those from Hebron and Lachish. Adoni-izedek can be translated "my lord is righteous or upright" or "$\text{sdq}$ is my lord." Some have suggested that this name parallel proves Melchizedek was king of Jerusalem, but the difference of seven hundred years prohibits that conclusion. Examining the structure of this name may be helpful. Adoni may be used as a title in referring to gods but is not a divine name per se. Thus, the dilemma of choosing which of the two is the divine name is resolved in translating the name, Adoni-izedek. The second element, $\text{sdq}$ is identical in Adoni-izedek and Melchizedek. $\text{mlk}$ $\text{sdq}$ might well mean in a parallel to Adoni $\text{sdq}$ "my king is righteous(ness) or upright" or "$\text{sdq}$ is my king." Various translations are possible but none is certain to be the primary denotation. Examining each word element opens a semantic cave, therefore scholars are not agreed.

Albright suggests that $\text{mlk}$ $\text{sdq}$ $\text{mlk}$ $\text{slm}$ could be translated "the just king who was allied (at peace) with him." This translation eliminates the controversy over the proper name.\textsuperscript{21} H. E. del Medico also argues for the elimination of the proper name from both Genesis and

\textsuperscript{19} Bright, op. cit., p. 98, ff. 67.


and Psalm 110 since "upright king" and "peaceful king" could both be epiteths of the King of Sodom. This outlook must be questioned in view of Sodom's anything but "righteous" status. Mitchell Dahood's translation of Psalm 110 also excludes the proper name.

Could Melchizedek be a royal title like Pharaoh or Hadad? The possibilities multiply and resolution is not secure. The time, the place, the culture involved; all these must be considered. Although parallels can be found, so many differences exist that exact comparisons are impossible. It can be said with assurance that the name Melchizedek does fit the time and place to which Genesis assigns it. Archaeological data have brought to light gods named Malik and Sadeq. And other kings of the period had similar names. Thus, it could be a proper name. Certainly, the ideal name for a priest-king would be a combination of the words righteous and king.

Melchizedek is described as "King of Salem". Again, the semantic puzzle confronts the reader. The writer of Hebrews and Alma both reaffirm this description. Salem or šlem means "peace." Whereas Shalem is also a divine name. The same root is found in the composition of Jerusalem (although that does not prove that the two are synonymous) and other Biblical names such as Absalom and Solomon. The god Shalem is known from the Ras Shamra Texts. Here Shalem signifies "the peace of evening" or the "completion of the day." Shalem,

\[^{22}\text{H. E. del Medico, "Melchisedech", Zeitschrift fur de Altestamentliche Wissenschaft 69, (1957), pp. 160-170.}\]


\[^{24}\text{Note: Same root word with different vowels.}\]
in its primary sense means "complete." Slm is not used as the name of
a god in the Old Testament but scholars trace its first appearance
compounded in the place name 'urushalimma found in the Egyptian Execra-
tion Texts from Luxor c. 1850 B.C. Some suggest that Salem is an
abbreviated form but it is difficult to find parallels where place
names were first abbreviated and then once more elongated. The modern
mania with abbreviation should not be superimposed on 18th century B.C.
Palestine. Following the precedent of a city's taking a local god's
name, Shalem may well have been the local God of Salem, wherever its
location. Proponents of the Jerusalem-Salem theory hold that Solomon
may have been an assumed royal title taken out of respect for the local
deity of Jerusalem. However, a Moabite king mentioned by Tiglath-
pileser III c. 743-726 B.C. was named Shalamanu, a variant of Solomon.
Moab, though nearby, is not Jerusalem, obviously it is with some diffi-
culty that personal names are convincingly linked to place names.

Jewish tradition came to identify Jerusalem with Salem. The
Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon, the Targumim and Psalm 76 all seem to
identify Salem with Jerusalem. Psalm 76 parallels Salem with Zion
however and is thus inconclusive; it is entirely possible that both
names may be used in that context as symbols of the complete or perfect
city (e.g. Enoch's city) rather than a specific geographic location.

Josephus records:

... And the king of the Sodomites met Abraham at a
certain place called the Royal Plain. There the King of

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25 Buttrick, and others, op. cit., p. 304
26 Ibid.
Solyma received him as a guest: this king was Melchizedek, whose name means the Righteous King. ... Solyma was later called Jerusolyma. ... 27

And, "... he (Melchizedek) led the city of Jerusalem, which was first called Salem." 28

Eusebius c. 335 A.D. equates Salem with Salumias, a village in the Jordan Valley "eight Roman miles south of Beth-shan." 29 (Beth-shan is seventy miles north of Jerusalem.) This site has numerous springs 30 and would therefore be a natural city location. Jerome c. 400 A.D. accepted the Salem-Jerusalem theory, gave it up favoring Eusebius' for a time, and then returned to it. One wonders whether geographical or theological traditions influenced his vacillations. The Salem-Beth-Shan theory places Salem near Aenon and is likely the Salim mentioned in John 3:23 where John was baptized because of the "much water." The many springs mentioned above fit well with this theory. Place names are remarkably indelible in Palestine as early archaeologists discovered. Many times a tel carried a name for centuries before an enterprising archaeologist began to dig to verify the name. This is not always true but a significant number of digs have been initiated in precisely this way. A suitable site complete with water, access to trade routes, if it was also defensible was often used and reused, even after complete and repeated destruction. The


30 See Map No. 3, Appendix A.
inhabitants would merely build on the ruins of the old city. Thus many place names come down to the present from remotest antiquity, e.g. Jericho, Megiddo, and Hazor.

A third Salem theory has surfaced in recent years. In addition to Salem-Jerusalem and Salem-Beth-Shan there is the Salem-Shechem theory. In Genesis 33:18, this place is called "Shalem, a city of Shechem." Jacob came there from Padan-aram and "pitched his tent before the city." There he bought a "parcel of a field" with one hundred pieces of silver and built an altar on it, dedicating it (the altar:: to El-Elohe-Israel which is translated "God, is god of Israel" (cf. Exodus 17:15). This was a logical place for Jacob to build an altar. The first altar built in Canaan by his grandfather Abraham was built at Shechem, [or more precisely, the oak of Moreh] for, as Genesis 12:6 explains, "... the Canaanite was then in the land." Abraham was a shepherd-chief of a tribe or clan. He had just arrived in Canaan. It is most unlikely that he would march into a city to set up his altar. This is a mountainous region; Shechem itself is located between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal. The oak must have been outside the city. Shalem might be identified with the village of Salim which is three miles east of ancient Shechem. Distances as seen on the map are deceiving. Shechem is forty miles north of Jerusalem, Bethel is about half way to Shechem (twenty miles) from Jerusalem, Hebron is twenty-one miles south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is approximately on the latitude of the northern shore of the Dead Sea.

31 Note: One other Salim can be located three miles directly south of Tel Megiddo. It is so far from the area of Abraham's travels that it is unlikely to be Melchizedek's city.
Illustration No. 3


The Salem-Shechem theory deserves a closer look. Shechem is located in the most important mountain pass between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. It is also the crossroads of four strategic ancient highways. G. Ernest Wright's excavations in 1957 demonstrated that the city reached its height in the Patriarchal period. The strongest period for Shechem was between 1800 and 1100 B.C. Further excavations in 1960 uncovered a palace built c. 1800 B.C. and enclosed by a strong wall. Around the western and eastern edges of the mound are some of the largest fortifications in ancient Palestine. They were undoubtedly built to guard the strategic pass. C. 1650 B.C. the palace area was filled over, the city wall was moved to the north and the "great temple of Shechem was built over the buried palaces."32 Destroyed c. 1550 B.C.

during the Egyptian campaigns, the temple was rebuilt on a smaller scale and with a different orientation. Alt calls Shechem the "uncrowned queen of Palestine," a "natural capital in the hills of the country," located in almost the exact center of western Palestine. There is no water on the Shechem side of Mt. Ebal but Mt. Gerizim has many springs. The whole area has a long association with the traditions of the Patriarchs. It is a focal point again and again for religious practices and rites. The Oak of Moreh is the setting for Abraham's first altar in Canaan. Kraeling says that the meaning of Moreh is "soothsayer." He suggests that "a member of that craft had once carried on his work there." Moreh may also be translated "vision or appearance." This interpretation is supported by looking to the next verse (Genesis 12:7) for it was here that "the Lord appeared to Abraham." How logical to name it the "oak of the appearance." (One cannot help but compare the Oak of Mamre, near Hebron, where the Lord appears to him later and where he also builds an altar. It is impossible to be explicit, but the Mamre appearance is closely related to the covenant when the Lord promises him the land.)

The area of Shechem, with its rich cultic traditions seems an appropriate place for a priest-king's residence. As the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek is so abrupt in the narrative, a prior meeting could be assumed. Would Melchizedek "go out" to meet a perfect stranger?

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The tribal laws governing hospitality demand it (cf. Genesis 18:2 where Abraham "ran out to meet" his three guests). Would Melchizedek bring forth "bread and wine"? Possibly. This would also fit into the hospitality of the time. The wine would label Melchizedek a city dweller.\(^{35}\)

A king, who is also a priest, would be more likely to bring a cultic feast or a sacrifice of thanksgiving since this is a victory scene. The blessing and tithe paying that follow continue the religious context. The use of bread and wine is seen later on in Moses' time. Bread and wine became important elements in the feast of the Passover. Rasmussen adds that "... Jesus, in partaking of the last Passover with his apostles, adapted the bread and wine as symbols of His sacrifice."\(^{36}\)

Would Abraham pay tithes to Melchizedek had they never met? Possibly. It is also possible that the "tithe" was a tribute Abraham paid to cross Melchizedek's dira or kingdom. This interpretation is weakened when one asks the final question: Would Melchizedek bless a man whom he had never met? Could an earlier meeting have taken place as Abraham camped near Mount Gerizim to water his flocks? Abraham, with his many clansmen, and herds of sheep and goats, must have been a sight. Abraham came to Canaan at the express command of God. God appeared to him near Shechem and hence near Shalem (Salem) promising to give "this land" to Abraham's seed. How far away was Melchizedek at that moment? Did Melchizedek hear of Abraham's approach from some of his people? Did he run out to greet him? If so, no record is available.

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\(^{35}\)See page 13.

of that meeting. Doctrine and Covenants 84:14 records that Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek. Is the record of Melchizedek's blessing Abraham in Genesis 14 a fragment of that ordination or did it take place at some earlier time?

The words of the blessing are significant assuming the earlier hypothesis. (Genesis 14:19)

"And he blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.' And Abram gave him a tenth of everything."

We note here the reciprocal blessings, first "blessed be Abraham," then "Blessed be God Most High." A kind of covenant formula emerges. God is seen both as creator of heaven and earth and as deliverer from Abraham's enemies. The texts of Ras Shamra show that creative activity was not exclusively attributed to the god of Israel. 'El, the supreme god of the Canaanites, was said to be a creator. 37 One wonders whether the two traditions were from a single source in some distant past and only the names were changed. More on this later.

Abraham passed close by each of the possible Salems on various occasions but built an altar near Shechem, which sets it apart from the others. Had Melchizedek ordained Abraham earlier it would have been more natural to bless him at a later meeting.

"... I am the true high priest of God who is exalted." 38

In these words a Coptic manuscript of Nag Hammadi describes Melchizedek.

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38 Delcor, Ibid.
What priesthood did he hold? Who was the god he served? The Genesis account calls him "priest of the Most High God (EL elyon)." This description immediately follows his bringing of the bread and wine. It may well be in explanation of that ritual act. The passage could be translated, "Melchizedek, king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: for he was priest of the Most High God." From the text we glean three links to priestly functions. (1) He brought forth bread and wine which might well have been a ceremonial feast or thanksgiving sacrifice. (The text is silent as to the use made of these items.) (2) He had the authority to bless. (3) He was the receiver of Abraham's tithe. The god in whose name he officiated was EL elyon. Who was EL elyon?

Speiser opens another semantic cave as he relates that both EL and elyon occur as the names of deities in Ugaritic and Phoenician sources: "... in the Old Testament EL is used as a literary or poetic synonym for Elohim; and elyon occurs either separately or as a divine epithet."39 Scholars disagree as to the relationship, if any, between Yahweh and EL elyon. In Exodus 6:3, "Elohim spoke to Moses, saying to him, I am Yahweh, ... I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob as El Shaddai and by my name Yahweh, was I not known to them?"40 This one passage alone contains three synonyms for the God speaking: Elohim, Yahweh and El Shaddai. Today God is known by different names even among those of the same religious persuasion.

39 Speiser, Ibid., p. 104
Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are familiar with the synonyms in common usage viz. Father, Lord, God, Father in Heaven, to name a few. There are more than thirty names for deity in the New Testament. The Doctrine and Covenants adds: the Lord your God, Alpha and Omega, the Son of God, the Great I Am, the beginning and the end, the Mighty One of Israel, etc. This does not communicate the idea of a different god for each name. The Canaanites worshiped through the fertility cult local pagan deities (baalim). The Mesopotamians worshiped their city-gods. Given this environment it is still possible for a people to worship one god whom they characterize as the only true god, above all other gods, in short, 'El 'elyon, the Highest. The Patriarchs were living proof of this as they intruded into a pagan land of many gods while still worshiping their one god. 41 It is logical that they would search for epithets to demonstrate his superiority over the local and less powerful deities. The idea that "our god is above your god" appears in the later incidents of Elijah's contest with the Priests of Baal (I Kings 18:21), and Moses with Pharaoh's priests. (Exodus 8:17, 18).

The many names of God may well have been merely due to differing dialects or languages. Today a Chinese, a Croatian, a Mexican, and an American all refer to one god but will each use a different word. Bright asserts:

All the accounts agree . . . that the Patriarchs worshiped God under various names: El Shaddai (Exod. 6:3, Gen. 17:1; 43:14, etc.); El 'Elyon (Gen. 14:18-24); El 'Olam (Gen. 21:33);

El Roi'i (Gen. 16:12; cf. Yahweh Yir'eh, Gen. 22:14); El Bethel (Gen. 31:13). All the patriarchal narratives were written from the point of view of Yhwhistic theology by men who were worshipers of Yahweh; whether they used the name or not, they had no doubt that the God of the Patriarchs was actually Yahweh, God of Israel.\(^{42}\)

Bright is unwilling to assume that Yahweh was in actuality the god of the Patriarchs for that would be imposing the faith of later Israel upon them. Rather than looking to later times let us consider the earliest, shadowy ideas of Hebrew religion. What were the pre-Abrahamic notions? Albright, in arguing against monotheistic tendencies among early Western Semites relates:

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\ldots \text{early South Arabian pantheons were often organized in triads of father, mother, and son; \ldots such triads are archaeologically illustrated in neolithic Jericho, not later than the sixth millenium. Early Hebrew popular religion was presumably similar, with a father, El, a mother whose specific name or names must remain obscure (perhaps Elat or Anath), and a son who appears as the storm-god, probably named Shaddai, "the One of the Mountain."}^{43}\]

One need not agree with Albright that this prohibits monotheism. It is a semantic distinction. The mere presence of other members of a godly family does not contradict the preeminence of one, in this case, El, god the father. This conceivably would actuate the need for special names pointing to a supreme being who rules all others.

