

MELCHIZEDEK IN THE BIBLE, THE QUMRAN TEXTS (11Q, 1965), AND THE URANTIA BOOK (1955)

Ángel Francisco Sánchez-Escobar

INTRODUCTION

As I was researching to write an article about Melchizedek from an interfaith perspective as depicted in *The Urantia Book* (1955) --shortened as UB in this paper--, I was pondering, how easy it would be for leaders of the religions of authority to get rid of some of their unnecessarily complex theological theories about the inspiration to justify that God was the author of the Bible if only they read the UB. If such was the case, they would realize, for example, that the matchless Moses had learnt the great lines of his teachings not through divine inspiration but through his ascendant Katro, family with whom Melchizedek lived,

The members of the family of Katro, with whom Melchizedek lived for more than thirty years, knew many of these higher truths and long perpetuated them in their family, even to the days of their illustrious descendant Moses, who thus had a compelling tradition of the days of Melchizedek handed down to him on this, his father's side, as well as through other sources on his mother's side. (p.1016 - 7)

and we could also see that his commandments were already delineated by Melchizedek more than five centuries before. But how could one make these "licensed" preachers see that the history of Melchizedek ran true when so much research about the human sources of the Urantia papers is shedding doubts over so many parts of the book and, at least in the Spanish world, Gardner (1995) is making more harm than he had ever imagined.

The UB points to some biblical texts, especially Hebrews for corroboration of this immensely important personality from the twentieth century B.C.:

But one of the writers of the Book of Hebrews understood the mission of Melchizedek, for it is written: "This Melchizedek, priest of the Most High, was also king of peace; without father, without mother, without pedigree, having neither beginning of days nor end of life but made like a Son of God, he abides a priest continually."

Yet, the revelators, as they usually do, give light to issues that have puzzled theologians and have brought many confusions:

This writer designated Melchizedek as a type of the later bestowal of Michael, affirming that Jesus was "a minister forever on the order of Melchizedek." While this comparison was not altogether fortunate, it was literally true that Christ did receive provisional title to Urantia "upon the orders of the twelve Melchizedek receivers" on duty at the time of his world bestowal. (p.1024 - 2)

This enlarging and/or revision of religious data is congruent with what the UB says about revelations:

Revelation is evolutionary but always progressive. Down through the ages of a world's history, the revelations of religion are ever-expanding and successively more enlightening. It is the mission of revelation to sort and censor the successive religions of evolution. But if revelation is to exalt and upstep the religions of evolution, then must such divine visitations portray teachings which are not too far removed from the thought and reactions of the age in which they are presented. Thus must and does revelation always keep in touch with evolution. Always must the religion of revelation be limited by man's capacity of receptivity. [...] But regardless of apparent connection or derivation, the religions of revelation are always characterized by a belief in some Deity of final value and in some concept of the survival of personality identity after death. (p.1007 - 1-2)

Thus I started to analyze the biblical texts in which Melchizedek appears, but then I discovered an striking first century BC document from Qumran (1947) [1], and especially thirteen fragments from Cave 11 (11QMelch from now onwards), discovered in 1956 [2], ten years after the UB (1955). The document, as we will see, takes the form of an eschatological midrash or interpretation on parts of Isaiah and it sees Isaiah's proclamation of liberty to the captives at the end of days (Isa 61:1) as part of a general "year of jubilee". I was thrilled at seeing that 11QMelch provided new information about the figure of Melchizedek in the Old Testament by depicting him as a heavenly deliverer, as a Son of God, when the Old Testament featured him not more than a human and the New Testament "like" a Son of God. This information, although not too accurate if we take the UB as a background, not only enlarged what we knew about him from the Old Testament, but also corroborated what the UB says about Melchizedek's being a Son of God.

But the Qumran texts also led me to other ancient sources finding that this priest-king of Salem has enjoyed a wide range of interpretation among Jewish, Christian, and Gnostic writings, some that brought him up to the heights of heaven, and others-of developing Christian and Jewish orthodoxy-that brought him down to earth again even omitting him for hidden agendas. This usually happens when the revelatory religion blends with evolutionary religions. The UB says about evolutionary religion in contrast with revelatory religion:

On Urantia, evolutionary and revelatory religion are progressing side by side while they blend and coalesce into the diversified theologic systems found in the world in the times of the inditement of these papers. (p.1010 - 6)

The book also adds:

Evolutionary religion is sentimental, not logical. It is man's reaction to belief in a hypothetical ghost-spirit world--the human belief-reflex, excited by the realization and fear of the unknown. Revelatory religion is propounded by the real spiritual world; it is the response of the superintellectual cosmos to the mortal hunger to believe in, and depend upon, the universal Deities. Evolutionary religion pictures the circuitous gropings of humanity in quest of truth; revelatory religion is that very truth. (p.1007 - 3)

Thus this paper is an attempt to analyze biblical and ancient references about Melchizedek and to see them from the perspective of the UB as their writers "sort and censor" the data about this personality, whose importance for our planet is seen in the fact that the word "Melchizedek" appears 313 times and "Melchizedeks" 111 times in The Urantia Book. This surprisingly contrasts with the Bible where "Melchizedek" is quoted twice in the Old Testament and nine times -all of them in Hebrews-in the New Testament.

