

Priestly Messiah

The practice of anointing a priest is evident in Leviticus 4:3, 5, 16; 6:20, thus placing priesthood within the bounds of the anointed (messiah). Four Jewish strands weave together to inform a priestly Messiah idea: a Mosaic-Davidic-Hasmonean pattern, Qumran's "the Messiah of Aaron," Joshua the priest of Zechariah 4, and Melchizedek. Hebrews especially develops the Melchizedekian High Priest concept. 1 John also develops a priestly Advocate role for Jesus.

The Jewish Heritage of King-Priest

The Mosaic pattern presented a leader of the people who also did priestly roles as well. For example, Moses fulfilled the priestly role by cleansing the tabernacle and Aaron, the high priest (Ex. 39:43; 40:17–35; Lev. 8–9). Furthermore, when David moved the tabernacle into Jerusalem, he sacrificed oxen and danced in the parade, which tends to merge the royal and priestly roles (2 Sam. 6:13–15). Additionally, David showed a priestly concern in trying to construct the temple, which Solomon actually constructed (2 Sam. 7:2, 13). David also contributed to the worship in the Temple with his composition of psalms which helped to express the prayers of the people. Once the monarchy had disappeared during the Babylonian captivity, the high priest appropriated the royal paraphernalia, such as the crown, indicating that he was the head of the nation (Zech. 6:9–14; cf. 2 Sam. 12:30; Jer. 13:18; Ezek. 21:31). Under Seleucid domination of Israel, the high priesthood was for sale to the highest bidder, or vacant. With the resolution of the Maccabean revolt, Jonathan, of the obscure priestly lineage of Yehoyarib, was elevated by the Seleucid emperor to high priest for the Feast of Booths in 152 B.C. and then promoted to be also military and civil governor of Judea.¹ Under the Hasmoneans the eight high priests (from Jonathan to Antigonus) were also kings, and took the title as well. Antigonus Mattathias, the last king-priest of this line (40–37 B.C.) was replaced by Herod the Great. Thereafter, the high priest was at the disposal of the sovereign, who could appoint and dismiss nominees at his caprice.

The Qumran community had an eschatological hope of "the Messiah of Aaron" to bring a stable reign and era of peace. The Damascus Document occasioned considerable interest with a repeated hope of the rise of "the Messiah of Aaron and Israel."² The singular noun in these texts left the possibility that there would be one Messiah, who would be priest and king for Israel. When the plural noun "Messiahs" turned up in other texts³ indicating the Qumran expectation of "Messiahs of Aaron and Israel," the majority of Qumran interpreters concluded that Qumran expected two Messiahs: a priestly one and a royal one. Marvin Pate conjectures that the reason for the bifurcation of the Messiah

¹ 1 Mac. 2.1; 10.65.

² CD 12:23-13:1; 14:19; 19:10-11; 20:1; *Charter of a Jewish Sectarian Association* 9.11; text 7 19; 4Q171 3.15; 4Q175 1.14; 4Q521 frag. 8 9. Some also argue that 4Q174's "interpreter of the Law" should be identified as the priestly Messiah because its close proximity to the blessing of Levi of Deuteronomy 33 in this text, a blessing that in the earlier 4QTestimonia probably refers to the eschatological priest. A priestly Messiah is also supported by: 1QS 9.11; *T. of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *T. Levi* 4.2; 17.2; 18.6–7.

³ 1QS 9:16; 19:11; *Rule of the Congregation* 2:11-22; and 4QTestimonia.

into two personages was due to the Essenes objection to the Hasmonaean combination of the two roles into a unified King-Priest.⁴

In Zechariah 4, there are two anointed figures envisioned, the royal figure Zerubbabel and the anointed righteous high priest Joshua.⁵ During the Babylonian exile Zerubbabel and Joshua share the leadership of the Jewish community. This eschatological priest pattern developed further in *Ben Sirah* 45–50, and especially 49:11–12.⁶ For example, *Ben Sirah* 45:6–24 describes Aaron at greater length than David (47:2–11). However, the priestly Messiah comes to full fruition in the *Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs*, where Levi (the priest) is superior to Judah (the king).⁷ *The Testament of Levi* 18.3–4 predicts that a new priest will come to replace the judged wicked ones, described as “his star shall rise in heaven like a king” and he “will shine forth like the sun in the earth.” Also, in the Qumran scrolls, the priestly Messiah (the Messiah of Aaron) is greater than the Messiah of Israel.⁸ The rabbis connected this priestly image with Melchizedek and Elijah.⁹

The Melchizedek Tradition¹⁰

The Melchizedek tradition begins with an enigmatic appearance of Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18–24. The name of Melchizedek in Hebrew means “king of righteousness” (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:2).¹¹ He is also king of Salem or peace (*shalom*), the city that would eventually be known as Jerusalem¹² (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:2). In second Temple Judaism, Melchizedek’s rule becomes identified as over all the forces of light.¹³

⁴ C. Marvin Pate, *Communities of the Last Days: The Dead Sea Scrolls, the New Testament & the Story of Israel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), p. 120.