In the same vein Albright declares, "It must \ldots be emphasized that the fluid conception of the god of a clan as being its blood relative takes root in dynamistic and corporative ideas of great antiquity."^{44}

\(^{42}\)Bright, op. cit., p. 96.

\(^{43}\)Albright, op. cit., p. 247

\(^{44}\)Ibid.
Thus God in the pre-patriarchal mists is seen as a "father-god" who is the literal progenitor of the tribe or clan. In the time of the Patriarchs God was called the "Kinsman of Isaac." Each Patriarch chose his god for himself. It was a free choice. Each reaffirmed the god of his father. The Patriarchal God was no mere local deity. Although he was the most high and had all power, He watched over his progeny. He was the "unseen head of the house; its members the members of his family."  

How much was the god whom Melchizedek served like this god? He is referred to in Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham as "maker (or creator)" and as "God, Most High." El, the chief god of the Canaanites might be referred to as both. But then the question arises, why did he bless Abraham whose god was not the same as his own? Even more to the point, why did Abraham submit to such a blessing and later, in speaking to the king of Sodom, connect his god's name with that name which Melchizedek had just used in blessing him? (Gen. 14:22) No mention is made of Abraham's resisting the blessing in any way. Did not Abraham himself reveal the secret when he used the names in combination? Melchizedek's god and Abraham's god must have been the same.

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45 Ibid.

46 Bright, op. cit., p. 98.
Chapter 4

JEWISH TRADITIONS ABOUT MELCHIZEDEK

Through the ages men have speculated concerning the mysterious figure of Melchizedek. Traditions concerning him cover a wide spectrum. For the sake of organization these traditions will be divided into two bodies of literature: Jewish traditions, and Christian traditions. Under both will be included selected commentary which will be representative of the vast corpus of scholarly concern with Melchizedek. As will be shown hereafter, the varied concepts were usually triggered by theological presuppositions although their speculations run far afield they arrived at their conclusions having started from precisely the same primary text; the account in Genesis 14 of the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek.

The Hasmonaeans present an interesting example of this. Although the Hasmonaean priests did not refer to themselves as "priests according to the order of Melchizedek" they styled themselves "Priests of the Most High God," an obvious reference to the priest-king's god. Delcor suggests that it was probably from the time of Johnathan Maccabeus, 152 B.C., that the Hasmonaeans referred to themselves in this way.

They wished in this way to legitimate their double function by referring to a precedent... they intended to show to their enemies that they claimed to originate from a priesthood
and from a royalty which were earlier than the Levitic priesthood, and than the royalty itself.\(^1\)

Louis Ginzberg presents the Jewish legends in broad strokes, collating one strand of legend with another, using notes to add various details. The picture of Melchizedek in these legends can also be painted with broad strokes. He is identified as Shem.\(^2\) One legend relates that Shem was named Melchizedek at the time God appointed him to be a priest.\(^3\) The recounting of the meeting with Abraham enlarges on the Genesis account:

> When Abraham returned from the war, Shem, or as he is sometimes called, Melchizedek, the king of righteousness, priest of God Most High, and king of Jerusalem, came forth to meet him with bread and wine. And this high priest instructed Abraham in the laws of the priesthood and in the Torah and to prove his friendship for him he blessed him, and called him the partner of God in the possession of the world, ... But Melchizedek arranged the words of his blessing in an unseemly way. He named Abraham first and then God. As a punishment, he was deposed by God from the priestly dignity, and instead it was passed over to Abraham, with whose descendants it remained forever.\(^4\)

It is interesting to note that Melchizedek is called high priest and that he instructed Abraham in the laws of the priesthood. The intent of the above legend was to show that the priesthood was taken away from Melchizedek and given to Abraham. Who has the priesthood forever? The Jewish legends say loudly, Abraham. The Christians, as will be shown below, shout just as loudly, Melchizedek. Other legends

\(^1\) M. Delcor, "Melchizedek From Genesis to the Qumran Texts and the Epistle to the Hebrews", Journal for the Study of Judaism, 2, 1971.


\(^3\) Ibid., Vol V., p. 226.

speak of Melchizedek as the son of Shem, thus providing a direct priesthood link back to Adam. Salem is commonly identified with Jerusalem, so that Melchizedek is associated with the king of Judah.

Melchizedek was supposed to have been born circumcised. This demonstrates the anti-Christian direction some of these legends took since circumcision immediately excluded Melchizedek from the Christian fold. Picking the bare bones of Genesis 14, the early Jews developed legends on each salient point that was known and then fleshed in what was not. These legends cannot be entirely dismissed, however, since it is difficult to separate the truly ancient from the purely anti-Christian polemic which developed later. The only yardstick available is the consideration of the theological bias of Christians and Jews during different periods of history. Although little historical information on Melchizedek emerges, their superimposed rhetoric about him reflects the interests of their theology at that period.

Significantly, Melchizedek, by name, drops out of the Book of Jubilees (c. 100 B.C.) At the point where he appears in Genesis, Jubilees reads:

"... for Abram and for his seed, a tenth of the first fruits for the Lord, and the Lord ordained it as an ordinance forever that they should give it to the priests who served before Him, that they should possess it forever. And to this law there is no limit of days; for He hath ordained it for the generations forever that they should give to the Lord the tenth of everything, of the seed and of the wine and of the oil and of the cattle and of the sheep. And he gave unto His priests to eat and to drink with joy before Him. And the king of Sodom came to him and bowed himself before him, and said: "Our Lord, Abram, give unto us the soul which thou

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5Ibid., Vol V, p. 226.
has rescued" ... and Abram said unto him, "I lift up my hands to the Most High God, that from a thread to a shoe latchet I shall not take aught ..." 6

Here we find neither Melchizedek nor Yahweh. Also, the law of tithing is said to be established for all generations. Abraham acts as priest and he vows to take no spoils. In Genesis he speaks of "having vowed" as if at some earlier time he had covenanted. The shadow of Melchizedek falls over the transaction, however, when Abraham uses the name Most High God, which designates Melchizedek's god.

In the Testament of Levi (c. 100 B.C.) the presence of Melchizedek is felt again. In Chapter 8 we read of Levi's commission to become Priest:

... Arise, put on the robe of the priesthood, and the crown of righteousness, and the breastplate of understanding, and the garment of truth, and the plate of faith, and the turban of the head, and the ephod of prophecy ... from henceforth become a priest of the Lord, thou and thy seed forever. And the first anointed ... me with holy oil and gave me the staff of judgement. And the second washed me with pure water, and fed me with bread and wine, even the most holy things, and clad me with a holy and glorious robe. The third clothed me with a linen vestment like an ephod ... the sixth placed a crown on my head. The seventh placed on my head a diadem of priesthood and filled my hands with incense, that I might serve as priest to the Lord God. And they said to me: Levi thy seed shall be divided into three offices, for a sign of the glory of the Lord who is to come. And the first portion shall be great; yea greater than it shall none be. The second shall be in the priesthood. And the third shall be called by a new name, because a king shall arise in Judah, and shall establish a new priesthood, after the fashion of the Gentiles. And His presence is beloved, as a Prophet of the Most High, of the seed of Abraham, our father. 7

In this pseudepigraphical work the Levitical priesthood is seen as the inheritor of the priestly kingship of Melchizedek. All the elements are


7 Ibid., p. 304.
present; the crown of righteousness, the bread and wine, the holy clothing, the coronation description, and the name of the god, Most High. The conception of an authoritative priesthood was essential in Judaism. Thus Melchizedek is covertly ushered in to plead Levi's cause and thereby sustain the legitimacy of the priesthood of his descendants.

This same concern for the legitimate priesthood was background for the Genesis Apocryphon which came from the Qumran community's scribes (c. 100 B.C.). Here Melchizedek appears by name and the narrative follows the Genesis text closely. The few changes are interesting. It is said that when the king of Sodom heard that Abraham had returned with the captives and booty:

... he went up to meet him. He came to Salem, that is Jerusalem, while Abram was camped in the Valley of Shaveh—this is the Vale of the King, the Valley Beth-hacherem. Melchizedek [one word in this text], the King of Salem, brought out food and drink [not bread and wine] for Abram and for all the men who were with him; ... [blessed Abram] And he [Abram] gave him a tithe of all the flocks of the King of Elam and his confederates. Then the king of Sodom approached Abram and said, "My Lord, Abram, give me the men that are mine who are captives with you and whom you have rescued from the King of Elam; ... ."8

This version smooths out the Genesis account by having the king of Sodom come to Salem, therefore making Melchizedek's appearance natural. When comparing this text to Genesis one wonders what text the scribe was copying from as he sat in the Qumran scriptorium. Did he have before him one ancient text or was he collating several accounts? After reading the Genesis Apocryphon, turning to Genesis is like reading a digest. That idea seems as convincing as that the Apocryphon is full of

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embellishments. Some additions are possibly editorial additions, like the Salem-Jerusalem attachment, but much of the rest falls coherently into place. If there were much editing involved it would be expected that the sacrificial elements in Melchizedek's "bread and wine" would have been noted since the scribe belonged to a group who championed a Zadokite priesthood and could have seen Melchizedek as chief of that line. The scribe, rather, wrote "food and drink" which is closely synonymous but subtracts the obvious sacrificial quality. The text also has Melchizedek bring the food and drink "for all the men who were with him" which may water down the ritual dimensions, substituting a feast for a sacrament. The addition of the names of the previous owners of the booty on which he paid tithes seems to finish the sentence in Genesis: "And gave him a tenth of all the flocks of the king of Elam and his confederates." The Genesis Apocryphon is difficult to classify as pure legend. Would it not be better to examine it, considering the possibility of a prior text?

The Melchizedek Scroll (c. 150 B.C. - 68 A.D.) from Qumran Cave 11 (hereafter referred to as 11Q Melch) presents some of the same problems as the Genesis Apocryphon. In this scroll the scribe is not copying verbatim from one source as he might have been in the Apocryphon. How much material did he have about Melchizedek besides the Old Testament texts he chooses to use in his midrash? The prior question might well be asked: Why did he choose Melchizedek as the subject of his exegesis? Did he see in Melchizedek the first priest of an order to which he now laid claim in the Zadokite priesthood? Was he simply applying his apocalyptic viewpoint to a personality, mysterious even then? Did he have earlier records relating to Melchizedek from which he could draw
different conclusions? His ideas pull away from other Jewish notions thus far considered. He sees a heavenly Melchizedek who will execute divine judgment in the future eschatological Jubilee year. He is seen in company with a "heavenly council" and is its leader. He will "exact the vengeance of the judgments of El (god) from the hand of Belial (Satan)." He is the "herald upon the mountains proclaiming peace." (Isa. 52:7, "How beautiful upon the mountains, etc.") Sanders points out that this same cluster of scriptures is related in the Epistle to the Hebrews to Christ but this 11Q Melch fragment is the earliest known instance of their being interwoven in this manner. "The heavenly Son of God of Hebrews 7, who rules above all heavenly and earthly powers, and lives for ever to make intercession for those who put their trust in him, has his counterpart now in the heavenly Melchizedek at Qumran." 10

One can see how Melchizedek fits into this typology. It is he who oversees the release of Abraham's prisoners and accepts Abraham's tithe. In Psalm 110 his priesthood is characterized as "eternal" so his officiating in the world to come and overseeing the release of prisoners there would be a natural sequence. This Qumran author, however, sees the priestly calling of Melchizedek clearly. (Thus differing from his brother who copied or composed the Apocryphon.) For him it transcends

9 cf. D&C 88:112-115 where Michael is seen in a very similar role, gathering together the hosts of heaven to fight the devil and his armies which he has gathered. Verse 115 reads, "For Michael shall fight their battles and shall overcome him who seeketh the throne of him who sitteth upon the throne, even the Lamb."

the limits of mortal life and Melchizedek becomes a towering redemptive figure rivaling the characterization frequently made of Michael, the great general in the final heavenly overthrow of Satan.

According to this text Melchizedek acts under the direction of El, who judges the people. A significant passage in the text finds El [the highest God], in the midst of Elohim [other "gods"] in his council, and another Elohim [who is Melchizedek]. The text reads:

as it is written . . . concerning him in the hymns of David who says, Elohim (Melchizedek or the holy one) standeth in the assembly of Elohim (God) among the Elohim (the holy ones, the court of heavenly beings) he judgeth.\footnote{Psalm 82:1}

Philo of Alexandria (born c. 20 B.C.) forced his native Judaism into Greek categories. An excellent example is found in his writing de Abrahomo. In it he mingles his philosophy with the tradition of his people and the line between is faintly drawn.

when the High Priest of the Most High God saw him [Abraham] returning victorious and unscathed, with his own forces still alive . . . for not one of his men had fallen—and he marvelled at the greatness of Abraham's deed and quite rightly thought that such a thing could not have occurred without divine inspiration and God's alliance. And lifting his hands unto heaven, he honored him with eucharis (blessings, prayers, oaths or vows) and made sacrifice in honor of the victory and fed all those who had taken part in the battle in banquet style, for he thrilled in the victory as if it were his own. And indeed it was his own, for it is said, "All things are shared among friends." \footnote{12}

Another example of his thinking on Melchizedek is found in a treatise on God's unearned gift of insight, which is given to Noah,


Melchizedek, and Abraham. The section on Melchizedek reads:

... God made Melchizedek the King of Peace, for Salem is thus interpreted, and his very own priest, before a single deed of Melchizedek had been performed; rather God first created him with a royal nature and a man of peace and one worthy of his own priesthood [priesthood after the order of the Son of God]. For he was called "Righteous King" (malkisedeq), and to be a king is to be the opposite of tyrant, because a king comes to power according to the laws but a tyrant is without law. Thus the tyrannical mind loads the soul and the body down with hard, harmful and severe suffering, I speak of both those things which work evil and those which promote short lived pleasures. But the regal mind does not give orders; he persuades. And afterwards he advances such recommendations as may help a good and skillful navigator to navigate his little ship of life over rough seas. Herein lies the correct understanding. Therefore the tyrant may be called the Prince of War; but the king is a Leader of Peace, Salem, and he provides the soul with nourishment full of right-mindedness and joy.