In fact, 11QMelch reveals fragmentary material about Melchizedek and his relationship with other superhuman personalities unknown to that moment, but which we already knew through the UB. Yet the information this first B.C. Qumran document offers is confusing, ambiguous, and contradictory. For example, besides being considered as a heavenly redeemer Melchizedek is portrait as Michael himself or even the Archangel Michael. This is probably due to the fact that the information about Melchizedek was transmitted through oral tradition having cut off from the Old Testament until the author of Hebrews expressed it in writing. This is what the UB says:

The teaching of Melchizedek was full and replete, but the records of these days seemed impossible and fantastic to the later Hebrew priests, although many had some understanding of these transactions, at least up to the times of the **en masse editing** of the Old Testament records in Babylon. (p.1023 - 3)

The national ego of the Jews was tremendously depressed by the Babylonian captivity. In their reaction against national inferiority they swung to the other extreme of national and racial egotism, in which they distorted and perverted their traditions with the view of exalting themselves above all races as the chosen people of God; and hence they carefully edited all their records for the purpose of raising Abraham and their other national leaders high up above all other persons, not excepting Melchizedek himself. The Hebrew scribes therefore **destroyed every record of these momentous times** which they could find, preserving only the narrative of the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek after the battle of Siddim, which they deemed reflected great honor upon Abraham. (p.1023 - 6)

Thus let us see Melchizedek in the Bible, the Qumran scrolls, as they partially echoed the records destroyed about him, and other ancient sources, and how the UB gives light to them all.

I MELCHIZEDEK IN THE BIBLE

Melchizedek appears in the Bible as a mysterious personality, nobody knowing where he comes from or where he is going to. Melchizedek is first mentioned in the Old Testament at Genesis 14:18-20, composed around tenth century B.C.:

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 [3] 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.

Genesis 14:17-24 narrates that Abraham upon his victorious return from a battle, was met by the king of Sodom, who was eager to reward Abraham for coming to his and his allies' aid. The narrative is interrupted by an enigmatic insertion (14:18-20) featuring "Melchizedek king of Salem," "priest of God Most High". Melchizedek "brought out bread and wine" and, in the exercise of his priesthood, blessed Abraham in the name of God Most High or the Most High God (Hebrew 'el 'elyon), a synonym for the God of Israel, whose personal name is YHVH (Ps 7:17; 21:7; 46:4). Abraham then gave Melchizedek a tithe of his booty, a custom practiced in early times, as an act of devotion or recognition of Melchizedek's authority as Melchizedek, who presided over the city of Salem, believed in and served the God of Abraham, prior to the patriarch's arrival in the promised land. We know that Salem (peace) is a reference to Jerusalem (habitation of peace), the city David chose as his capital when Hebron was too far south for his united kingdom. It should be kept in mind that Jerusalem in the time of Abraham was inhabited by the Jebusites [4], a tribe of Canaanites, which probably descended from the Hittites and Amorites. Also two distinct deities --Elyon and Zedek-- are found in the Canaanite/Phoenecian pantheon. Thus, the name Melchizedek (qdc_iklm) can be translated as "righteous king" or "my king is justice", as corroborated by Heb:2, and, paying attention to the suffix "dk", as "My King is (the god) Zedek" (Tau Apiryon and Helena, 1995; Delcor, 1971: 116-117).

Serving the true Creator God, Melchizedek became a type of the Davidic kings. In Psalm 110:4, the only other Old Testament occurrence of the name Melchizedek, we read:

4 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." [5]

In this Psalm we understand that Melchizedek is a priest, not from the tribe of Levi (the tribe of priests), but from a more ancient order of reality, a special category, under divine appointment.

But there is nothing in these Old Testament texts to suggest that Melchizedek is more than human, yet we find suggestions of this Melchizedek's condition in the New Testament, in the Epistle to the Hebrews (5:6-10; 6:20; 7:1-17):

Hebrews 5: 6-10:

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

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 Melchizedek.

In Hebrews 6: 20,

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7: 1-17:

1 For this Melchizedek, 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 Melchizedek 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 Melchizedek, 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 Melchizedec 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 Melchizedec.

In these quotes, Melchizedek is being described as more than human. He is interpreted as a type of the "high priest" "for ever" (Heb 5:6,10) of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 7:3, which has become the basis for most Christian interpretation of the figure of Melchizedek, we read that Melchizedek was "made like unto the Son of God" or "like the Son of God" "forever" or "continually" as other versions of this same passage state:

3 We are not told that he had a father or mother or ancestors or beginning or end. He is like the Son of God and will be a priest forever. (NIV)

3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God), abideth a priest continually. (ASV)

3 We are not told that he had a father or mother or ancestors or beginning or end. He is like the Son of God and will be a priest forever. (CEV)

Nevertheless the way I read this verse is that Melchizedek "resembles" the Son of God. It does not clearly say he is a Son of God, like the Qumran texts declares and the UB corroborates. Yet, we also see that Melchizedek's priesthood is superior to that of the "descendants of Levi" (Heb. 7:5), thus foreshadowing the priesthood of the Son of God.

It is also puzzling that in more than five centuries, from Psalm 110:4 to Hebrews, we didn't have any mention of Melchizedek, and then in the Epistle we discover Melchizedek to be almost a supernatural being, which caused to be seen as such by the time of Jesus: he has no known genealogy, so he has no beginning; the psalm declares him to be a priest forever, so he must be immortal; Abraham submitted to him, so he must be greater than a man. In Hebrews, Jesus is featured as the fulfiller of the prophesy of Psalm 110. Through his death on the cross Jesus becomes the inheritor of Melchizedek's ministry and becomes the perfect and eternal high priest of God. These things combined surely gave rise to the notion of a heavenly Melchizedek in perpetual service to Yahweh but also, as we will see, as Christ to be a reincarnation of Christ.

But surely, as already mentioned, there must have been an oral tradition, collected by Essenes before Hebrews, which was the source for all this speculation about Melchizedek.

II MELCHIZEDEK IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS 11QMELCHIZEDEK (11Q13): SOME INTERPRETATIONS

The Dead Sea Scroll 11QMelch has become such an important witness to pre-Christian Jewish speculation on Melchizedek [6] that it has had many interpretations. Let us see some of them to have a better picture of what this fragmentary Hebrew text says. Thus, according to Kobelski (1981: pp. 5-23), Melchizedek is featured as a heavenly end-time redeemer, with attributes of the archangel Michael. He appears in the tenth and final jubilee of world history to rescue the elect, the "men of the lot of Melchizedek", doing battle with Belial and his fellow evil spirits. Melchizedek's triumph is described as a high-priestly act of "expiation".

