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0521018714 - The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to
the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews

Fred L. Horton

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A CRITICAL EXAMINATION
OF THE SOURCES
TO THE FIFTH CENTURY A.D. AND
IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

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PREFACE

This study originated in a short paper which I presented to Professor W. D. Davies' seminar on the Epistle to the Hebrews in 1968 which dealt with the relationship between Qumran and Hebrews. That paper dealt at length with a fragmentary document from the Dead Sea which treated Melchizedek as a divine figure, and at the time the parallels between Hebrews and that document seemed irresistible to me. To find a definite parallel to Hebrews at Qumran which was not also to be found in other forms of the Judaism of the period opened the possibility for a new way of understanding Hebrews and suggested some new answers to old questions about the origin and background of the Epistle.

The first task, it seemed to me, was to establish the parallel between Qumran and Hebrews as to Melchizedek, and it was to this task that I turned when I began research for this present work which was to be my dissertation. In the fall of 1969 I presented another paper to the Biblical Studies Seminar at Duke University in which I attempted to give further evidence for the association of Hebrews and Qumran on the basis of the Melchizedek fragment from Qumran. Simply to have expanded this study, however, would have been to assume the correctness of my assumptions, and it was for that reason that I decided that I should attempt to show the development of Melchizedek speculation through the early centuries of the Christian era in an effort to relate Hebrews to an independent development of thought. In particular, I hoped to show a continuity of development which extended from the Old Testament, through Qumran, to later Christian, Jewish, and Gnostic thought. This would show clearly what I supposed to be the very close relationship between Hebrews and Qumran, at least on the subject of Melchizedek.

The scheme decided on at the beginning of my work has been retained, but the assumptions which lay behind it have been

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abandoned. As regards my initial assumptions the results of my study have been largely negative, but as those assumptions were being discarded, another result emerged which is described in the last chapter.

The scope of this book is greater than is usually the case for a New Testament work, but I have benefited from having a perspective, limited as it is, from which to view some of the important debates in early Christianity, Gnosticism, and Rabbinic Judaism. Also the work has allowed me a much needed review of the major emphases of the so-called Myth and Ritual School. Nevertheless, my final aim has been to produce a book which will clarify a major issue in the study of the Epistle to the Hebrews. I hope at a later time to continue the present work and apply it even more directly to Hebrews.

I should like to thank the Danforth Foundation and Duke University for providing me with the funds necessary to stay in residence while I completed the original version of this book as a dissertation. I do not have enough words of gratitude to express my appreciation for the help and encouragement given me by my research director, W. D. Davies. His abiding interest in his students is altogether remarkable, and I have benefited immeasurably from my association with him. I also appreciate deeply the great interest which Professor Orval Wintermute took in my work. Without his help the investigation of several topics dealing with Qumran and Gnosticism would have been greatly hampered. Professor Franklin Young was kind enough to read the portion of the dissertation dealing with the church fathers and to point out certain of the weaknesses in that section. Finally, I am greatly in the debt of Professor A. S. Van der Woude and Professor R. McL. Wilson who read the manuscript and offered many suggestions for corrections and additions. The many errors in this work are my own, but without the help of those named above those errors would have been much greater.

During the fall semester of 1971 Wake Forest University was privileged to have Dr Matthew Black as Visiting Professor of Religion. I am most grateful for this opportunity to know that great scholar and am grateful for his encouragement of my presenting this work for publication. Also I must thank Wake Forest University for providing me with funds to have the manuscript typed for the press.

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I have benefited greatly from the editorial abilities of my student assistant, Cathy L. Martin, who assisted me in correcting the master copy of this book for submission to the press. I am also indebted to her for suggestions as to how some of the material could be clarified.

Last of all I have to thank my wife Patricia, who more than once interrupted her own academic work to help me with the preparation of this study. Also I must thank my daughter, Christina, who spent so much of her time sitting on the sofa of my study, hampered by a broken leg and playing quietly while I worked on this book. To them this work is gratefully dedicated.

F.L.H.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- ANET*² *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed.
- ARN* *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*, ed. Schechter
- BA* *Biblical Archaeologist*
- BASOR* *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
- Bauer, *Lexicon* Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Arndt and Gingrich
- BDB* F. Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
- BZAW* Beihefte zur *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
- BZNW* Beihefte zur *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
- CBQ* *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
- Ep.* *Epistula* (in Latin titles)
- G.-K. Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar*, ed. Kautsch
- HE* Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiae*
- HTR* *Harvard Theological Review*
- HzNT* *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament*
- IEJ* *Israel Exploration Journal*
- Jastrow, *Dictionary* Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*
- JBL* *Journal of Biblical Literature*
- JJS* *Journal of Jewish Studies*
- JSJ* *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
- JTS* *Journal of Theological Studies*
- L.-S. Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*
- m.* Mishnah (before the name of a tractate)
- Moore, *Judaism* George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 3 vols.
- MSG* Migne, Series Graeca
- MSL* Migne, Series Latina
- For *MSG* and *MSL* the volume number is given in Arabic numerals followed by the page number. Example: *MSG* 94, 712 is *MSG* vol. 94, page 712.
- MT* Masoretic Text

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ABBREVIATIONS

NTS *New Testament Studies*

R. *Rabbah* (in reference to the Midrash Rabbah)

RB *Revue Biblique*

RGG *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen)

RSV Revised Standard Version

Str.-B. Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 4 vols.

USQR *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*

VT *Vetus Testamentum*

ZAW *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

ZNW *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

// phoneme (a distinct class of sounds in a single language)