These examples illustrate the mishmash of philosophical midrash in Philo. It is tempting to sort through the philosophy looking for authentic Jewish tradition. This is a difficult, if not impossible task.

Although all history must be read through the bias of the historian, still Philo's four-level allegorical approach muddies the water badly.

The Jewish historian Josephus (born about 37 A.D.) offers another opportunity to confront a bias. A former Jewish general turned Roman aristocrat, Josephus writes with supposed authority and interpretes his people's history to his Jewish brethren and his Roman patrons. He was a Pharisee himself and opposed the Zealots, feeling that God was on the side of Rome and had punished the Jewish Zealots with just cause in the

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13 NOTE: "his own priesthood" above, cf. D&C 107:2. Before Melchizedek lived it was known as the "Priesthood after the order of the Son of God."

Jewish War. His references to Melchizedek possess little more than literary value since he fills in where the Genesis account is silent.

And the King of the Sodomites met Abraham at a certain place called the Royal Plain. There the King of Solyma received him as a guest; this king was Melchizedek, whose name means "the Righteous King." And most certainly he was just that sort of man, and indeed this was the very reason that he became a priest of God. And Solyma was later called Jerusolyma. And this Melchizedek supplied the army of Abraham with abundant hospitality and presented them copiously with appropriate effects and began to praise him with blessings and to thank God who had made Abraham victorious over his enemies. And Abraham also brought forth a gift, giving him a tenth of the booty.15

The connection of Salem with Jerusalem is expected. The absence of a reference to Shem-Melchizedek leads one to wonder whether the Shem-Melchizedek legend had not yet developed. Josephus is quite sentimental about Jerusalem, having seen it so recently destroyed, and in The Jewish War he recounts:

It [Jerusalem] was originally founded by a Canaanite chieftain called the "king of Righteousness," for such he was. On that account he was the first priest of God and the first to build the Temple and in its honor to give the name of Jerusalem to the City, previously called Salem . . . the Canaanite inhabitants were driven out by the Jewish king David, who settled his own people there. . . .16

Josephus is the only source for the ideas that Melchizedek was the first to build the Temple and to name the city, Jerusalem. Again there arises the problem of his embroidery of history versus his use of ancient texts or traditions which may have included strands of truth.

Comparison of the various writings uncover similarities but literary


16 Ibid., The Jewish War, 1968, p. 360.
relationships become a problem since credit is rarely given. The approximate dating of the materials at least shows which texts may have been available for examination.

By the time the Targums (1st and 2nd Century A.D.) were written there was much material to be consulted. The need to meet the Christian threat also existed. The traditions about Melchizedek now posed a real problem to Jews since Christians had adopted him as their own. Because the scriptures refer to him as being "without father or mother" this adoption was easy. The Jews met this challenge by pulling Melchizedek into their lineage. He is identified as Shem, the son of Noah.

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.  

Pseudo-Jonathan (c.130 A.D.) records: "And Melchizedek, who is Shem, the son of Noah, went out to meet Abraham." This may be the earliest identification of Shem with Melchizedek. If so, the expansion of Christianity would be sufficient motivation. The first legend quoted in this chapter resolved the problem handily. Melchizedek had "arranged the words of his blessing in an unseemly way" by naming Abraham before God and so the priesthood was taken from him and given to Abraham, "with whose descendants it remained forever."

A summary of Jewish midrash on Melchizedek is found in The Soncino Chumash:

17 Delcor, op. cit., p. 130
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., p. 2.
18. Melchizedek. The Midrash identifies him with Shem. (R). He was thus called because he was king (melech) over a place famed for its righteousness (tseke) (E). N. Similarly: He ruled over the place where one day would be built the Temple wherein dwelt the Divine Presence which is called tsedek. The Midrash applies the term to Jerusalem as a whole, as it is written, Righteousness lodged in her (Isa. i.21).20

The Melchizedek-Shem identification is not surprising. Melchizedek's connection with the Temple suggests priesthood ties there and perhaps with the Zadokite priesthood which officiated there from Solomon's time. But the interesting element in this paragraph is the reference to the "Divine Presence which is called tsedek" [gdq]. This linking of Melchizedek with the "Divine Presence" sounds suspiciously like the Christian heresy treated below called the Melchizedekian Heresy, which characterized Melchizedek as a member of the Godhead or the Holy Ghost.

Down through the ages the Rabbis sought to preserve and observe the ancient Law. They, too, carried on a polemic against the Christians. An interesting dichotomy developed. On the one hand, an exalted Melchizedek emerged, reminiscent of the Qumran Melchizedek.

It is written in Zechariah (2:3): The Eternal showed me four workmen. R. Hanna bar Gizna says in the name of R. Simon the Hasid: These four workmen are: the Messiah son of David, the Messiah son of Joseph, Elijah and Melchizedek.21

There could not have been a more exalted company! On the other hand, others saw Melchizedek fallen from his place and his priesthood bestowed upon Abraham. The Rabbis generally identify Melchizedek with Shem while one strong tradition cited above says he was born circumcised;


an obvious jab at the Christians. Much midrash is devoted to his lack of parentage. One story even suggests his mother was a prostitute. This demonstrates the lengths to which the Jewish scholars went to claim and categorize Melchizedek, one way or the other.

The trend of Jewish thought after the advent of Christianity was against the identification of Christ with Melchizedek as demonstrated in the Epistle to the Hebrews and carried forward by the Fathers of the Church. The way the Rabbis chose to combat this was to invalidate Melchizedek's priesthood. How could a fallen priest be the prototype of Christ? And a prototype was just what the early Christian Fathers sought as they began their defense of the church as the legitimate outgrowth of the Old Testament.
Chapter 5

CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS ABOUT MELCHIZEDEK

The Jewish scholars had many centuries to consider Melchizedek before their Christian brothers influenced them to alter their views. The Christian apologists were fresh on the scene but brought enthusiasm to the task. The use of Psalm 110 in Hebrews 7 is a vigorous example. (See Appendix B for full text.) The adoption of Melchizedek pushed the roots of Christianity back to the dawn of time. It opened the category of "chosen" to include, in addition to Judah-Israel, Gentiles who took Melchizedek for their champion. Whereas the Jews claimed Abraham as their father (to Jesus' great displeasure) the Christians now countered with Melchizedek. Needless to say there was no dichotomy among Christian writers as to his supremacy.

The discourse of Alma in the Book of Mormon must be considered here. This discourse is dated c. 82 B.C., but must still be considered with the Christian materials. Although Alma had no polemic against the Jews, he had such a clear understanding of the coming of Christ that his writings should be considered under this category. From what sources did Alma gain his knowledge of Melchizedek? Was it from the Brass Plates which his forefather Lehi struggled to bring from Jerusalem? Was it from oral traditions? Was it a combination of the two? He refers to Melchizedek and his people as exemplary and defines the attributes of those holding the "high priesthood of the holy order of his [God's]
Son." He urges his hearers to purify themselves through humility and repentance. He continues by saying:

Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order . . . who also took upon him the high priesthood forever. And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed. Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord. Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness; But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father. Now, there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater, therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention. Now I need not rehearse the matter; what I have said may suffice. Behold, the scriptures are before you; if ye will wrest them it shall be to your own destruction.¹

The last sentence in the above quotation may be a hint of Alma's source. One can picture his gesturing to a written (engraved) record as he urges his people not to "wrest them [the scriptures]." A timely suggestion in light of the diverse commentary which would pile up on the subject of priesthood. Another clue could be easily passed over. Alma refers to Melchizedek as "a king over the land of Salem." Alma's forefather Lehi had left the City of Jerusalem to come to the "promised land." That city is referred to by name in verse four of the first chapter of the Book of Mormon. If the Brass Plates, which predated 600 B.C. (we can't know by how much) referred to Salem as Jerusalem,

¹The Book of Mormon, Alma 13:14-20.
surely Alma would have done so. He did not. Therefore, his text likely did not include that identification.  

Alma, in discussing the high priesthood with his people used the word "also" twice near the beginning of the passage which might indicate that the people to whom he spoke also had that same priesthood. He discussed the role of that priesthood in perfecting people, even those gone astray who were "full of all manner of wickedness." He told how Melchizedek preached repentance and how his people did repent and peace was established in their land. Thus he explained why Melchizedek was called the prince of peace.

An interesting note followed this explanation: "and he did reign under his father." In this one tiny phrase Alma dispelled the mystery of Melchizedek's parentage. His father was a king before him, likely in Salem.

The role of the priesthood is described (with Melchizedek as its prototype) as a gradual sanctification process moving from mighty faith through humility and repentance to a state of absolute righteousness.

Alma's assessment of the man Melchizedek is in verse 20. (Also, an answer to the oft asked question, why do we hear so much of this Melchizedek who comes on the scene like a thief in the night?) "... there were many before him, and ... many afterwards, but none were greater; therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention."

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^2 See discussion on Salem above.
Christian legends surrounding Melchizedek reached elaborate proportions. Melchizedek-Shem was reported as the priest who buried Adam, whose body was taken by Noah on the ark. The burial taking place "at the center of the earth, which is Jerusalem; but, say some, he was buried by Shem along with Eve, in the cave Machpelah, in Hebron. But others relate that Noah on leaving the ark distributed the bones of Adam among his sons, and that he gave the head to Shem, who buried it in Jerusalem."\(^3\)

Other legends which Baring-Gould records are that Shem received the priesthood rather than Noah because the latter was bitten by a lion when leaving the ark; that he was to bury Adam and remain celibate, never to shed blood and to offer to God only the sacrifice of bread and wine; and finally, that he fell asleep in a cave and awoke at the time of the Nativity of Christ and then traveled to Bethlehem as one of the Magi.

Moving away from the legends which reached remarkable dimensions as can be seen above, we will now consider the important discovery at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt about 1946. Thirteen papyrus codices were found there in an earthenware jar. Eleven of them were still in their leather bindings. Until this discovery knowledge of the Gnostics was limited by the polemic of the early church Fathers who sought to discredit them. These small Gnostic groups were convinced that they possessed a secret knowledge which was not available to the uninitiated. It was not based, they claimed, on scientific inquiry or philosophy,

but came to them through revelation. The Nag Hammadi Library is of great importance. Scholars were heretofore dependent on secondary sources, viz. the critical writings of the Fathers, now at Nag Hammadi the original documents of the Gnostics themselves have come to light. Apparently, these secret writings originally were only available to a few initiates. These Nag Hammadi Coptic documents are books which were copied around the fourth century but the originals may have appeared as early as the second century A.D. of the Christian Era. Less than half of these materials have been published and the Melchizedek tractate is only partially translated and has not gone to press. 4

Werner Foerster, in commenting on the value of these documents, suggests:

"... the newly discovered documents as primary sources preserve the passages which were omitted by their opponents or perhaps not correctly reproduced. ..." 5

The discovery of these documents is causing a reappraisal of the beginnings or formative years of Christianity. We now know Gnosticism was more complex than had been assumed. For years the Gnostics were considered en masse as a heretical movement and were dismissed as anti-Christian. But some of the findings in the Coptic Gnostic library at Nag Hammadi, e.g. the Gospels of Thomas and Philip, open the possibility that some strands of the Gnostic movement may have been at the very center of original Christianity and cannot be so easily dismissed.

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4 Birger A. Pearson, University of California at Santa Barbara is now (1975) in the process of translating The Nag Hammadi Melchizedek Tractate.

The secrecy under which the Gnostics worshiped prohibited a sure knowledge of their ritual but these latest findings show a singular emphasis on priesthood authority, baptism and other ordinances and temple ritual. Within this context still another Melchizedek emerges.

The Melchizedek Tractate 6 is very fragmentary, for some pages contain only two or three isolated words, which add no meaning to the text. There are four references to Jesus Christ by name. In these references He is referred to as the "Son of God" and "the commander in chief of the luminaries". Melchizedek is mentioned at least five times and is several times referred to as "the true high priest of God, Most High". It should be noted that this terminology parallels that used in Genesis 14 and Hebrews 7. The tractate begins with a fragment that speaks of truth revealed; then the words "proverb" and "parable" ([2], 1) seem to refer to the Gnostic doctrine of hidden wisdom revealed to a select few through understanding different layers of meaning in the parables. Another reference near the beginning of the tractate is to "female gods" and "male gods" ([2], 10) together with "angels" which brands the writings as Gnostic since "female gods" are seldom mentioned in an orthodox context. Christ is referred to in several fragments (but not by name). He is spoken of as dying and on the third day rising from the dead. His power to grant eternal life to others is often referred to. The "high priest" is mentioned in many sections of the tractate but it is not always clear whether the reference is to Melchizedek or Christ. References to the ordinance of baptism are found in several places but are so brief as to

6 The Melchizedek Tractate = CG IX, 1 and references throughout this section are to numbering in Birger A. Pearson's working copy.

be difficult to identify strictly and may refer to ritual washings. ([8], 2-3, [7], 27) Water is mentioned in two instances in connection with baptism. A very interesting and more complete fragment tells of a "father of the All" who "engenders, men, all of them, in heaven and upon the earth." This compares to the "father-god" discussed above in Jewish tradition. Another fragment contains the words "Eve" and the "tree of knowledge" and "Adam" in a garden of Eden setting. ([10], 1-6) This might have been part of a ritual drama. On the first page of the tractate a "garment" is mentioned ("I will put on as a garment...") ((1), 10-11) which could refer to ritual garb worn by initiates or priests in performing and participating in their rituals. Gaster enlarges on ritual garments. Another fragment includes the names "Adam, Enoch and Melchizedek" in that order. Although there are only a few other words on the page, could the very order of the names refer to Priesthood dispensations? (Joseph Smith includes a similar listing) There is reference to "two who have been chosen" just a few lines after the "Adam-Enoch-Melchizedek" citation. Again, there is no way to know the identity of the "two". The promise is made to them that they "at no time nor in any place will they be stricken" ([13], 3-5) by friends or enemies. With the reference to "enemies" the text seems to turn to concepts of war. The next fragment which is more complete speaks of

7cf. Psalm 82:6, "I have said ye are Gods; and all of you are children of the most High".


the Saviour "will take them away and everyone will be overcome, . . . He will destroy death." ([14], 4-9) Then appears a caution not to "reveal to anyone" the hidden things except they be of the inner group. The fragment which is most complete concerning Melchizedek begins with the mention of "angels of light" and revelation. Just before the passage concerning Melchizedek it reads:

... when he came he raised me up from ignorance and from the fruitfulness of death to life. I have a name, I, Melchizedek, the Priest of God Most High, I know that I am truly the true High-priest of God Most High." ([15], 5-13)

One of the most complete sections in the tractate reads:

"I have offered up myself to you as a sacrifice, together with those that are mine, to you yourself, O Father of the All, and those whom you love, who have come forth from you who are holy and living ... I shall recite my name as I receive baptism ... for ever among the living and holy names and in the waters, Amen." ([16], 8-16)

The use of the word "name" in the two passages above is intriguing. Could it refer to the "name" cited in Revelations 3:12?