Hebrew Streams abstracting from different sources (Geza Vermes, 1997: 500; Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Edward Cook, 1996: 455; and Carol Newsom, 1985: 37), complementing with other Qumran texts, sees the author of the 11QMelch featuring Melchizedek as having heavenly origins and being the chief angelic priest, yet we remain without knowing how divine he is or how close he is to God [7] :

The author of 11 QMelch says that the agent of the future jubilee salvation will be a heavenly deliverer: Melchizedek. In this text, he is an exalted divine being, to whom are applied biblical titles generally reserved for God alone: the Hebrew nouns El and Elohim (though they are also applied to angelic or divine beings a few times.) The mysterious king-priest of Shalem stands in the place of God in the final judgment.

In the author's citation of Isaiah 61:2 (which speaks of "the year of the LORD's favor") the name Melchizedek is substituted for YHVH, the name of Israel's God. Also, Melchizedek is said to atone for the sins of the righteous and to execute judgment upon the wicked's actions usually associated with God himself. The author also quotes Psalm 82:1 ("Elohim stands in the council of El") but inserts "Melchizedek" in place of "Elohim" (God). [...]

Melchizedek [...] also presides over the final judgment and condemnation of his demonic counterpart: Belial, Satan, the Prince of Darkness. In other documents from Qumran this being is called "Melchiresha." His name Melchi-resha ("king of wickedness/wicked king") darkly mirrors that Melchi-zedek (4Q280 "Curses of Melchiresha"; 4Q544 "Testament of Amram"). (The spelling "Melchi-" versus the Hebrew "Malchi-" is due to the influence of the Septuagint Greek Bible on English spellings.)

In the mystical Qumran documents known as "Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice" (originally called "The Angelic Liturgy"), Melchizedek appears to be a superior angel. The texts are broken up too badly to be sure of this identification (4Q401 11:3; 22:3). But what is certain is that the "Songs" depict a hierarchy of angelic priests who serve in the heavenly temple. They are surrounded by other divine beings known as elim or elohim (gods, divine beings) or holy ones, spirits, princes, and ministers.

In the so-called "War Scroll" (1QM 13:10; 16:6-8; 17:7), Melchizedek appears to be the archangel Michael, who is "the prince of light" (1QM 13:10-11; cf. 1QS 2:20-22; CD 5:17-19) and "the angel of [God's] truth" (1QS 3:24).

Delcor (1971: 124-125) states that in 11QMelch:

Melchizedek appears as an eschatological saviour who has a heritage. His mission is to bring back at the end of days the exiles to announce to them their liberation and the expiation of their sins. The fragment here takes up in part Is. 61,1 which Luke applies to Jesus (cf. Luke 4,18), Melchizedek appears as a celestial being who stand in the assembly of God and on this occasion will judge among the heavenly ones. He participates in the vengeance of the judgment of God. Here we find (though with some modifications) taken up Ps, 82,1 and Is.,61,2. Melchizedek is helped by the celestial armies in his struggle against Belial and his angels.

There are other references by scholars on the Melchizedek priesthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls [8] :

Florentino Garcia Martinez (1966) states that "Elohim will stand up in the assembly of God, in the midst of the gods he judges... all the sons of God, and he will preside over this assembly..." [called "the sons of justice"], and Melchizedek himself will free them [the deniers, or the "rebels"], from Belial. So Melchizedek takes the lead in helping the rebellious ones repent and come back to the "Zion" of God in the Dead Sea Scroll texts (p. 139f).

John J. Collins (1995) says that the "sons of El", are, to be sure, "most often heavenly beings in the Hebrew Bible, examples include Genesis 6, Psalms 82, Deut. 32:8-9..." (p. 161). Collins also notes that Melchizedek in 11QMelch is called "Michael, Melchizedek, and the Prince of Light were three names for the same figure." (p. 176).

S. Van Der Woude (1965) discusses the heavenly Melchizedek and his prominent place, as well as the close ties with The Archangel Michael. He also deals with the assembly of the Gods and their discussion among themselves.

In short, among other attributes, Melchizedek is called a "heavenly deliverer, a "divine or celestial being" who "execute(s) judgment upon the wicked's actions", who "presides over the final judgement of his demonic counterpart", who is the Archangel Michael or even Michael himself. Like Melchizedek, Jesus is described as the eschatological judge of the last days (Acts 17:31; 10:42 and John 5:27 [9]).

III MELCHIZEDEK: OTHER ANCIENT SOURCES

Pearson, also drawing from different references (Charlesworth, 1983; Delcor, 1971: 15-35; Gianotto, 1984; Gruenewald, 1970: 88-98; Horton, 1976; Kobelski 1981; Pearson, 1990) lists several ancient sources speculating about Melchizedek:

Philo, a first-century Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, in three writings (*Legum Allegoriae* 3.79-82; *De Congressu* 89; *De Abrahamo* 235) interprets the text of Genesis in a Platonic-allegorical fashion, seeing in Melchizedek a reference to the divine Logos, the thought of God in which the pattern of all existing things is conceived and the "image" of God according to which man was created.

In 2 Enoch (Alexandria, around first century A.D.) a child is born miraculously to Noah's recently deceased sister-in-law, and the child, marked on his chest with a priestly seal, speaks and praises God. The boy is named Melchizedek by Noah and his brother Nir, whose wife had been posthumously delivered. In a night vision Nir is told of the

impending flood; he is also informed that the archangel Michael will bring Melchizedek to paradise, thus enabling him to escape the flood waters. Melchizedek will eventually become the chief of priests among the people, and in the end of days he will be revealed yet another time as the chief priest. In this text, Melchizedek has three different earthly manifestations: born before the Flood, serving in the postdiluvian age as a great priest, and functioning in the end-time as a messianic priest.