⁵ Similar allusions to two messiahs: a king and priest in Jer. 33:15–18; Hag. 2:1–7; Zech. 6:12–13; 4Q254 frag. 4.

⁶ Cf. *IQS* 9.11; *IQSa* 2.11–17; *4Q174* 3.11–12; *T. Reu.* 6.8; *T. Jud.* 21.1–5 where the priest is above the royal figure; *T. Sim.* 5.5 with *IQM*; *2 Macc.* 1.10.

⁷ In *Testament of Judah* 21:2–4, the Lord “set the kingship beneath the priesthood...as heaven is higher than the earth, so is the priesthood of God higher than the kingship on the earth;” cf. Harm Hollander and Marinus de Jonge, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 56–61 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), p. 222. Additionally, a small fragment of *Testament of Levi* reads, “the kingdom of priesthood is greater than the kingdom” (*IQ21 [IQTL Levi ar]* fragment 1).

⁸ The Messiah of Aaron takes precedence over the Messiah of Israel, (*IQS* 9.11); the Messiah of Aaron stretches out his hand to the bread before the Messiah of Israel (*IQSa [IQ28a]* 2.17–21); and the blessing of the high priest precedes that of the prince of the congregation (*IQSb [IQ28b]*); cf. Collins, *Scepter and Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 74–77, 83–95.

⁹ Comparing *t. b. Sukk* 52b with *Song of Songs R.* 2.13–14; cf. Fred Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976], pp. 125–130.

¹⁰ This is a subject that the author of Hebrews indicates is difficult and thus becomes one indication of an individual’s maturity in spiritual matters (Heb. 5:11–6:1).

¹¹ Josephus (*War* 6.438 and *Ant.* 1.179–81) describes Titus’ destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple reports that the founder of the city was a Canaanite chieftain known as the “king of righteousness.”

¹² Salem is traditionally identified as Jerusalem (Ps. 76:2; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.180; *IQapGen* 22.13–14; *Tg. Neof.* on Gen. 14:18; L.H. Vincent, “Abraham à Jérusalem,” *RB* 58[1951]: 360–71; P. Winter, “Note on Salem-Jerusalem,” *NovT* 2[1957]: 151–52.

¹³ *4Q545* frag. 2, 3.15–16.

No genealogy identifies who Melchizedek is;¹⁴ he just appears as a priest of the Most High God in the narrative (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:3). Without a genealogy mentioned in Genesis, the individual priest becomes the focus rather than a lineage of high priests.

Abram heard that the forces of Chedorlaomer had taken his relative Lot captive so he went after them with three hundred and eighteen men defeating the rear guard, thus freeing the captives. As he returned with these rescued captives and spoil from the battle, Melchizedek, the king of Salem, came out to meet Abram with provisions of bread and wine (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:2, 4).¹⁵ Melchizedek blessed Abram with prayer¹⁶ to the name of God Most High, *El Elyon*, to which Abram could relate (Gen. 14:19–20; Heb. 7:1, 6–7). Abram responded by giving God’s priest, Melchizedek, a tenth of the spoil¹⁷ and thereby indicating that both recognized that the victory was from God. Apart from this tithe of gratitude to God and the spoils consumed by his fellow warriors, Abram insisted on returning the people and the spoils to their rightful kings (Gen. 14:21–24).

The enigmatic picture of Melchizedek continues in the Davidic¹⁸ royal psalm 110. Here the Davidic King or a king greater than David is seen as having a willing and strong conquering army. However, Yahweh swore by an oath that this king was a priest forever¹⁹ like (עַל־דִּבְרֶתָהּ) Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4). The word עַל־דִּבְרֶתָהּ / *ldbrt* (like) does not indicate that a new priestly order is being established but rather the comparison that this king-priest is *like* or *in the manner of* Melchizedek in role.²⁰ Yahweh will destroy kings and nations in judgment in order to establish this King-Priest as triumphant in his kingdom of refreshment (Ps. 110:5–7).

¹⁴ Beginning with the second century A.D., rabbis identify Melchizedek as Noah’s son Shem late in his life (Gen. R. [Lech Lecha] 44.7; Neofiti I; Pseudo-Jonathan; Jerusalem 2; Midrash Tehillim on Ps. 76.3; cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary Biblica et Orientalia*, 1. [Rome: Pontifical Institute, 1966], pp. 31–32; Robert Hayward, “Shem, Melchizedek, and Concern with Christianity in the Pentateuchal Targumim” in *Targumic and Cognate Studies. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 230*, edited by David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996], pp. 67–80). This view is countered by the Davidic perspective of Ps. 110 and the Qumran eschatological Melchizedek in *11QMelch*.