"... and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my god, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name."

The context in Revelations is one of "him that overcometh" which is closely parallel with the Melchizedek passages we are considering.11

The last fragment about Melchizedek reads:

"... They said to me, "Be strong, o Melchizedek, great High-priest of God Most High over us who made war; you have ... they did not prevail over you and you endured, and you destroyed your enemies." ([26], 2-9)

In this last quotation the Qumran warrior Melchizedek is paralleled,

11 cf. Exodus 23:21 "... for my name is in him." Abraham 1:18 "Behold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee."
and he is once more described as "great high priest of God, Most High ['El 'elyon]." Melchizedek is again the center of attention ("they said to me") as others address their plea to him. The use of the first person is unusual in this and the "I have a name. . ." segments. Could these be fragments of either a temple ritual or a Priesthood ordination ceremony? Any why is Melchizedek found at Nag Hammadi? His presence at Qumran can be explained as a prototype for a Zadokite priesthood which was championed there or as part of a conserved tradition. At Qumran he is viewed as a heavenly apocalyptic personage. At Nag Hammadi there is some of this same quality as comparisons have shown. But the Nag Hammadi materials couple Melchizedek and Jesus Christ with a strong identification between the two. (As mentioned above, it is difficult to tell which "high priest" of the two is meant in many passages.)

Sanders defends the idea that "the heavenly Son of God of Hebrews 7 . . . has his counterpart now in the heavenly Melchizedek at Qumran."12 If this is true, then that relationships is further cemented in the Nag Hammadi tractate where both Jesus Christ and Melchizedek appear almost interchangeably, as messiahs, bearers of an everlasting priesthood, commanders of a righteous legion, celebrants of a personal sacrifice, coming off triumphant after overcoming all. Such sentiments could place the Gnostic writer of this piece not nearly so far afield from original Christianity as some of his more extreme brethren whose secret knowledge caused the Fathers such discomfort.

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The early Apostolic Fathers could see the seeds of change all around them and wrote with feeling to warn their people of divergent sects which they saw arising. Justin Martyr (died c. 165 A.D.) refers to Melchizedek in his "Dialogue with Trypho." In this work he champions Christ as the Messiah of the Old Testament. He quotes Psalm 110 and then adds:

... with an oath God has shown Him [Christ] (on account of your unbelief) to be the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek; i.e. as 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. . ."13

Here Justin Martyr takes up the battle with the Jews, making Melchizedek the type for Christ and Priest of the uncircumcised or Gentiles while Abraham is the type for all Jewry. Since Melchizedek blesses Abraham his ascendency is assured.

Origen, (Born c. 185 A.D.) in teaching about the high priesthood has this to say about Melchizedek in his Commentary on John:

And those who fulfil a more distinguished office than their kinsmen will perhaps be high-priests, according to the order of Aaron, not that of Melchizedek. Here some one may object that it is somewhat too bold to apply the name high-priests to men, when Jesus Himself is spoken of in many a prophetic passage as the one great priest, . . . (quotes Psalm 110) . . . after the order of Melchizedek, and not according to the order of Aaron. We say accordingly that men can be high-priests according to the order of Aaron, but according to the order of Melchizedek only the Christ of God.14

14 Ibid., Vol. 10, p. 298.
Again we see Christ paired with Melchizedek, only this time as the only priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Cyprian (born c. 200 A.D.) uses Melchizedek to undergird the eucharist in his Epistle LXII to Caecilius.

Also in the priest Melchizedek we see prefigured the sacrament of the sacrifice of the Lord, according to what divine scripture testifies, and says, "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine." Now he was a priest of the most high God, and blessed Abraham. And that Melchizedek bore a type of Christ, the Holy Spirit declares in the Psalms... after the order of Melchizedek; which order is assuredly this coming from that sacrifice and thence descending;... For who is more a priest of the most high God than our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered a sacrifice to God the Father, and offered that very same thing which Melchizedek had offered, that is, bread and wine, to wit, His body and blood?... In Genesis, therefore, that the benediction, in respect of Abraham by Melchizedek the priest, might be duly celebrated, the figure of Christ's sacrifice precedes, namely, as ordained in bread and wine; which thing the Lord, completing and fulfilling, offered bread and the cup...15

Eusebius (born c. 260 A.D.) the historian relates Melchizedek to Christ's priesthood in the recurring theme of the Fathers.

... this Melchizedek is introduced in the Holy Scriptures as a priest of the most high God, not consecrated by an anointing oil, especially prepared, and not even belonging by descent to the priesthood of the Jews. Wherefore after his order, but not after the order of the others, who received symbols and types, was our Saviour proclaimed, with an appeal to an oath, Christ and Priest. History, therefore does not relate that he was anointed corporeally by the Jews, nor that he belonged to the lineage of priests, but that he came into existence from God himself before the morning star, that is before the organization of the world, and that he obtained an immortal and undecaying priesthood for eternal ages... and (Christ) is glorified as the true and only high priest of God... 16

Again the Jewish priesthood is renounced. The reference to an oath is significant in connection with the priesthood. Abraham's oath in Genesis 14 provides a parallel. Again, Christ is seen as the only high priest.

After-Nicea there were a myriad of heresies and the Fathers wrote against them with even more vehemence, defending the Church and ranging scripture and their own deliberations against the waves of speculation.

Gregory of Nazianzen (born c. 330 A.D.) in a glorious oration on the birthday of Christ makes the statement, "Melchizedek is concluded. He that was without mother becomes without father..." and the footnote by Charles Gordon Browne, the translator, reads:

The meaning clearly is that the type presented by Melchizedek is fulfilled in Christ. The explanation here given by S. Gregory is the ordinary one found in the Fathers. Thus, e.g. Theodoret says, "Christ our Lord is without Mother as God for he was begotten of the Father alone; and without Father as Man, for He was born of a pure Virgin."17

This is another obvious reference to Psalm 110 with a clever interpretation forcing both Melchizedek and Christ into the same mold.

St. Ambrose (born c. 340 A.D.) speaks of Melchizedek in connection with an eternal priesthood and as a type of Christ in his *Exposition of the Christian Faith, Book III.*

It is a priest's duty to offer something, and according to the Law, to enter into the holy places by means of blood; seeing, then, that God had rejected the blood of bulls and goats, this High Priest [Christ] was indeed bound to make passage and entry into the holy of holies in heaven through his own blood, in order that He might be the everlasting propitiation for our sins. Priest and victim, then, are one; the priesthood and sacrifice are, however, exercised under

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the conditions of humanity, for He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Let no man, therefore, when he beholds an order of human establishment, contend that in it resides the claim of Divinity; for even that Melchizedek, by whose office Abraham offered sacrifice, the Church doth certainly not hold to be an angel (as some Jewish triflers do) but a holy man and priest of God, who, prefiguring our Lord, is described as 'without father or mother' . . . This Melchizedek, then, have we received as priest of God made upon the model of Christ, but the one we regard as the type, the other as the original. Now a type is a shadow of the truth, and we have accepted the royalty of the one in the name of a single city, but that of the other as shown in the reconciliation of the whole world; . . . 18

The "Jewish triflers", to whom Ambrose refers may have been a group practicing some form of the Melchizedekian Heresy or may have been some other Jewish sect similar to the Qumran community. See below for discussion of the Melchizedekians.

St. Chrysostom (born c. 407 A.D.) discusses Melchizedek in his Holity XII on Hebrews 7:1-3. After wringing out every nuance in the scripture, he makes his central point:

Hast thou seen the superiority? Hast thou seen how great is the interval between Abraham and Melchizedek, who bears the type of our High Priest [Christ]? And he shows that the superiority had been caused by authority, not necessity. For the one paid the tithe, which indicates the priest: the other gave the blessing, which indicates the superior. This superiority passes on also to the descendants. In a marvelous and triumphant way he casts out the Jewish system. . . 19

Here he sums up much of the rhetoric of the Fathers. His last line marks the enemy to be put down and and put down it is.

The time was ripe for discussions of angels on pinheads and minute examinations of every word of scripture with whole doctrines evolving

18 Ibid., Vol X, 2nd Series, p. 255.
19 Ibid., Vol XIV, p. 424.
out of such deliberations. Relatively young Christianity squared off against ancient Jewry while quieting mutinous thunderings in its own ranks. Among the heresies considered anathema at that time was the Melchizedekian Heresy. The Melchizedekians were founded by Theodotus the Banker. They taught that Melchizedek was an incarnation of the Logos. They are described in Pseudo-Augustine as thinking that Melchizedek was not a man but was "a virtue of God." They paid him cultic homage and placed him above Christ, sometimes subtracting from Christ His divinity. Again Melchizedek was sometimes identified as the Holy Ghost. All this likely arising from speculations on the same passage in Hebrews about which so many of the Fathers wrote. They saw a natural inferiority implied in the declaration that Christ was a high priest after the order of Melchizedek and suggested that Melchizedek had been doing for angels and heavenly powers what Christ did for men. And of course the "without father, without mother" passage fired their imaginations.

The Fathers spent considerable effort refuting the heresy. And the Melchizedekians were anathematized by the bishops. But they would not stop their preaching. St. Jerome (born 420 A.D.) denied the Melchizedekian idea that the priest-king was more than a man, and also that he was a divine power who brought forth the bread and wine.20 Jerome mentions that he consulted Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Apollinaris, and agreed with them that Melchizedek was a Canaanite king of ancient Jerusalem. Another sect called Melchizedekians arose who would not

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touch or allow themselves to be touched by anyone outside of their sect. There is apparently no historical link between the two groups. The latter, whose locale was Phrygia, were neither Jew nor Gentile, but kept the Sabbath. By the seventh century all such groups disappear from history. 21

This heresy likely called forth much of the speculation as to the names of Melchizedek's parents, for naming them somehow solved the riddle.

During this period Melchizedek's star rose as he was cast as the archetype of Christ. His "bread and wine" offering to Abraham was linked officially with the Eucharist. Christian art of the subsequent period shows this clearly, as he is even portrayed with the embossed wafer of the Catholic Eucharist either in his hand or before him on the altar. (See Illustration No. 1 and No. 3.)

Thus, Melchizedek was pictured by the author of Hebrews as a type of Christ, the great High Priest while the Fathers of the Church developed this imagery still further, until Melchizedek entered the Canon of the Mass. This addition to the Roman liturgy can be traced to about the fourth century. J. A. Jungmann, in tracing the history of the Mass cites an anonymous work of the fourth century which discusses Melchizedek (whom the author identified as the Holy Spirit):

And likewise, the Holy Spirit sent as the High Priest (i.e. Melchizedek) was called priest of the most high God, not "most high priest of God" as we say in our oblation. 22

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Thus Catholics were already using the phrase in the Mass "which your high priest Melchizedek offered to you."

Ambrose of Milan, cited above, provides the earliest evidence for the order and formulae of the Latin Mass. His lectures to catechumens On the Sacraments were preserved by an anonymous scribe. In this work Ambrose quotes the eucharistic prayer in customary use at Milan in his day. After praising God and interceding for "the people, for kings, and the rest," the celebrant continues in the blessings on the bread and wine, ending with this inunction:

And we pray and beseech you to accept this oblation by the hand of your angels, as you deigned to accept the gifts of your servant, righteous Abel, and the offering made to you by the high priest Melchizedek.23

The present Catholic Mass is worded similarly but now adds Abraham:

Look with favor on these offerings and accept them as once you accepted the gifts of your servant Abel, the sacrifice of Abraham, our Father in faith, and the bread and wine offered by your priest Melchizedek.

Almighty God, we pray that your angel may take this sacrifice to your altar in heaven. . .24

Jungmann comments on a possible earlier occurrence of Melchizedek:

. . . but the mention of Abel and Abraham (to whom Melchizedek was perhaps joined originally) in an Egyptian offertory prayer brings us back to a much earlier period when Rome and Egypt had a liturgical practice in common.25

Unfortunately, Jungmann makes no reference to where the Egyptian offertory prayer may be found.


Early Christian art adds clues to the evolving Catholic use of Melchizedek. In such art the Church seeks to educate its illiterate laity in its doctrines. The Princeton Index of Christian Art\textsuperscript{26} shows sixty-nine references listed under "Abraham blessed by Melchizedek," thirty references under "Melchizedek" and fifty-two references under "Melchizedek with Chalice." Émile Mâle calls Melchizedek the most famous of all types of Christ.\textsuperscript{27} He suggests this in consequence of his appearance in the canon of the Mass. Other types of Christ he mentions are: Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, David and Solomon. The meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek and the bringing of the bread and wine provide a type for the sacrament of the Lord's supper. These elements are found consistently in early Christian art. From the many possibilities for consideration five works of art in which Melchizedek is portrayed have been selected.

The earliest is a mosaic at St. Maria Maggioria, in Rome (Third century A.D.). It depicts Abraham on horseback with his army behind him. Melchizedek is on foot, wears a robe hooked with a large brooch and extends a basket of bread to Abraham who reaches a hand to receive it. A large amphora presumably full of wine sits on the ground between them. While in similar position above them in the heavens Christ extends his right hand toward Melchizedek. Christ's body is shown from the waist upward and his face bears some resemblance to Melchizedek's, possibly indicating that connection between them. One cannot attach

\textsuperscript{26}A copy of The Princeton Index of Christian Art at the University of California at Los Angeles was consulted by the author.

Illustration No. 5

THE ST. MARIA MAGGiorIA MOSAIC
the same Eucharistic meaning to this portrayal as to later pieces which we will consider where altars are present. A point of interest is the "veil of heaven" through which Christ appears extending his right hand toward Melchizedek. Later pieces reduce this conception to a hand only.