A fragmentary text from Nag Hammadi [10] contains an apocalypse given by angels to Melchizedek, "priest of God Most High." It is revealed to Melchizedek that he will ultimately reappear as Jesus Christ, Son of God, to do battle with the cosmic forces of darkness. Here we can see influence not only from the Epistle to the Hebrew but also from non-Christian lore.

In the Second Book of Jeu, "Zorokothora Melchizedek" is a heavenly priest who presides over a heavenly baptism. No trace of Hebrew is found in this text.

The most developed levels of speculation on Melchizedek, also lacking any influence from Hebrews, are found in Pistis Sophia, Book 4, in which Melchizedek plays a key role in the process of purifying human souls for entry into the "Treasury of Light" and transferring them from the domain of the archons, or earthly rulers, to that heavenly region. The younger material in books 1-3 of Pistis Sophia develops these ideas further: Melchizedek is a heavenly being who seals the saved souls upon their entry into the realm of light.

The church fathers attest to several heterodox ideas associated with Melchizedek. Hippolytus of Rome (Refutatio 7.35-36) and Epiphanius of Salamis (Panarion 55) are the most important witnesses to a group of heretics called Melchizedekians. They had a low Christology and exalted Melchizedek as a heavenly power superior to Christ. Others equated Melchizedek with the Holy Spirit (Panarion 67), and some "even in the true church" (i.e., not "heretics") naively regarded Melchizedek as the Son of God (Panarion 55.7.3). The later view seems also to have been present among the monasteries of Egypt (Apophtegmata Patrum, in Patrologia Graeca 65.160) and was even defended in a treatise on Melchizedek by a fifth-century resident of the Judean desert, Mark the Hermit (PG 65.1117-40). Such views were eventually overcome by teacher-bishops such as Cyril of Alexandria (PG 65.160).

On the Jewish side, while early rabbis continued to speculate on Melchizedek's role in scripture (e.g., equating him with Shem, son of Noah; cf. b. Nedarim 32b; Midrash Gen. R. 44.7; Targum Ps.-J. Gen. 14:18), a major stream of rabbinic tradition viewed Melchizedek negatively, a fact that indicates some Jewish sensitivity to the use of Melchizedek traditions by Christians (Gianotto, pp. 172-85).

Furthermore, Dionysius calls Him "the hierarchy most beloved of God"; Tertullian says that Melchizedek is a "celestial virtue of great grace who does for heavenly angels and virtues what Christ does for man"; once in the Babylonian Talmud, he is pictured as the judge of the last days (Sukkah 52b). As we see, again, Melchizedek is described as a heavenly being, the Divine Logos, and as messianic judge-priest of the end of the day who will reappear as Jesus Christ to fight against the forces of darkness.

IV MELCHIZEDEK: A PREVIOUS REINCARNATION OF JESUS?

There has been a lot of speculation about Melchizedek's being a previous reincarnation of Jesus based on the Book of Hebrews' not treating him as an ordinary man and on strong parallels between Melchizedek and Jesus. Besides this Biblical evidence, supporters of this theory base themselves on other data resulting from the discoveries of early Christian texts in 1945 and the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. As we will see the UB teaches that the Melchizedek's Thought Adjuster inhabited Jesus -or Michael--.

Regarding the identical characteristics of Melchizedek and Jesus, they say that both are Sons of God (Luke 3:38, Heb. 7:3, Mark 1:1); they have the same order of priesthood -- priest of the God Most High of the Order of Melchizedek-- (Gen 14:18; Psalm 110:4; Heb. 5:6); identical symbol of rule --the scepter-- (Gen. 49:10; Heb. 1:8); identical right to rule -they were appointed by God, did not depend upon genealogy as the Aaronic priesthood did; identical title --"King of Peace"-- (Heb. 7:2; Isaiah 9:6); identical term of priesthood -eternal-- (Heb. 7:3; 5:6); identical age --pre-existent-- (Heb. 7:3; Micah 5:2); identical association with Abraham (Gen. 14:18-19; John 8:56-59); they are also one spirit who incarnated many times and who transcended death (Heb. 7:23); they have an identical use of ritualistic symbols of bread and wine (Gen. 14:18; Matt. 26:26-29); identical title -the Anointed One-- (Heb. 1:9; Acts 4:25-26).

Yet the NT says Melchizedek was like the Son of God; it does not say he was the Son of God. Also the author of Hebrews adamantly distinguishes the two priests: Yeshua --not Melchizedek-- is the one and only High Priest who "abides forever" and "holds his priesthood permanently" (Heb 7:24). Though the author sees parallels between them, he nowhere suggests they are one in the same person. Melchizedek was "made like the Son of God" (7:3). He does not say he was the Son of God.

Reincarnationists also base themselves on Christian Gnostic scriptures discovered in 1945 which affirm that Melchizedek and Jesus to be different incarnations of the same soul; on above mentioned ancient texts, discovered also in 1945 in Upper Egypt, which reveal that the early Christians and Jews believed that Melchizedek was a previous reincarnation of Jesus the Messiah; on the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered two years later which revealed the Messiah to be a reincarnation of Melchizedek: the Essenes believed in the doctrine of pre-existence and reincarnation and appeared to have been influenced by Gnosticism; and on evidences provided by the first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus who stated that the Pharisees were believers in reincarnation.

The belief that Melchizedek was, as we have seen, the Messiah was a strongly held conviction among the Qumran community, as well as among some other Jewish and Gnostic sects in the first century A.D. This seemingly becomes apparent in 11QMelch about the coming of Melchizedek as the Messiah. Also, some disciples of Jesus apparently believed he was even Melchizedek reincarnated, or in later Christian terms, Melchizedek was "the preincarnate manifestation" of the Messiah. [11]

From what we have in the Qumran documents we can easily conclude, as UB confirms, that Melchizedek's was far more prominent than we had supposed, and the reason why we haven't known this is because, as the Bible scholars tell us, it had been expunged from the Bible. In light of this, an interesting analysis was published by, of all people, Frank Moore Cross (1985: 4), who noted that when the Bible was put together by the later councils of the church, "the rabbi's selected preferred texts" [...] while excluding "wholly other works with claims of sacred status [...] books attributed to prophets or

patriarchs before Moses were excluded: the Enoch literature and works written in the name of Abraham and other Patriarchs."