The second mosaic is the beautifully colored and conceived piece found at St. Apollonaire de Classe, in Ravenna, Italy (Sixth century A.D.) In it we see Melchizedek as the central figure dressed in a purple robe.
surprisingly like the one at St. Maria Maggioria but this time with a tiara on his head. He presides at an altar on which are placed two embossed wafers centered by the wine chalice (a straightforward linking to the Eucharist). On his right is Abel with a white lamb held up over the altar and on the left is Abraham offering Isaac. Behind them, a curtain or veil separates them from the heaven beyond and this time only a right hand is extended toward Melchizedek over his right shoulder. The face of Melchizedek is similar to many ikons of Jesus which again identifies him as a type.

This mosaic is situated on the right of the mosaic of Constantine. The Constantine mosaic is an earthly representation while the Melchizedek piece is symbolically religious in nature. The value of the work is in the fact that it corresponds to the traditional iconography that had reached its climax at this time. Each gesture, expression and varying color were intended to have a precise meaning.

When St. Apollonaire de Classe was dedicated it was as an Arian church. But when Ravenna became part of the Byzantine Empire, Justinian gave it to the Catholic Church. It was built sometime between 494-526 A.D. and finished the same year that Theodotus died.

The third example is also from Ravenna. It is the famous mosaic from St. Vitale. This church was built between 522-547 A.D. St. Vitale was built on the ruins of an old oratory, some parts of which are still visible. It was built as a result of political upheaval and became an example of the beautiful craftsmanship of that era. Maxim was the Bishop at its completion. Having been built under the auspices of the church, it is interesting to note with what concern the iconographical themes are chosen as well as the materials, colors and artists. As
the church sought to educate its laity it left a legacy of doctrinal history to subsequent generations. In this mosaic we see Abel and Melchizedek presenting their sacrifices before a much larger altar which is prepared for the Mass. The altar is similar to the one at St. Apollinaire with two embossed wafers centered by the wine chalice. Behind Abel stands a country-type dwelling. Abel lifts his white lamb above his head and over the altar. Behind Melchizedek is a palace. He lifts a wafer toward the altar. It is larger but identical to the
two wafers on the altar. Both their names appear above them. In the very center of the heavens above them is a right hand, this time pointing straight down. No Abraham or Isaac is present. Thus we see how the theological dispute between the Christians and the Jews may have been acted out by omitting Abraham and his son. Jungmann says that probably the Roman canon gave impetus to these portrayals. 28

Six hundred years later at Chartres, France, a glorious cathedral was reared. Mâle describes cathedrals of the Twelfth century thus:

   Seen from afar, the church with her transepts, spires and towers seems like a mighty ship about to sail on a long voyage. The whole city might embark with confidence on her massive decks.

   As he draws near her he first meets the figure of the Christ, as every man born into the world meets Him on his voyage through life. He is the key to the riddle of life. Round Him is written the answer to all men’s questionings. The Christian is told how the world began and how it will end; and the statues which symbolize the different ages of the world measure for him its duration. Before his eyes are all the men whose history it is of importance he should know. These are they who under the Old or New Law were types of Christ. . . thus, the world with its history becomes intelligible. 29

If the early churches were schools for the unlearned, the Twelfth century cathedral became the university! The mediaeval artist was not a revolutionary. He was a quiet interpreter of grand ideas, but invention was rarely permitted him. Male explains that "the Church left little more than pieces of pure decoration to his individual fancy,


29 Mâle, op. cit., p. 396.
but in them his creative power had free play and he wove a garland of all living things to adorn the house of God. Plants, animals, all those beautiful creatures that waken curiosity and tenderness in the soul of the child and of the simple, there grew under his finger."  

Illustration No. 8

MELCHIZEDEK AT CHARTRES

[Ibid. 30]
As in Ravenna, the artists are unnamed but are thought to be sculptors from southern France. Chartres was begun in 1194 A.D. and "arched" in 1220 A.D. In it the thought of the middle ages is presented.

In the north porch at Chartres, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Samuel and David stand to the right of the entrance to the Church. On the left are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Simeon, John the Baptist, and Peter. In the middle, above the doors is the Virgin and above her in a semi circle is the Tree of Jesse, which is a sculptured genealogy arching over her head.

The Patriarchs and prophets form a sacred way leading into Christ. Melchizedek, like the other figures, is simple in line. He wears the same cloak as the Melchizedeks of Ravenna, the brooch is likely hidden beneath the fine, curling beard. This time he wears a cap on his head reminiscent of a cardinal or Pope. He carries in his left hand the chalice and in his right he holds a censer (the small vessel in which incense is burned). The censer is a badge of priesthood. Each of the other figures in the grouping holds a symbol which prefigures Christ. Abraham has his hand on Isaac's head, Moses holds the serpent of brass, Samuel carries the sacrificial lamb, David the crown of thorns, Isaiah the stem of Jesse, Jeremiah the cross, Simeon the divine Child, John the Baptist the lamb and finally Peter, the chalice. The same chalice which appears in Melchizedek's hand at the beginning of history is found again in the hands of St. Peter. Thus, the cycle is closed.

These astonishing statues are as beautiful as the ideas they represent to the people. They are very close to the building. For them,
Illustration No. 9

MELCHIZEDEK AT CHARTRES, NORTH PORTAL

Adolf Katzenellenbogen, The Sculptural Programs of Chartres Cathedral, Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1959, p. 188
immobility represents the Law. The arms are glued to the bodies while the objects they hold are pressed close to the chest. Most heads look directly ahead while some heads are not exactly in the axis of the body and are turned slightly. The faces have a singular serenity and grandeur. Mâle describes the grouping which includes Melchizedek:

... These inspired ones are solemn as mouthpieces of God, sad as those who announce that which they will not see. Some of them are unforgettable. The Melchizedek of Chartre with his pontifical tiara, his long fluid beard, his far-away look, equals in majesty the mysterious Melchizedek of the Bible.31

The typology which began among the early Fathers comes full circle here as the cycle is indeed closed as surely as if Melchizedek had handed the chalice to Peter.

Another jump in time brings us to 1627 A.D. and Peter Paul Rubens, the first named artist in these selections. Four hundred years after Chartres he painted another Melchizedek. This time twenty persons are crowded onto the canvas, although Abraham and Melchizedek are easily distinguished. The panel is 16 by 32 1/2 inches and is presently on display in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Where the other selections showed one container for the wine, this painting has three large silver and gold ones and where Melchizedek offered a wafer or one basket of bread in the others, here Abraham holds two loaves while a servant behind him carries a large basket on his shoulder full of loaves and the feeling is one of oppulence, like there is much more where these came from. The setting is the pillared porch of a palace. Many servants surround Melchizedek, while soldiers and a horse are

Illustration No. 10

THE MEETING OF ABRAHAM AND MELCHIZEDEK

Rubens
behind Abraham. Melchizedek is about half a head above Abraham; enough to make the point of superiority. He is dressed in an ermin-bordered cloak, blue silk fringed robe, and white under garments. Abraham looks almost as if he is about to kneel or has just arisen from that position. His gaze is fastened on the white-bearded, benevolent-looking King and he is dressed in short suit of mail and armor with a sword at his waist, helmetless (though his retainers wear plumed helmets) and draped in a crimson cloak. Other weapons carried by his men are spears which have an authentic look of the patriarchal period (which almost nothing else does—the sword was extant in Abraham's time but not such an advanced design). Three cherubs hold up what looks like a tapestry that is a typical form of Baroque illusionism.

Rubens produced this piece, one of a series of seventeen sketches for tapestries, commissioned by the Archduchess Isabella, to illustrate the doctrine of the Eucharist. They were woven for the Convent of the Barefooted Carmelite nuns in Madrid. Rubens was a deeply committed Catholic and all through the 1620's had been working for the return of Protestant Holland to the fold of Spain and the Catholic Church. Upon completing these tapestry designs he wrote in 1628, "Religion takes hold on men's hearts more than any other emotion." For Rubens there was no separation between himself as a painter, citizen and Catholic. He was an artist and diplomat. Isabella entrusted him with important diplomatic missions. Some consider him to be the first "committed painter": committed, that is, to the cause of Catholicism in Europe. This was a good stance to take in his era since non-Catholics were outlawed and had to become converted or leave their country. To miss the Mass on two out of three Sundays could mean excommunication, and in
Spain, there were still those who felt heretics should be burned. Intellectual energies were devoted to religious propaganda. Rubens was a great supporter of the system and saw art as a means of defending the church against Protestantism.

The tapestries still hang in the convent in Madrid. They represent the Catholic dogma of the Real Presence which was a principal cause of contention between Catholics and Protestants. They were weapons against heresy and produced to the glory of the Counter-Reformation. The Mass of that period called Melchizedek's offering to Abraham, "the holy sacrifice, the immaculate Host." The story of Abraham and Melchizedek was also used to demonstrate the preeminence of the Church symbolized by Melchizedek over the State symbolized by Abraham. This was a controversial issue at that time. 32

In Appendix C are other representations of Melchizedek in Christian art. We shall not go into such detail concerning each of them as for the five just considered. The material is so vast as to deserve separate treatment at another time. The same guidelines apply in examining them. They become visual sermons. For the regular attender at Mass, merely looking at them reiterated the verbal message received earlier from the priest.

The Rubens painting introduced a transition in the Catholic confrontation since the Protestants now posed a threat.

There were many fronts in the battle which Luther enjoined. The one with which this study is concerned is the confrontation over the Real Presence and the doctrine of Transubstantiation. The debate included arguments over the meaning of "bread and wine" in Genesis 14

and thereby pulled Melchizedek into the fore. While Catholics affirmed the actual body and blood in the wafer and wine, at this point they still could use Melchizedek as the type of Christ and the first priest to offer the Eucharist in its later form of bread and wine. They saw him standing out in bold relief from the others surrounding him in the Old Testament who offered first fruits and animal sacrifices. He became, in this era, the great exemplar of the Eucharist. The question was no longer raised in Catholic circles whether this were a cultic celebration: it was. But the Protestants revived the question.

In 1518, Luther said in Psalmen-Auslegung, "Melchizedek was a king and a priest and offered wine and bread... that expresses the priesthood of Christ in this time and until the day of judgment, in that he offers the secret sacrament of the altar in Christendom." By 1527 the clash with the Catholics over the sacrament had grown in proportion and Luther shifted his ground. No longer was Melchizedek the Prototype for the Eucharist. Luther joined his Jewish brothers who had been embroiled in a similar fray a thousand years before. He softened Melchizedek's role by suggesting he was none other than Shem! He denies any sacramental motive in the bringing forth of the bread and the wine. In 1535 he labels Melchizedek's bread and wine as simply a victory feast.

Later he was critical of the vast allegorical milieu which had accumulated through the centuries. He found the allegories "dangerous

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33 John W. Welch, Melchizedek Through the Ages, unpublished manuscript. 1973, p. 73.

as they transform the meaning and depart a long way from the true text.\(^{35}\) He came to the notion of Real Presence, in the sense of mysterious effects in the communicant, while opposing transubstantiation. And again Melchizedek was the pivot point around which the debate ensued.

The initial interest in Melchizedek at the time of the Reformation rapidly dwindled. While he remains in the Catholic Mass he is nowhere to be found in the Protestant liturgy. In the post-Reformation Christian world, the Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith, emerges as Melchizedek's lone advocate.

\(^{35}\) Welch, Ibid.
Chapter 6

MELCHIZEDEK AND JOSEPH SMITH

Even the liturgical revival of recent years has failed to arouse renewed interest in Melchizedek. He has also dropped out of Jewish concern. Melchizedek rested peacefully for centuries until new interest was generated academically at the discovery and publishing of the Melchizedek materials among the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi library.¹

While the Protestants have neglected Melchizedek and the Catholics name him only in the Mass, Joseph Smith, in the early 19th century, identified him not as a type only, and not as a legend, but as a historical individual of great stature and importance in the history of the priesthood of God. He said:

Respecting the Melchizedek Priesthood, the sectarians never professed to have it; consequently they never could save anyone. . . . There was an Episcopal priest who said he had the priesthood of Aaron, but had not the priesthood of Melchizedek: and I bear testimony that I never have found the man who claimed the Priesthood of Melchizedek. The power of the Melchizedek Priesthood is to have the power of 'eternal lives;' for the everlasting covenant cannot be broken.²

²Joseph Fielding Smith, Teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press), 1946, p. 322.
More than one hundred years later the only church demonstrating real concern with the Priesthood of Melchizedek is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Joseph Smith explained Hebrews 7 thus in a funeral discourse delivered August 27, 1843:

There are three grand orders of priesthood referred to here. 1st. The king of Shiloam (Salem) had power and authority over that of Abraham, holding the key and the power of endless life. Angels desire to look into it, but they have set up too many stakes. God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last law from Moses.

The sacrifice required of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, shows that if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life; he must sacrifice all things. When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned. The Israelites prayed that God would speak to Moses and not to them; in consequence of which he curses them with a carnal law.

What was the power of Melchizedek? 'Twas not the Priesthood of Aaron which administers in outward ordinances, and the offering of sacrifices. Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings. In fact, that Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam.

Abraham says to Melchizedek, I believe all that thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away. Abraham rejoiced, saying, now I have a priesthood. . .

. . . "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually." The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right from the eternal God, and not by descent from father and mother; and that priesthood is as eternal as God Himself, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.

The 2nd Priesthood is Patriarchal authority. Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood.
The 3rd is what is called the Levitical Priesthood, consisting of priests to administer in outward ordinance, made without an oath; but the Priesthood of Melchizedek is by an oath and covenant.

The Holy Ghost is God's messenger to administer in all those priesthoods.

Jesus Christ is the heir of this Kingdom--the Only Begotten of the Father according to the flesh, and holds the keys over all this world.³

Here Joseph Smith answers questions raised by Jews, Catholics and Protestants in earlier ages. Strangely, his answers came at a time when few remembered the questions had even been asked. In light of the traditions already treated, there are four fruitful areas for discussion in the above quotation.

I. Melchizedek Priesthood is not the same as the Priesthood of Aaron, which "administers outward ordinances and offering of sacrifices."
   II. Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood "are kings and priests of the Most High God and hold the keys of power and blessing."
   III. The "Priesthood of Melchizedek is by an oath and covenant."
   IV. Melchizedek had "power and authority over that of Abraham."

Melchizedek taught or instructed Abraham concerning the Priesthood. He ordained Abraham, giving him the priesthood.

I. The first concept differentiates between the Melchizedek Priesthood and the Priesthood of Aaron, which is defined as administering outward ordinances and offering of sacrifices. In the Doctrine and Covenants 84:18-22 this Aaronic Priesthood is contrasted to the higher priesthood:

³Ibid., p. 322-23
And the Lord confirmed a priesthood also upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations, which priesthood also continueth and abideth forever with the priesthood which is after the holiest order of God.

And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

Both priesthoods are to be eternal, but the higher priesthood was to take the role of administrator. The Aaronic Priesthood is connected with outward ordinances and the offering of sacrifices.

We have no record of animal sacrifice having been offered by Melchizedek. However, his one appearance with Abraham is surely not conclusive on this point. But the content of his sacrifice is one of the things which sets him apart from the priests of his time, and even from Abraham. On this point, Melchizedek seems an anachronism, if the bread and wine he brings are indeed a sacramental offering. He presents the only example of that rite to be found anciently. Joseph Smith revises verses 17 and 18 in his New Translation of the Bible to read "be break bread and blest it; and he blest the wine" thus making clear the sacramental character of the feast. Here Joseph Smith and the early Catholics agree in identifying an exercise of a priestly function. The Catholics see Melchizedek as a type of Christ and later would

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4This book is called by other titles including: The Inspired Version, The Inspired Revision, but Joseph Smith referred to it as the New Translation, hence we adopt this title. See Bibliography for edition consulted.
insist on the bread and wine's transubstantiational character. Joseph Smith sees the incident as an early exercise of priesthood by a priest-king of an eternal priesthood line, the feast as a symbolic act pre-figuring the sacrifice embodied in Jesus Christ Himself. The bread and wine sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ which he later gave to the Apostles in Jerusalem and the Nephites on this hemisphere constitute another example of this.

In this regard it is interesting to compare the mode of sacrament in III Nephi with what might have been the mode of Melchizedek's sacrifice. In the III Nephi account the bread and wine are blessed and distributed on two different occasions (chapters 18 and 20). The first time Jesus broke the bread and blessed it, giving it first to his chosen disciples (whom we would compare to the apostles in Jerusalem), commanding them to eat. When they had eaten "and were filled" he commanded them to give to the multitude and when they had eaten and "were filled" he told them that he would ordain one among them and give him power that "he shall break bread and bless it and give it unto the people of my church."5 (Was Melchizedek an earlier "one"?) He goes on to bless the wine, giving it to the disciples first, until they are "filled" and then commanding them to give to the multitude who drank until they were "filled." One wonders whether this was a physical fullness as well as a spiritual one. It is not difficult to see Melchizedek as one who was given this power, distributing bread and wine in the same pattern to Abraham and his retainers.

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5 Book of Mormon, III Nephi 18:1-14.
The second account in III Nephi is much the same except that Jesus teaches by example as he, first, breaks the bread and blesses it, giving it first to his disciples, then commands them to break the bread for the multitude and distribute it. (The next logical step would be for them to bless it as well.) They distribute the wine just as in the first instance. This second account also differs in that the bread and wine are miraculously provided so that the disciples are not sent away for it. Also, He gave further teachings regarding its purpose in III Nephi 20:8.

And he said unto them: He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled.

In speaking of the law of sacrifice, Joseph Smith says:

We all admit that the Gospel has ordinances, and if so, had it not always ordinances, and were not its ordinances always the same.\(^6\) ... whenever the Lord revealed himself to men in ancient days, and commanded them to offer sacrifice to Him, ... it was done that they might look forward in faith to the time of His [Christ's] coming, and rely upon the power of that atonement for a remission of their sins. ... we may conclude that though there were different dispensations, yet all things which God communicated to His people were calculated to draw their minds to the great object, and to teach them to rely upon God alone as the author of their salvation. ...\(^7\)

II. The second idea embodies elements of a "fulness" and "keys"; a kind of ruling authority or kingship. Both terms—"kings and priests" --are used when referring to Melchizedek, only this time they are used in the plural, suggesting that others have or will hold these same


\(^7\)Ibid., p. 60-61.
keys. They will have the power to bless, thus we note Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham is in context. This function of priesthood, i.e. one man's blessing another, stands out in bold relief from earlier biblical accounts where a man's contact with God is direct and frontal. Even Abraham's earlier experiences fall into this category. His great desire for the priesthood, as described in the Pearl of Great Price (Abraham 1:2-5) led him to seek one who had that power and could dispense it.

... I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. ... I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed. My fathers having turned from their righteousness...

III. In the third concept Joseph Smith speaks of the "oath and covenant" of the Priesthood of Melchizedek. It is distinguished from the Levitical Priesthood "made without an oath."

The concept of covenant has far reaching implications. Mendenhall's interest in covenant relationship has resulted in a new model for understanding the conquest of Palestine. He rejects the unilinear evolutionary pattern of development from nomad to village to city-state

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8 In a discussion of "this greater priesthood" in Doctrines and Covenants 84:19-26 we read that it administers the Gospel and holds the "key of the mysteries of the kingdom" and of "seeing God face to face." Verses 25 and 26 read "... he took Moses out of their midst and the Holy Priesthood also and the lesser priesthood continued ..." This may explain the diminished importance of Melchizedek after the time of Moses.
and sees instead a covenant relationship uniting "a mixed multitude" to Yahweh. He describes it thus:

The Hebrew conquest of Palestine took place because a religious movement and motivation created solidarity among a large group of pre-existent social units, which was able to challenge and defeat the disfunctional complex of cities dominating the whole of Palestine and Syria at the end of the Bronze Age.  

He sees the Exodus resulting in a need for supportive social and political institutions.

Without any other community upon which they could rely for protection and support, they established a relationship with a deity, Yahweh, who had no antecedents except in human traditions about ways in which God manifested himself to human beings. . . common loyalty to a single Overlord, and obligations to common and simple group of norms created the community. . .

Although Mendenhall sees this as a natural, human response to need, it could also be interpreted as an intervention by Yahweh. Yahweh thus met Moses face to face as one man meets another in the same pattern initiated earlier and remembered in the "human traditions" cited above. Mendenhall describes Abraham's period as a time of small, competing city-state kingdoms, ruled by kings who are constantly fighting their neighbor kings. The picture in Genesis 14 certainly concurs with this view adding only the element of alliances between the kings of the north and the kings of the south. But given this picture, Melchizedek is an anachronism. Adopting Mendenhall's model of a "covenant keeping" society which would unite such disparate elements, Melchizedek could

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10Ibid., p. 107.
have been one of the early guardians of the "covenant." This would explain his having been known as the King of Peace or the King of Righteousness; keeper of a covenant with the Most High God. The perfection of his people as mentioned in Alma adds evidence to such a theory. (Alma 13:18) Mendenhall summarizes the contrast between covenant and law in the following ways: 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVENANT</th>
<th>LAW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose: To create new relationships in accordance with stipulations given in advance (cf. Marriage).</td>
<td>To regulate existing relationships by orderly means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanction: Punishment and reward meted out by powers not under human control, namely, God: curses and blessings.</td>
<td>Punishment defined by and administered by social organs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms: Undefined except by the fear of God (conscience) of the actor.</td>
<td>Defined by society, and in formal terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binding: By voluntary act of individual, usually ritual in nature.</td>
<td>By enactment of legitimate social power, regardless of individual's attitude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity: Unlimited, since it is bound to the individual wherever he may be.</td>
<td>Territorially bound—no validity beyond the boundary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Reference: Future—it is a solemn promise as to future behavior.</td>
<td>Past—it does not operate as a social reality until a violation has taken place; it has a future orientation only in that it is a prediction of what courts will do in the case of a past violation, and therefore may be a deterrent to prescribed forms of behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure: Recognized in the dynamics of historical process</td>
<td>Ritual form prescribed in advance by society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The difference between the purpose of covenant and law is significant when applying the distinction to the relationship which existed between Melchizedek and Abraham. One is reminded of Abraham's conversation with the King of Sodom where he says he has "raised his hand", promising not to take any of the booty; an ideal example of a stipulation in advance. It is interesting to speculate as to whether Abraham may have made that earlier covenant with God before Melchizedek.

The sanctions which Mendenhall asserts for the covenant-makers also bring to mind the relationship of Melchizedek with Abraham. Mendenhall speaks of curses and blessings, both of which are included in Melchizedek's blessing to Abraham. When he blessed Abraham, the victor, he also spoke of his enemies having been delivered into his hand, which resulted in a curse upon them.

The voluntary act of Abraham in not keeping the booty demonstrated the binding nature of the covenant he had taken and held out promise for future expectation on the part of the King of Sodom, who was clearly not his friendliest ally (given the problems Lot had known in the wicked city of that King).

Abraham is the picture of a righteous man, bound by covenants even at this early stage of his life. (In fact the next recorded incident in Genesis after the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek is the covenant ceremony in which Abraham divides the birds and animals before the Lord.) According to the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price he was a man of faith and earnestly sought the covenants of his fathers which he equated with the priesthood.

IV. This leads directly to the results of Abraham's search for the priesthood and the fourth idea: Melchizedek has power and authority
over Abraham, taught or instructed Abraham concerning the Priesthood and ultimately ordained Abraham a High Priest.

Here, we must meet the question of the relationship which existed between these two ancients. Is it possible that Melchizedek and Abraham were allies, joined together in some sort of alliance for war? If this were the case, the bread and wine could be construed to be part of the alliance ceremony. But alliances were built from positions of strength and surely a lone king with no retainers mentioned presents a position of weakness, yet Abraham, backed by a small army, submitted himself to Melchizedek. An alliance ceremony also seems unlikely since Abraham was returning from a fight, not going to one. It would also seem reasonable to expect that the mention of the King of Sodom and Abraham's negotiations with him, could have included Melchizedek had they been allies. And it does not in the account as we have it.

The New Translation adds a second blessing by Melchizedek after the negotiations with the King of Sodom, as if Abraham's magnanimous act in returning all but the tithe and what the young men had eaten was to be commended. The further explanation in the passages that follow in The New Translation tell of the righteousness and peacefulness of Melchizedek which would explain a positive reaction by him to a peaceful act on Abraham's part. (The New Translation, Gen. 14:25)

It might be suggested that the abrupt appearance of Melchizedek posits for a meeting of two strangers, perhaps as Abraham finds himself crossing another man's dira or kingdom enroute back from Dan. Ancient custom included paying for that privilege. Safe conduct was then assured across the entire stretch of land. The whole confrontation could be seen in that light. Melchizedek's bringing of bread and wine could have
been the same kind of hospitality Abraham demonstrated with his "three guests." But if the hospitality rules of the Bedouin parallel Abraham's welcome to the "three," Melchizedek left out the most important element: the fatted calf or at least a lamb. It is to be remembered that Melchizedek was a King and therefore likely had a palace or stronghold in a nearby city. Why would he come to the plain with his hospitality when he could entertain safely within his stronghold? Particularly when Abraham came with a fighting force behind him, why did he choose to meet him outside of his city? If Melchizedek were merely asking tribute for crossing his kingdom would he not have sent an emissary rather than go himself? And why was his priesthood mentioned? Certainly the payment of a tithe could be held to be the tribute paid, but if he knew he was going to return everything to the King of Sodom wouldn't he have referred any bills to him? Why should he tithe on something he would not in a matter of moments own. If the blessing had come after the tithe it might have been some kind of an acceptance formula. But the blessing came first and the tithe afterwards. This implies more of a cultic tie, a priesthood relationship, if you will. Coupled with the exchange between Abraham and the King of Sodom, it hints of a previous covenant, perhaps made before the fight to this Melchizedek, wherein Abraham had raised his hand (Anchor Bible reads, "I have sworn to Yahweh, God Most High, Creator of Heaven and earth, that I would not take so much as a thread or a sandal strap...") in token that he would not take anything that belonged to that king. (Note herein a possible foreshadowing of the like covenants of the Israelites of the Conquest which they did not abide.)
Were Abraham and Melchizedek kindred? In the Pearl of Great Price Abraham tells of his fathers having "turned from their righteousness and from the holy commandments". When Jehovah himself spoke to Abraham he tells him the reason he will lead him to another land is "because they have turned their hearts away from me..." which implies that at one time their hearts were turned toward him. Jehovah goes on to say:

Behold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father and my power shall be over thee. As it was with Noah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God.12

Noah was indeed his forefather and now Jehovah promises Abraham his Priesthood "from the fathers" which must mean that Melchizedek was kindred, for he, too, received the Priesthood in the same way. Abraham goes on to explain how his father was led away by the imitation priesthood of the Egyptians. Then he tells of another appearance of Jehovah in answer to his and Lot's prayer. This time he received the "promise" or what could be called the "Blessings of Abraham." (Abraham 2:6-11) Herein Abraham is promised that the hands of his seed "shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations:

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, Thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.

Thus, the blessing of Melchizedek to Abraham echoes the blessing of

Jehovah when it begins, "Blessed be Abraham by the Most High God," and The New Translation continues, ". . . thou art a man of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and of earth, and blessed is the name of the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand."\(^\text{13}\) Here Joseph Smith makes clear that it is Abraham who is to be possessor of heaven and earth along with Jehovah. The King James Version is ambiguous on this point.

Melchizedek’s lineage is a subject for much debate. From Alma we have learned of his father who was a king before him. The Doctrine and Covenants sheds a bit more light in Section 84:14-17:

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... which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah; and from Noah till Enoch through the lineage of their father, and from Enoch to Abel ... which priesthood continueth in the church of God in all generations, and is without beginning of days or end of years. . .
\]

This passage establishes Melchizedek’s relationship to Noah "through the lineage of his fathers" which rules out his being Shem. The few generations separating both Melchizedek and Abraham from Noah would surely mean that they were not too distantly related, especially since both share a common priesthood tradition "from the fathers." Helaman 8:18 may contain another wisp of information:

\[
... Abraham not only knew of these things (the coming of Christ), but there were many before the days of Abraham who were called by the order of God; yea even after the order of his Son; and this that it should be shown unto the people, a great many thousand years before his coming, that even redemption should come unto them.
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In The New Translation we learn of his call (Genesis 14:26-29):

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Now Melchizedek was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire. And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch, it being after the order of the Son of God; which order came not by man, nor the will of man; neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but by God; and it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name.

Here it is the priesthood which is without father or mother and not Melchizedek as in the biblical accounts. One can see how a scribal error or editing for a purpose could have dropped out the intervening information. In this passage "he was ordained a high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch." Thus an earlier antecedent for Mendenhall's model using the covenant is established in Enoch. Combining this passage with the Helaman passage a pattern emerges of priesthood and Gospel, hand in hand, established from the beginning of time to forshadow the coming of the Son of God, imbued for the task with His very power.