V THE URANTIA BOOK AND MELCHIZEDEK

Paraphrasing the beginning quote about revelation, we can say that the mission of revelation is to sort and censor and to exalt and upstep the successive religions of evolution. Let us see the way the UB does this regarding what we have just seen in the Bible, the Qumran documents, and other ancient sources.

1. Machiventa Melchizedek: A divine being, a Son of God

In the UB we read that the order of Melchizedeks are Local Universe Sons of God (p. 223-15); they are divine Sons:

The Melchizedeks are the first order of **divine Sons** to approach sufficiently near the lower creature life to be able to function directly in the ministry of mortal uplift, to serve the evolutionary races without the necessity of incarnation. These Sons are naturally at the mid-point of the great personality descent, by origin being just about midway between the highest Divinity and the lowest creature life of will endowment. They thus become the natural intermediaries between the higher and divine levels of living existence and the lower, even the material, forms of life on the evolutionary worlds. The seraphic orders, the angels, delight to work with the Melchizedeks; in fact, all forms of intelligent life find in these Sons understanding friends, sympathetic teachers, and wise counselors. (p. 385 - 4)

But with the Adamic default this regime, extending over a period of more than four hundred and fifty thousand years, came to an end. In the spiritual spheres, angelic helpers continued to struggle in conjunction with the Thought Adjusters, both working heroically for the salvage of the individual; but no comprehensive plan for far-reaching world welfare was promulgated to the mortals of earth until the arrival of Machiventa Melchizedek, in the times of Abraham, who, with the power, patience, and authority of a **Son of God**, did lay the foundations for the further uplift and spiritual rehabilitation of unfortunate Urantia. (p.852 - 5)

2. The Most High

Melchizedek arrived in Urantia as a priest of El Elyon, the Most High, the Father of the Constellation of Edentia -a Vorondadek--,

Every quarantined or isolated world has a Vorondadek Son acting as an observer. He does not participate in planetary administration except when ordered by the Constellation Father to intervene in the affairs of the nations. Actually it is this Most High observer who "rules in the kingdoms of men." Urantia is one of the isolated worlds of Norlatiadek, and a Vorondadek observer has been stationed on the planet ever since the Caligastia betrayal. When Machiventa Melchizedek ministered in semimaterial form on Urantia, **he paid respectful homage to the Most High observer then on duty**, as it is written, "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, was the priest of the Most High." Melchizedek revealed the relations of this Most High observer to Abraham when he

said, "And blessed be the Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand."
(p. 491 - 13)

Nevertheless, Melchizedek allowed the rank of the followers to associate the Most High to God,

Melchizedek taught the concept of one God, a universal Deity, **but he allowed the people to associate this teaching with the Constellation Father of Norlatiadek**, whom he termed El Elyon--the Most High. Melchizedek remained all but silent as to the status of Lucifer and the state of affairs on Jerusem. Lanaforge, the System Sovereign, had little to do with Urantia until after the completion of Michael's bestowal. To a majority of the Salem students Edentia was heaven and the Most High was God.
(p.1016 - 4)

The UB talks about this generalized confusion existing on Urantia about celestial beings,

Down through the ages there has been **great confusion on Urantia regarding the various universe rulers**. Many later teachers confused their vague and indefinite tribal deities with the Most High Fathers. Still later, the Hebrews merged all of these celestial rulers into a composite Deity. One teacher understood that the Most Highs were not the Supreme Rulers, for he said, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." In the Urantia records it is very difficult at times to know exactly who is referred to by the term "Most High." But Daniel fully understood. (p.488 - 6)

One of the **greatest sources of confusion on Urantia concerning the nature of God** grows out of the failure of your sacred books clearly to distinguish between the personalities of the Paradise Trinity and between Paradise Deity and the local universe creators and administrators. During the past dispensations of partial understanding, your priests and prophets failed clearly to differentiate between Planetary Princes, System Sovereigns, Constellation Fathers, Creator Sons, Superuniverse Rulers, the Supreme Being, and the Universal Father. Many of the messages of subordinate personalities, such as Life Carriers and various orders of angels, have been, in your records, presented as coming from God himself. Urantian religious thought still confuses the associate personalities of Deity with the Universal Father himself, so that all are included under one appellation. (p.60 - 1)

3. The UB and the Bible

The UB explains the circumstances why a Melchizedek, an emergency Son (p.389 - 1), came to Urantia in the time of Abraham,

The Melchizedek who lived on Urantia during the time of Abraham was locally known as Prince of Salem because he presided over a small colony of truth seekers residing at a place called Salem. He volunteered to incarnate in the likeness of mortal flesh and did so with the approval of the Melchizedek receivers of the planet, who feared that the light of life would become extinguished during that period of increasing spiritual darkness. And he did foster the truth of his day and safely pass it on to Abraham and his associates. (p.389 - 4)

and chose Palestine:

The choice of Palestine as the site for Michael's activities was in part predicated upon the desire to establish contact with some human family embodying the potentials of leadership. At the time of the incarnation of Melchizedek there were many families on earth just as well prepared to receive the doctrine of Salem as was that of Abraham. There were equally endowed families among the red men, the yellow men, and the descendants of the Andites to the west and north. But, again, none of these localities were so favorably situated for Michael's subsequent appearance on earth as was the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The Melchizedek mission in Palestine and the subsequent appearance of Michael among the Hebrew people were in no small measure **determined by geography, by the fact that Palestine was centrally located with reference to the then existent trade, travel, and civilization of the world.** (p.1018 - 7)