Did Melchizedek instruct Abraham concerning the Priesthood?

Joseph Smith says yes. Jewish traditions agree (see Jewish Traditions above) although the Jewish traditions suggest that he instructed him in Torah as well. What instructions did he give Abraham? Joseph Smith taught that the Melchizedek priesthood was:

"a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam. Abraham says to Melchizedek, I believe all that thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away. Abraham rejoiced, saying Now I have a priesthood."14

Thus, according to Joseph Smith, Melchizedek taught Abraham of the coming of the Christ, the law of theocracy, and how to administer endless lives. Joseph Smith also taught in this same section on priesthood that the priesthood is as eternal as God himself; that the Holy Ghost is God's messenger to administer in all God's priesthhoods; that Jesus Christ is the heir of this kingdom and holds the keys over all this world. These matters may well have been taken up by Melchizedek as he instructed Abraham. Surely he could tell him of his pursuit of peace and righteousness and the success he had experienced in bringing his people to repentance. There is no way to know what wisdom passed between them but the exercise of Priesthood power would require instruction as to its rightful use. One might also surmise that Melchizedek taught him of the oath and covenant which the priesthood entailed. Surely he taught him of the covenant.

Melchizedek became known to Abraham as one who had the priesthood he so earnestly sought. In Doctrine and Covenants 84:14 it is related that Abraham did receive the priesthood from Melchizedek. It would have to be postulated that the bestowal of the priesthood either took place at an earlier or later meeting between the two or that those details of the Genesis 14 meeting are missing. The blessing of Melchizedek to Abraham, including as it did the formula Jehovah had used previously, recognized who Abraham was. If this was the time of ordination, it would seem odd to partake of a sacramental meal before such an important ordinance. But there is no precedent for comparison, therefore it could have been in any order. The fact of Abraham's paying tithes to Melchizedek opts for Melchizedek's authority over Abraham. Certainly the Jews and Christians found the passage
ambiguous as they sought to prove the ascendancy of their particular champion by deciding who paid tithes to whom. Joseph Smith adds (Genesis 14:37, The New Translation) that Melchizedek was the "keeper of the storehouse of God" which might add to his position of authority over Abraham. But in much the same way as John the Baptist had authority to baptize the Christ but was not thereby greater than He, Melchizedek had the authority to give Abraham the priesthood which he held but was not thereby automatically greater. The very nature of priesthood is stewardship: the use of God's power to serve others. Therefore, one man's service to another even in ordination to the priesthood cannot point out the greater of the two. Thus the Jewish-Christian debate is without merit. Perhaps what needs saying is that Melchizedek had the Priesthood before Abraham did. But since this Priesthood is eternal both will have it forever, so who will ultimately care?

Other interesting additions in The New Translation which are reminiscent of earlier cited traditions are the statements in verses 32-36 which read:

And men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven. And now, Melchizedek was a priest of this order; therefore he obtained peace in Salem, and was called the Prince of peace. And his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world; and hath said, and sworn with an oath, that the heavens and the earth should come together; and the sons of God should be tried so as by fire. And this Melchizedek, having thus established righteousness, was called the king of Heaven by his people, or, in other words, the King of peace.

Here one has a hint of the apocalyptic figure spoken of at Qumran and Nag Hammadi. It is also interesting to compare this to Doctrine and
Covenants 19:1-3 which refers to Christ—especially the last verse which reads:

Retaining all power, even to the destroying of Satan and his works at the end of the world, and the last great day of judgment, which I shall pass upon the inhabitants thereof, judging every man according to his works and the deeds which he hath done.

This sounds like the apocalyptic Melchizedek of the Qumran writing; the vanquisher of Satan or Belial, the one who takes part in the judgment, the Messiah figure called Melchizedek, all these have a familiar ring.

Next we should consider the Melchizedek referred to in the epistle to the Hebrews. Many have speculated as to the recipients of that epistle and have asked: to which Hebrews was the letter addressed? Yadin tries to prove that:

The addressees of the Epistle must have been a group of Jews originally belonging to the Dead Sea Sect who were converted to Christianity carrying with them some of their previous beliefs.  

The immortal character of Melchizedek in the Epistle would surely appeal to such a group whose previous speculations had given Melchizedek a celestial role. Spicq makes this comment:

A royal and eternal priesthood is not affected by death. He who has received it does not have to transfer his function to another; . . .

Paul makes no mention of the meaning of Melchizedek's life as he is more concerned with the discussion of Christ's eternal priesthood.

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Jean Hering, in writing on the Epistle, wonders whether the lack of detail concerning his life may not mean that he was transported to heaven like Enoch and Elijah. 17

Thus the scribes at Qumran and Nag Hammadi and the apostle Paul cross paths with Joseph Smith and Melchizedek. Although Joseph Smith may have been a student of the writings of Paul, the work of the Qumran and Nag Hammadi scribes was still rolled up in jars which waited in caves to be discovered over a hundred years after the death of Joseph Smith.

For Joseph Smith, Melchizedek was a man who lived at the time of Abraham and from whom Abraham received the priesthood. He was king over a land called Salem. Melchizedek was himself a man of great faith, who wrought righteousness. As a child he had feared God, had power over lions, and even quenched fire. He was approved of God, and ordained a High Priest after the covenant of Enoch which was after the order of the Son of God. 18 His power came by faith and held sway over the physical elements of the earth including dividing seas (like Moses), breaking mountains, and drying up waters. He also had power over armies of nations, and his power included that ability to stand in the presence of God. Men with these powers, having this faith, and belonging to

17 Delcor, op. cit., p. 127

18 The Son of God is referred to twice in the Book of Mormon as the "son of righteousness". In II Nephi 26:9: "But the Son of righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them, and they shall have peace with him, until three generations shall have passed away, and many of the fourth generation shall have passed away in righteousness." Ether 9:22: "... yea, and he even saw the Son of Righteousness, and did rejoice and glory in his day; and he died in peace."
this order of God, were indeed, translated and taken up into heaven. Though he had dealt with a wicked people he had taught them repentance and had obtained righteousness and peace in his land and among his people. He was the keeper of the storehouse of God, receiving tithes from the people, including Abraham, to be used for the poor. His people called him the king of heaven or the King of peace. Finally, he administered ordinances which were calculated to point the people forward towards the Son of God who would come.
Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

Having completed an overview of the world of Melchizedek and of four thousand years of tradition and commentary, we are prepared to identify the common elements which emerge from this study.

The evidence points to the following generalizations:

Melchizedek was king of a small city-state which was part of a culture far advanced from the primitive. He moved in a world which had already seen the rise and fall of thriving civilizations. Archaeologists have provided ample evidence of the high level of development which preceded the time of Melchizedek. His own time was characterized by the ebb and flow of political unrest. Egyptian control of Canaan was declining while none of the Mesopotamian states were strong enough to predominate. Tribal chiefs like Abraham led their people through the thinly populated areas from Shechem to the Negev, grazing their flocks and engaging in some commerce with the settled, city-state dwellers in the fertile Jordan Valley and Plain of Esdraelon. These settled tribes were governed by kings who were often priests, as well.

Melchizedek may have been one of the kings who divided his attention between a nomadic tribal confederacy and the city-state which was his headquarters. The fact that he did not entertain Abraham in his palace or stronghold leads to the speculation that he was such a king, comfortable in a nomadic setting as well as in a palace. King

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Melchizedek was very unlike King Solomon. Their kingdoms differed vastly in size as well as other aspects. Instead, it is reasonable to think of Melchizedek as ruler of a city-state called Salem, or the land of Salem as Alma denotes it. Such city-states may have had small, surrounding villages as satellites but fall far short of empire. Some scholars characterized the kings of the period as warriors. But if Melchizedek were such a king it would be peculiar for him to be called a King of Righteousness or a King of Peace, recalling that these two epithets attach themselves to him in nearly all the traditions. The eschatological warrior of Qumran and Nag Hammadi is the only exception. Perhaps the brevity of the Genesis account omits comment on this side of his nature, recording only his more important function as priest. Even the story of Abraham's battle with the kings of the north is almost an anomaly in Genesis for we never again see Abraham taking up arms. This points to the possibility that only the functions deemed of paramount importance were highlighted by the ancient Genesis historian. That historian left no doubt as to Melchizedek's priestly role.

Melchizedek was a priest-king, presiding over the cult as well as the state. Frankfort maintains that the kings of Palestine were not the leaders in the cult. This study found, however, that the tribal chief or king was a father-figure to the tribe, and was the natural leader of the cult. The people prized kinship and extended that kinship back to their god whom they referred as actual father of their race. David patterned his kingship after an ancient royal tradition which likely included Melchizedek. The fact that David chose Jerusalem for his capitol and Zadok for his chief priest prompted Rowley's comparison of Abraham-Melchizedek and David-Zadok. David's idea of kingship
included priesthood. He wore the ephod or priestly garment and officiated in religious rites. The title of priest, the bringing of bread and wine, the accepting of tithes, the blessing given to Abraham, all point to Melchizedek as a priest as well as a king.

There is no consensus among scholars concerning the meaning of his name but "Sedeq (a name for God) is my King" is a possible translation. This translation provides for some interesting comparisons. The Jewish tradition included in The Soncino Chumash (see Chapter 4 page 59) describes Melchizedek as king over a place famed for its righteousness [sedeq] and where one day a temple would be built wherein would dwell the "Divine Presence which is called Tsedek." This reference to the Jewish deity as "tsedek" [ṣedeq] leads to the conclusion that, along with God's many other superlative names, "ṣedeq" may have been among the most ancient. Two interesting comparisons to such an appellation are found in The Book of Mormon where Jesus Christ is called the "Son of Righteousness". In II Nephi 26:9 we read, "But the Son of righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them and they shall have peace with him." Ether 9:22 includes the same title in describing the end of Emer's reign: "... and he even saw the Son of Righteousness, and did rejoice and glory in his day; and he died in peace." Theophoric names characterized the time of Melchizedek so it is to be expected that his name could include the name of the god he worshiped. And if his God were the source of a royal priesthood and promised an eternal kingship, what better name for his servant than Melchizedek.

Melchizedek's city-state was named Salem and of the four plausible geographical locations postulated, the Salem-Shechem theory leaves
fewer problems. Shechem was the first city mentioned in the Genesis narrative when Abraham entered the land of Canaan. Abraham's identification with the area would make it possible to postulate an earlier meeting in addition to the one brief encounter recorded in Genesis. Although Abraham often traveled the main highways of the day, and although those highways intersect all but one of the four possible Salems, Abraham's first altar was built at the Oak of Moreh near Shechem. It is worth noting that the names Salem and Melchizedek are absent from the Egyptian Excommunication Texts of the period. This could mean that Melchizedek was indeed a king of peace and had no wartime encounters with Egypt. Jerusalem is the most popular identification for Salem. But the evidence from the early period does not warrant that conclusion. Alma refers to Melchizedek as "a king over the land of Salem". If Jerusalem and Salem were synonomous, Alma would surely have referred to Jerusalem, the land of his forefather, Lehi. Since he did not we must assume that his 600 B.C. text did not include that identification.

Melchizedek's God, 'El 'elyon; God Most High, was none other than Yahweh, who was known by many names, all of which point to a superlative god above other gods: the one true God. Abraham worshiped this same God. In a land of many local deities, it is logical that a people worshiping one true god would search for epithets to demonstrate his superiority above all others. These many names may have been due to differing dialects of their spoken language. Albright assures us "that the Patriarchs worshiped God under various names..." (see footnote No. 41 in Chapter 3). The earliest pre-Patriarchal concepts of God in the Hebrew religion are of a "father-God" who is literally
the progenitor of the race. Although he was the "Most High" and had all power he watched over his people as the members of his family. The blessing of Abraham by Melchizedek furthers the proposition that they worshiped the same God. Abraham's identification of 'El 'elyon with Yahweh in Genesis 14:22 signifies that 'El 'elyon was another title for Yahweh.

The Jewish traditions identify Melchizedek with Shem and Salem with Jerusalem. They also subordinate Melchizedek to Abraham and see the priesthood of Melchizedek passing to Abraham. This stance was forced upon them because of Christian polemic which Melchizedek ushered into the Christian fold. The Jews were forced to contend that the Levitical Priesthood was the inheritor of the priestly kingship of Melchizedek. Joseph Smith overlaps with some of the traditions of the Jews. He also taught that Melchizedek ordained Abraham to the priesthood (Doctrine and Covenants 84:14). But he parts company with them when they champion the cause of the Levitical Priesthood and forget that there was ever a higher order. His teachings describe a strict line of demarcation between the two priesthods, each having its own duties and responsibilities, with the Melchizedek Priesthood holding the right of presidency. He denotes those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood as "kings and priests of the Most High God." Although Melchizedek personified such a priestly king, the Jews lost sight of him. The Dead Sea Scrolls reawakened a two thousand year old concern, presenting a heavenly, eschatological, messianic Melchizedek. This characterization may have arisen to champion the cause of their Zadokite priestly caste or may have actually embodied ancient traditions which they had conserved and which have since been lost to us.
The Christians claimed Melchizedek as the type for Christ and his priesthood, and thus forged their own link to antiquity. The early Christian Fathers first squared off against the Jews and then countered the heretics in their midst by focusing on Melchizedek. He became a symbol of the Eucharist, entered the Mass, and Male labels him the most famous of all types of Christ in Christian art. The Melchizedek art included in this study is a visible manifestation of Catholic theology of each succeeding period represented. Luther puts Melchizedek to his own use as he contended with the Catholic Church over the composition of the Eucharist. Thereafter, Christian concern for Melchizedek faded. That interest may revive, at least on an academic level, when the Nag Hammadi Melchizedek materials are published. At Nag Hammadi we find another apocalyptic Melchizedek as at Qumran, only this time he is closely identified with Jesus Christ. Although the Gnostics have been uniformly labeled anti-Christian, these new Nag Hammadi materials deserve careful study for the possibility looms that their secret doctrine could have contained some of the core of original Christianity.