The papers also fill in the missing gaps we find in Genesis 14, about the relationship between Abraham and Melchizedek:

When Melchizedek heard of Abraham's declaration of war, he went forth to dissuade him but only caught up with his former disciple as he returned victorious from the battle. Abraham insisted that the God of Salem had given him victory over his enemies and persisted in giving a tenth of his spoils to the Salem treasury. The other ninety per cent he removed to his capital at Hebron. P.1020 - 2

Melchizedek, the visible Son of God, finally persuaded Abraham "to abandon his scheme of material conquest and temporal rule in favor of the spiritual concept of the kingdom of heaven. (P.1020 - 4)" and made with him a covenant which represented "This covenant of Melchizedek with Abraham represents the great Urantian agreement between divinity and humanity whereby God agrees to do everything; man only agrees to believe God's promises and follow his instructions. Heretofore it had been believed that salvation could be secured only by works--sacrifices and offerings; now, Melchizedek again brought to Urantia the good news that salvation, favor with God, is to be had by faith. But this gospel of simple faith in God was too advanced; the Semitic tribesmen subsequently preferred to go back to the older sacrifices and atonement for sin by the shedding of blood. (p.1020 - 7

and give light to the above mentioned offer of bread and wine by Melchizedek, later also used by Jesus --as a substitution of sacrifices on animals--:

While no sacrifices were permitted within the colony, Melchizedek well knew how difficult it is to suddenly uproot long-established customs and accordingly had wisely offered these people **the substitute of a sacrament of bread and wine for the older sacrifice of flesh** and blood. It is of record, "Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine." But even this cautious innovation was not altogether successful; the various tribes all maintained auxiliary centers on the outskirts of Salem where they offered sacrifices and burnt offerings. Even Abraham resorted to this barbarous practice after his victory over Chedorlaomer; he simply did not feel quite at ease until he had offered a conventional sacrifice. And Melchizedek never did succeed in fully eradicating this proclivity to sacrifice from the religious practices of his followers, even of Abraham. (p.1018 - 3

The UB also explains the reason for the confusion about "forever after the order of Melchizedek",

Melchizedek taught that at some future time another Son of God would come in the flesh as he had come, but that he would be born of a woman; and that is why numerous later teachers held that Jesus was a priest, or minister, "forever after the order of Melchizedek." (p.1017 - 1)

and why he ended of his bestowal on Urantia:

It was shortly after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah that Machiventa decided to end his emergency bestowal on Urantia. Melchizedek's decision to terminate his sojourn in the flesh was influenced by numerous conditions, chief of which was the growing tendency of the surrounding tribes, and even of his immediate associates, **to regard him as a demigod, to look upon him as a supernatural being, which indeed he was; but they were beginning to reverence him unduly and with a highly superstitious fear.** In addition to these reasons, Melchizedek wanted to leave the scene of his earthly activities a sufficient length of time before Abraham's death to insure that the truth of the one and only God would become strongly established in the minds of his followers. Accordingly Machiventa retired one night to his tent at Salem, having said good night to his human companions, and when they went to call him in the morning, he was not there, for his fellows had taken him. (P.1022 - 3)

Notice that this confirms all the speculation about him in the Qumran documents. As I have stated, its author must have collected through the existing oral tradition since Melchizedek's bestowal on Urantia nineteen centuries earlier.

4. Melchizedek as a eschatological saviors/judge of the last days

The UB does not say anything about this redeeming role of Melchizedek to judge the wicked and Belial o Satan - "He **remained all but silent as to the status of Lucifer**" (p.1016 - 4)--, yet it says about his present and future condition, which, along with what it states about the source of confusion Urantians usually have, can give an explanation of why he was mistaken with Michael, our Creator Son. On the one side, the UB records that Machiventa had told his followers about Michael,

And thus, in losing sight of Melchizedek, they also lost sight of the teaching of this emergency Son regarding the spiritual mission of the promised bestowal Son; lost sight of the nature of this mission so fully and completely that very few of their progeny were able or willing to recognize and receive **Michael when he appeared on earth and in the flesh as Machiventa had foretold.** (p.1024 - 1)

probably mentioned his present and future status to a few of his followers and his future possibility to act in behalf of Michael or represent Michael,

Machiventa Melchizedek, the only Son of this order to bestow himself upon the Urantia races. While still numbered as a Melchizedek, he has become "forever a minister of the Most Highs," eternally assuming the assignment of service as a mortal ascender, having sojourned on Urantia in the likeness of mortal flesh at Salem in the days of Abraham. This Melchizedek has latterly been proclaimed vicegerent Planetary Prince of Urantia

with headquarters on Jerusem and **authority to act in behalf of Michael**, who is actually the Planetary Prince of the world whereon he experienced his terminal bestowal in human form. (p.514 - 6 14).

The Thought Adjuster... Vicegerent Planetary Prince of Urantia ... and thus " It is our belief that, as long as Urantia remains an inhabited planet, Machiventa Melchizedek will not be fully returned to the duties of his order of sonship but will remain, speaking in the terms of time, forever a planetary minister **representing Christ Michael**. (p.1025 - 1

as well as his future role in the final days:

When such an era is attained on your world [when settled in light and life], no doubt Machiventa Melchizedek, now the vicegerent Planetary Prince of Urantia, **will occupy the seat of the Planetary Sovereign**.(p.632 - 2)

But it is Michael who has the power to end a dispensation:

Gabriel and the archangel hosts moved to the place of the spiritual polarity of the planet; and when Gabriel gave the signal, there flashed to the first of the system mansion worlds the voice of Gabriel, saying: "By the mandate of **Michael, let the dead of a Urantia dispensation rise!**" Then all the survivors of the human races of Urantia who had fallen asleep since the days of Adam, and who had not already gone on to judgment, appeared in the resurrection halls of mansonia in readiness for morontia investiture. (p.2024 - 4)

However, we are that told that "as acting Planetary Prince he would undoubtedly continue in charge of the planet until the final adjudication of the Lucifer rebellion and probably on into the distant future of planetary settlement in light and life. (p.1251 - 2

Yet, what the Qumran scrolls say is not too far from reality since the Melchizedeks accompany the Avonal or magisterial Sons,

The Avonals are known as Magisterial Sons because they are the high magistrates of the realms, **the adjudicators of the successive dispensations of the worlds of time**. They preside over the awakening of the sleeping survivors, sit in judgment on the realm, bring to an end a dispensation of suspended justice, execute the mandates of an age of probationary mercy, reassign the space creatures of planetary ministry to the tasks of the new dispensation, and return to the headquarters of their local universe upon the completion of their mission. (p.226 - 1)

In all their work for and on the inhabited worlds, the Magisterial Sons **are assisted by two orders of local universe creatures, the Melchizedeks and the archangels**, while on bestowal missions they are also accompanied by the Brilliant Evening Stars, likewise of origin in the local creations. In every planetary effort the secondary Paradise Sons, the Avonals, are supported by the full power and authority of a primary Paradise Son, the Creator Son of their local universe of service. To all intents and purposes their work on the inhabited spheres is just as effective and acceptable as would have been the service of a Creator Son upon such worlds of mortal habitation. (p.225 - 8)

And then be confused by the Archangel Michael, who is not other than the archangel of Michael or the archangel of the resurrection:

Two senior archangels are always assigned as the personal aids of a Paradise Avonal on all planetary missions, whether involving judicial actions, magisterial missions, or bestowal incarnations. When this Paradise Son has finished the judgment of a realm and the dead are called to record (the so-called resurrection), it is literally true that the seraphic guardians of the slumbering personalities respond to "the voice of the archangel." **The roll call of a dispensation termination is promulgated by an attendant archangel.** This is the archangel of the resurrection, sometimes referred to as the "archangel of Michael." (p.409 - 3)

5. Melchizedek as a reincarnation of Michael or Jesus

The UB, which does not accept the theory of reincarnation, gives a different explanation: Melchizedek's Thought Adjuster, because of the experience he has accumulated, indwelt Michael (Jesus) when he was in mortal flesh:

This incarnated **Melchizedek received a Thought Adjuster**, who indwelt his superhuman personality as the monitor of time and the mentor of the flesh, thus gaining that experience and practical introduction to Urantian problems and to the technique of indwelling an incarnated Son which enabled this spirit of the Father **to function so valiantly in the human mind of the later Son of God, Michael**, when he appeared on earth in the likeness of mortal flesh. And this is the only Thought Adjuster who ever functioned in two minds on Urantia, but both minds were divine as well as human. (p. 1016 - 1)

The activities of Adjusters in your local universe are directed by the Personalized Adjuster of Michael of Nebadon, that very Monitor who guided him step by step when he lived his human life in the flesh of Joshua ben Joseph. Faithful to his trust was this extraordinary Adjuster, and wisely did this valiant Monitor direct the human nature, ever guiding the mortal mind of the Paradise Son in the choosing of the path of the Father's perfect will. **This Adjuster had previously served with Machiventa Melchizedek in the days of Abraham** and had engaged in tremendous exploits both previous to this indwelling and between these bestowal experiences. (p.1200 - 4)

SOME CONCLUSIONS

I believe that our analysis of the 11QMech fragment (1956/1965), helped by the examination of other biblical and extra biblical texts, against *The Urantia Book* (1955) has shown that, even though Melchizedek was practically purged from the Bible for whatever reason, that Melchizedek's personality and consideration as a God, was alive in oral tradition until it was collected by the writer of this fragment Qumran text with many confusions and by Hebrew in a much limited manner. Yet, all this information, enrichingly and enlightening organized was presented by The Urantia Book before the document was found.

But why would a divine Son of God come to our planet? It is logical to think that he came to upstep the religion of revelation by bringing the human of those ages news from God and his plan of salvation. The UB says that he "came to achieve two tasks: to

keep alive on earth the truth of the one God and to prepare the way for the subsequent mortal bestowal of a Paradise Son of that Universal Father. (p.1018 - 4).

In the midst of polytheism, Melchizedek came to teach the doctrine of one God,

Melchizedek taught his followers all they had capacity to receive and assimilate. Even many modern religious ideas about heaven and earth, of man, God, and angels, are not far removed from these teachings of Melchizedek. But this great teacher subordinated everything to the doctrine of **one God, a universe Deity, a heavenly Creator, a divine Father**. (p.1016 - 8)

and set the way for a Michael, a Paradise Son:

And thus did Melchizedek prepare the way and set the monotheistic stage of world tendency for the bestowal of an actual Paradise Son of the one God, whom he so vividly portrayed as the Father of all, and whom he represented to Abraham as a God who would accept man on the simple terms of personal faith. And Michael, when he appeared on earth, confirmed all that Melchizedek had taught concerning the Paradise Father. (p.1017 - 2)

But also, to return to the initial consideration about Melchizedek and interfaith which propelled this paper, and knowing, according *The Urantia Book*, that all main religions in the Orient (India, China, Tibet), the Levant (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Iran., Arabia), and the Occident (Greek, Rome) originated in the teachings of Machiventa Melchizedek, it is not difficult to understand why nowadays all religions have the concept of oneness at their core and why theologians have to redefine their complex framework about the concept of revelation.

APPENDIX: DEAD SEA SCROLLS TEXT: THE COMING OF MELCHIZEDEK [11Q13][12]

Col.2

(...) And concerning what Scripture says, "In this year of Jubilee you shall return, everyone of you, to your property" (Lev. 25;13) And what is also written; "And this is the manner of the remission; every creditor shall remit the claim that is held against a neighbor, not exacting it of a neighbor who is a member of the community, because God's remission has been proclaimed" (Deut.15;2) the interpretation is that it applies to the Last Days and concerns the captives, just as Isaiah said: "To proclaim the Jubilee to the captives" (Isa. 61;1) (...) just as (...) and from the inheritance of Melchizedek, for (... Melchizedek) , who will return them to what is rightfully theirs. He will proclaim to them the Jubilee, thereby releasing them from the debt of all their sins. He shall proclaim this decree in the first week of the jubilee period that follows nine jubilee periods.