Three hundred years after the last excitement over Melchizedek had quieted, and with no polemic to motivate him, Joseph Smith contributed considerable information about Melchizedek and his priesthood. Many of his assertions are not inconsistent with the other traditions, as noted above. Moreover, he adds material for which there is no known tradition. His teachings parallel the early Christians who took Melchizedek as a type of Christ. He asserts that before his time, Melchizedek's priesthood was known as the priesthood after the order of the Son of God. Joseph Smith explained that because he was such a
great high priest this higher priesthood was renamed after him. This was done to avoid the too frequent repetition of God's name. (A plausible thing to do in the historical context of a people who later refused to even write the letters of God's name, because it was too sacred, replacing them with a code word.) Where the Jews had urged the Levitical Priesthood and the Christians had argued for one supreme priesthood, Joseph Smith defined three orders of priesthood each with its own rights and duties. He showed where the Melchizedek or highest priesthood encompassed all others and held the keys of presidency. He taught that "those holding the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessing." He explained the worrisome passages on Melchizedek's parentage by pointing out that "The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right from the eternal God, and not by descent from father and mother; and that priesthood is as eternal as God Himself, having neither beginning of days nor end of life". (TPJS p. 322-23) He contrasted the Levitical Priesthood with the Melchizedek because the former was made "without an oath" while the latter is "by an oath and covenant". That covenant was to help the people perfect themselves and is the part of temple worship which differs distinctly from the Jewish law in exactly the ways Mendenhall describes above. Joseph Smith admonished his people to "Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood." Thus he connected the priesthood of Melchizedek with temple ceremonies. The Nag Hammadi materials contribute significantly here as they focus upon the importance of a ritual name, a ritual garment, and an Eden narrative which could hark back to an ancient ritual drama. Both
Joseph Smith and the scribe from Nag Hammadi perceive Jesus Christ and Melchizedek\(^1\) as great high priests of God Most High, who, in perfect pattern, prevail and endure into a messianic age to come.

\(^1\)Joseph Smith, Jr., The Holy Scriptures, Inspired Version, Hebrews 5:7-8 are enclosed in parenthesis. The footnote reads: "The 7th and 8th verses allude to Melchizedek and not to Christ--I.V.MS."
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APPENDIX A

MAPS
PALESTINE
AT THE TIME OF
MELCHIZEDEK

The
Great Sea

Meggido
Bethel
Jericho
Jerusalem
Hebron
Mount of the Lord's
Altar of Abraham

BASHAN

HAZOR

MOAB

Beersheba

Dan

Vadamus

10 20 30 Miles

Altar of Abraham
APPENDIX B

The Texts
APPENDIX B

Summary Chart of Melchizedek in the Texts

Texts

Genesis 14:18-24
Psalm 110
Hebrews 5
Hebrews 7
11Q Melchizedek from Dead Sea Scrolls
Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I
Nag Hammadi Melchizedek Tractate
   (Not yet published – working copy of Birger A. Pearson, University of California at Santa Barbara, consulted)

Book of Mormon; Alma 13:6-20
Doctrine and Covenants 76:56-57
Doctrine and Covenants 84:14-28
Doctrine and Covenants 107:1-4
Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible
   Genesis 14:17-40
Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith
### SUMMARY CHART OF MECHIZIDKEN IN THE TEXTS

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Genesis 14: 18-24

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

23 That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.
Psalm 110

1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall be lift up the head.
Hebrews 5

1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.
Hebrews 6

1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

3 And this will we do, if God permit.

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dress, receiveth blessing from God:

8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself,

14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.
15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high preist for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
Hebrews 7

1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham and blessed him that had the promises.

7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.
14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in or a better hope did; by the which we draw high unto God.

20 And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:

21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.
(1) ........................ your (?) ................
(2) ............ and that which He says: In this year of jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession, its interpretation .......... (3) and that which He says: Every creditor shall release that which he lent unto his neighbour nor of his brother, because he has proclaimed God's release (4) Its interpretation, at the end of days, concerns those in exile which.... he took captive (5) ....... their ............... and from the inheritance of Melchizedek.........their....
Melchizedek, who (6) will bring them back to them and he will proclaim liberty for them to set them free and (to?) make atonement for their sins .......this word (7) in the last year of jubilee.............??.......... that is ........ the tenth year of jubilee (8) to make atonement therein for all children of light and for the men of the lot of Melchizedek................... over them;?? ........ their ....... for (9) that is the time of the acceptable year of Melchizedek ............
God's holy ones to the reign of judgement, as it is written *(10) concerning him in the hymns of David who says: The heavenly one standeth in the congregation of God; among the heavenly ones he judgeth, and concerning him he says: Above them (11) return thou on high; God shall judge the nations. And that which he says: How long will ye judge unjustly and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah (12) Its interpretation concerns Belial and the spirits of his lot which...... ?? ...... of God??....... (13) and Melchizedek will avenge with the vengeance of the judgements of God.... ....... from the hand of Belial and from the hand of all the spirits of his lot. (14) And to his help are all the heavenly ones on high. He ...................
all mighty men and .......... (15) this. That is the day of slaughter (?) and that which He says concerning the end of days by means of Isaiah the prophet who says: How beautiful (16) upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that pub-
iseth salvation, that saith unto Zion: Thy heavenly one is King, (17) its interpretation: The mountains will give their yield (?) ........... for all .........

*(10) My translation:
* concerning him in the songs of David, who said, Elohim (Mel-
chizedek) standeth in the assemble of El (Highest God) in the midst of the Elohim (Gods in the court of God) he judgeth...
** my italics
(18) And he that bringeth good tidings: That is the anointed by the Spirit, from whom He (?) says........ and that which He says: He that bringeth good tidings of good, (19) that publisheth salvation: that is which is written concerning him, that He says........ (20) to comfort........ he will instruct them concerning all the times of wrath........ (21) in (?) truth........ (22) ............ (23) ............ .... she (?) turns away from Belial and she (?) ...... (24) ............ through the judgements of God, as is written concerning him: He that saith to Zion: Thy heavenly one is king. Zion, that are .... (25)........... those who establish the covenant, who have turned away from going on the way of the people, and thy heavenly one, that is ...... (26) ............ Belial.

And that which He says: Ye shall cause the alarm-trumpet to be blown in the seventh month........... Lev. 25:9

12. the captives which they had taken he brought back. The king of Sodom heard that Abram had brought back all the captives

13. and all the booty and he went up to meet him. He came to Salem, that is Jerusalem, while Abram was camped in the Valley of

14. Shaveh - this is the Vale of the King, the Valley of Beth-hac-cherem. Melchizedek, the king of Salem, brought out

15. food and drink for Abram and for all the men who were with him; he was a priest of the Most High God and he blessed

16. Abram and said, "Blessed be Abram by the Most High God, the Lord of heaven and earth. Blessed be the Most High God

17. who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all the flocks of the king of Elam and his confederates.

18. Then the king of Sodom approached Abram and said, "My Lord, Abram,

19. give me the men that are mine who are captives with you and whom you have rescued from the king of Elam;

20. all the goods (are) left for you." Abram then answered the king of Sodom, "I raise

21. my hand (in oath) this day to the Most High God, the Lord of heaven and earth, that I shall not take so much as a thread or
a sandal strap

22. from anything that is yours lest you say, 'From my possessions (comes) all of Abram's wealth' --

23. except for what my young men who are with me have already eaten, and except for the portion of the three men who

24. went with me; they are masters over their portions, to give it to you (or not)." Then Abram returned all the goods and all

25. the captives and gave (them) to the king of Sodom. All the captives who were with him from this land he set free

26. and sent them all away.

The Nag Hammadi Melchizedek Tractate

The Nag Hammadi Melchizedek Tractate has not yet been published. (The author has consulted Birger A. Pearson's working copy.)

James M. Robinson The Nag Hammadi Library (NY, Harper: 1977) p.399-403
6. And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest --

7. This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things --

8. Now they were ordained after this manner -- being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order, which calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without beginning or end --

9. Thus they become high priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth. And thus it is. Amen.

10. Now, as I said concerning the holy order of this high priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish;

11. Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.

12. Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceeding great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

13. And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest.

14. Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever.
15. And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed.

16. Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord.

17. Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness;

18. But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father.

19. Now, there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater; therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention.

20. Now I need not rehearse the matter; what I have said may suffice. Behold, the scriptures are before you; if ye will wrest them it shall be to your own destruction.
56. They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

57. And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.
14. Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah;

15. And from Noah till Enoch, through the lineage of their fathers;

16. And from Enoch to Abel, who was slain by the conspiracy of his brother, who received the priesthood by the commandments of God, by the hand of his father Adam, who was the first man—

17. Which priesthood continueth in the church of God in all generations, and is without beginning of days or end of years.

18. And the Lord confirmed a priesthood also upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations, which priesthood also continueth and abideth forever with the priesthood which is after the holiest order of God.

19. And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

20. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

21. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh.

22. For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

23. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God;

24. But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory.

25. Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also;

26. And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel;
27. Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments, which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John, whom God raised up, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb.

28. For he was baptized while he was yet in his childhood, and was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power.
1. There are, in the church, two priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic, including the Levitical Priesthood.

2. Why the first is called the Melchizedek Priesthood is because Melchizedek was such a great high priest.

3. Before his day it was called the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God.

4. But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek, or the Melchizedek Priesthood.
Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible

Genesis 14: 17-40

17 And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he break bread and blest it; and he blest the wine, he being the priest of the most high God,

18 And he gave to Abram, and he blessed him, and said, Blessed Abram, thou art a man of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth;

19 And blessed is the name of the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand.

20 And Abram gave him tithes of all he had taken.

21 And the king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth.

23 And have sworn that I will not take of thee from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, (lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich;)

24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Ener, Eschol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

25 And Melchizedek lifted up his voice and blessed Abram.

26 Now Melchizedek was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire.

27 And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch,

28 It being after the order of the Son of God; which order came, not by man, nor the will of man; neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God;

29 And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name.
30 For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course;

31 To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things according to his will, according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world.

32 And men having this faith coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven.

33 And now, Melchizedek was a priest of this order; therefore he obtained peace in Salem, and was called the Prince of peace.

34 And his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world;

35 And hath said, and sworn with an oath that the heavens and the earth should come together; and the sons of God should be tried so as by fire.

36 And this Melchizedek, having thus established righteousness was called the king of heaven by his people, or, in other words, the King of peace.

37 And he lifted up his voice, and he blessed Abram, being the high priest, and the keeper of the storehouse of God;

38 Him whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor.

39 Wherefore, Abram paid unto him tithes of all that he had, of all the riches which he possessed, which God had given him more than that which he had need.

40 And it came to pass, that God blessed Abram, and gave unto him riches, and honor, and lands for an everlasting possession; according to the covenant which he had made, and according to the blessing wherewith Melchizedek had blessed him.
President Joseph Smith, Jun., addressed the assembly and said, the Melchizedek High Priesthood was no other than the Priesthood of the Son of God; that there are certain ordinances which belong to the Priesthood, from which flow certain results; and the Presidents or Presidency are over the Church; and revelations of the mind and will of God to the Church, are to come through the Presidency. This is the order of heaven, and the power and privilege of this Priesthood. (p. 111)

THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD HOLDS ALL AUTHORITY

At the Conference, October, 1840

In order to investigate the subject of the Priesthood, so important to this, as well as every succeeding generation, I shall proceed to trace the subject as far as I possibly can from the Old and New Testaments.

There are two Priesthoods spoken of in the Scriptures, viz., the Melchizedek and the Aaronic or Levitical. Although there are two Priesthoods, yet the Melchizedek Priesthood comprehends the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood, and is the grand head, and holds the highest authority which pertains to the Priesthood, and the keys of the Kingdom of God in all ages of the world to the latest posterity on the earth; and is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation and every important matter is revealed from heaven.
Its institution was prior to "the foundation of this earth, or the morning stars sang together, or the Sons of God shouted for joy," and is the highest and holiest Priesthood, and is after the order of the Son of God, and all other Priesthoods are only parts, ramifications, powers and blessings belonging to the same, and are held, controlled, and directed by it. It is the channel through which the Almighty commenced revealing His glory at the beginning of the creation of this earth, and through which He has continued to reveal Himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which He will make known His purposes to the end of time. (p. 166)

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DIFFERENT DEGREES OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK

"Answer to the question, Was the Priesthood of Melchizedek taken away when Moses died? All Priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different portions or degrees of it. That portion which brought Moses to speak with God face to face was taken away; but that which brought the ministry of angels remained. All the prophets had the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by God Himself. (p. 180)

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The power of the Melchizedek Priesthood is to have the power of "endless lives;" for the everlasting covenant cannot be broken.

The law was given under Aaron for the purpose of pouring out judgments and destructions. (p. 322)
THREE GRAND ORDERS

There are three grand orders of priesthood referred to here.

1st. The King of Shiloam (Salem) had power and authority over that of Abraham, holding the key and the power of endless life. Angels desire to look into it, but they have set up too many stakes. God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last law from Moses.

The sacrifice required of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, shows that if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life; he must sacrifice all things. When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned. The Israelites prayed that God would speak to Moses and not to them; in consequence of which he cursed them with a carnal law.

What was the power of Melchizedek? 'Twas not the Priesthood of Aaron which administers in outward ordinances, and the offering of sacrifices. Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings. In fact, that Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam.

Abraham says to Melchizedek, I believe all that thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away. Abraham rejoiced, saying, Now I have a priesthood. (p. 322-323)
APPENDIX C

Additional Illustrations
Illustration No. 11

Illustration No. 12

Fernand Cabrol and Henri LeClerq, Dictionnaire D'Archeologie et de Liturgie, Paris: 1933 Volume II p. 239


Illustrations Nos. 13 and 14
Illustration No. 15

Illustration No. 16

Enlargement of Melchizedek at San Vitale
Illustration No. 17

Enlargement of Abel at San Vitale
MELCHIZEDEK, THE MAN AND THE TRADITION

Ann Nicholls Madsen

Interdepartmental Program in Ancient Studies

M. A. Degree, April 1975

ABSTRACT

The common elements which emerge from this study are: Melchizedek was a priest-king, ruling a small city-state and presiding over the cult. He lived among a people far advanced from the primitive. There is no consensus among scholars concerning the meaning of his name but "Sedeq (a name for God) is my King" is a possible translation. Melchizedek's city-state was named Salem and of the four plausible geographical locations postulated, the Salem-Shechem theory leaves fewer problems. Abraham and Melchizedek worshiped the same God who was known by several names, among which were 'El 'elyon, God Most High and Yahweh. All of these names point to a superlative god above all others. Jewish traditions identify Melchizedek with Shem and Salem with Jerusalem. They also subordinate Melchizedek to Abraham and see the priesthood lost by Melchizedek and passing to Abraham. The Christians claimed Melchizedek as the type for Christ and his priesthood, and thus forged their own link to antiquity. Joseph Smith's teachings parallel the early Christian traditions of Melchizedek as a type of Christ and other traditions on priestly kingship and ritual. He also defines orders in the priesthood.

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