Then the "Day of Atonement" shall follow after the tenth jubilee period, when he shall atone for all the Sons of Light, and the people who are predestined to Melchizedek. (...)

upon them (...) For this is the time decreed for the "Year of Melchizedek`s favor", and by his might he will judge God's holy ones and so establish a righteous kingdom, as it is written about him in the Songs of David ; "A godlike being has taken his place in the council of God; in the midst of divine beings he holds judgement"

Ps. 82;1). Scripture also says about him ; "Over it take your seat in the highest heaven; A divine being will judge the peoples" (Ps. 7;7-8) Concerning what scripture says; "How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality with the wicked? Selah" (Ps. 82;2) ,the interpretation applies to Belial and the spirits predestined to him, because all of them have rebelled, turning from God's precepts and so becoming utterly wicked. Therefore Melchizedek will thoroughly prosecute the vengeance required by God's statutes. Also, he will deliver all the captives from the power of Belial, and from the power of all the spirits destined to him. Allied with him will be all the "righteous divine beings"(Isa. 61;3).

(The ...) is that whi(ch ...all) the divine beings. The visitation is the Day of Salvation that He has decreed through Isaiah the prophet concerning all the captives, inasmuch as Scripture says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion "Your divine being reigns"." (Isa. 52;7) This scriptures interpretation : "the mountains" are the prophets, they who were sent to proclaim God's truth and to prophesy to all Israel. "The messengers" is the Anointed of the spirit, of whom Daniel spoke; "After the sixty-two weeks, an Anointed shall be cut off" (Dan. 9;26) The "messenger who brings good news, who announces Salvation" is the one of whom it is written; "to proclaim the year of the LORD`s favor, the day of the vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn" (Isa. 61;2)

This scripture's interpretation: he is to instruct them about all the periods of history for eternity (... and in the statutes) of the truth. (...) (.... dominion) that passes from Belial and returns to the Sons of Light (....) (...) by the judgment of God, just as t is written concerning him; "who says to Zion "Your divine being reigns" (Isa. 52;7) "Zion" is the congregation of all the sons of righteousness, who uphold the covenant and turn from walking in the way of the people. "Your divine being" is Melchizedek, who will deliver them from the power of Belial. Concerning what scripture says, "Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; in the seventh month . . . " (Lev. 25;9)

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[1] These important ancient scrolls were discovered by three Bedouin shepherds in 1947 around the Dead Sea in Israel. They entered an undiscovered cave and found jars filled with ancient scrolls. Later more caves were discovered. Cave 11 (11Q) were fragments of an eschatological *misdrach* about Melchizedek was found in February 1956. The Dead Sea Scrolls were authored by a monastic group known as the Essenes. The Essenes were an apocalyptic Jewish sect who withdrew from society and established a monastery on the shores of the Dead Sea. It is believed that sometime during the Roman-Jewish war of 66-70 A.D. the Essenes hid their sacred writings. See A. Gonzalez Lamadrid, *Los descubrimientos del Mar Muerto*, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos de la Editorial Catlica, Madrid 1985.

[2] First published by A. S. Van Der Woude in "Melchizedek als himmlische Erlsergestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim aus Qumran Hble XI, *Oudtestamentische Studin* XIV (1965), pp. 354-373.

[3] According to the UB (p.1021 - 1), Abram, upon the public and formal acceptance of his covenant with Melchizedek changed his name to Abraham

[4] The UB also mentions Jebus and gives other names Melchizedek was known for: "Within a few years Melchizedek had gathered around himself a group of pupils, disciples, and believers who formed the nucleus of the later community of Salem. He was soon known throughout Palestine as the priest of El Elyon, the Most High, and as the sage of Salem. Among some of the surrounding tribes he was often referred to as the sheik, or king, of Salem. Salem was the site which after the disappearance of Melchizedek became the city of Jebus, subsequently being called Jerusalem. (p.1015 - 4) [5] We are not sure of the exact date of composition of the psalms, but experts conjecture that there were probably written between VIII and II's century B.C., yet the main part of them was given their final shape after the Jews returned from their Babilonia to their promised land and built the Jerusalem temple again (year 515 B.C).

[6] See Appendix for an English translation of this Qumran document.

[7] Other Jewish works of this era reflect a common belief that Someone operated in close proximity to God and shared his authority and even name, yet he was not God. See Sunner Paul, "Visions of the Heavenly Council in the Hebrew Bible." Cited by Kerry A. Shirt.

[8] Adapted from Kerry A. Shirt.

[9] In John we find a reference to the Son of Man, which has an echoed in Daniel 7:13-14. There, a "Son of Man" is given authority by the Ancient of Days to rule "all peoples, nations, and languages". It does not explicitly say he will judge the earth. But in biblical thought, a king embodies all of government, including the judicial functions. A king is also judge. [10] The Nag Hammadi Library, a collection of thirteen ancient codices containing over fifty texts, was discovered in upper Egypt in 1945. This immensely important discovery includes a large number of primary Gnostic scriptures -- texts once thought to have been entirely destroyed during the early Christian struggle to define "orthodoxy" -- such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, and the Gospel of Truth. The discovery and translation of the Nag Hammadi library, completed in the 1970's, has provided impetus to a major re-evaluation of early Christian history and the nature of Gnosticism

[11] Adapted from Near-Death Experiences & the Afterlife (<http://www.near-death.com/experiences/origen04.html>), no author is cited.

[12] From The Dead Sea Scroll Collection at The Gnostic Society Library.