¹⁵ Qumran *Genesis Apocryphon* 22.15 presents the Genesis text literally in Aramaic but adds that Melchizedek’s generosity of food and wine was for all the men with Abraham. Josephus (*Ant.* 1.181) describes that these gifts and provisions foster a festival honoring the conquerors with Abram.

¹⁶ Philo (*Legum Allegoriae* 3.79–82; *De Congressu* 99; and especially the fuller *De Abrahamo* 235) adds to the Genesis account that Melchizedek lifts his hands in prayer and then offers victory sacrifices. This according to Philo begins a lasting friendship between Abram and Melchizedek.

¹⁷ Qumran *Genesis Apocryphon* 22.17 presents the Genesis text literally in Aramaic but adds that the spoils came from the flocks of the king of Elam and his allies.

¹⁸ Most commentators see this as a Davidic psalm based on the superscription in the first verse, and the similarity of this kind of oath with the Davidic covenant (cf. Leslie Allen, *Psalms 101–150. Word Biblical Commentary 21* (Waco: Word Books, 1983), p. 81). However, a few see this as a Hasmonean composition perhaps justifying Simon Maccabeus royal priesthood (ca. 142–143 B.C.) on the basis of a tenuous acrostic (Simeon) beginning each verse.

¹⁹ *Forever* (עוֹלָם) indicates perpetuity in time (e.g., Pss. 106:1, 31, 48; 107:1; 111:5, 8–9).

²⁰ The other Biblical instances of this word indicate a comparison meaning *manner* or *likeness* or *concern* (Ec. 3:18; 7:14; 8:2). The words could indicate *because* or *in the case of* as in Job 5:8, but this meaning would not fit this Psalm context. Likewise, the LXX Ps. 109:4 statement here of κατὰ τὴν τᾶξιν indicates the *quality* or *manner* or *condition of likeness* so that if it had been preceded by the preposition ἐν the possibility of a fixed order of priests would be more likely (cf. BAG, p. 811).

In Qumran an eschatological priest was to be associated, if not equated with Melchizedek. Marvin Pate summarizes the primary document for this view, *11QMelchizedek* as interpreting the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:13)²¹ and the return from the Babylonian exile²² (Isa. 61:1-3)²³ as ultimately fulfilled in the Qumran community.

Three points dominate the work:

1. The DSS people are the true inheritors of the land of Israel (*11QMelch* 2:1-4).
2. They have followed the true interpretation of the law (*11QMelch* 2:20-24); therefore Melchizedek, the heavenly priest, has made atonement for their sins (*11QMelch* 2:6-9).
3. When Melchizedek, the heavenly priest, wages eschatological war against those who follow Belial, which have departed from the true Torah (*11QMelch* 2:5; 11-13; 25), the Essenes will be vindicated and rule with him (*11QMelch* 2:10-11, 14-24; cf. *IQM* 17:1-9, where Michael most likely is to be equated with Melchizedek).

The purpose of the Essenes' aligning themselves with Melchizedek was as the true descendants of Aaron (see *CD* 6:2-6; *IQsa* 2), to legitimate their interpretation of the law of Moses over against the Jerusalem leadership's reading of the Torah.²⁴

Melchizedek is described in Qumran as *elohim* in his role as eschatological judge.²⁵ However, the *elohim* are plural here for he is standing among the *elohim* and exacting the vengeance for our God (*elohenu*). However, the Qumran interpreter takes the *elohenu* to refer to Melchizedek and cites passages which he takes to be angels judging fallen angels.²⁶ In this role of judging angels and the saints, Melchizedek is also "the Messiah of the Spirit" who cultivates a people for Himself.²⁷ This identifies Melchizedek with the Messiah of Daniel 9:26, "After sixty-two weeks the Anointed One shall be cut off."²⁸ After this undeveloped death, Melchizedek announces Jubilee comfort and rules over "all the sons of righteousness who uphold the covenant."²⁹ There is no second Temple Jewish echo of who this Melchizedek might be and when he comes.

²¹ *11QMelch* 7; for text and analysis of this document cf. Paul Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchireša'.* *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 10* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981).

²² *11QMelch* 6.

²³ Parts of Isaiah 61:1-3 are quoted or alluded to in *11QMelch* 15-18.

²⁴ Pate, *Communities*, p. 123; cf. Yigael Yadin, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews" in *Scripta Hierosolymitana. Volume 4, Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. edited by Charim Rabin and Yigael Yadin (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1958), pp. 36-55.

²⁵ *11QMelch* 10-11, 13-14. This *elohim* view was interpreted late in the fourth century by Eliphanius of Salamis as indicative of divinity (*Panarion* 55.7.3) and some others have followed his view. Especially a fifth century A.D. Gnostic sect referred to as the Melchizedekians (cf. Fred Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition*, pp. 89-113; Birger A. Pearson, "The Figure of Melchizedek in Gnostic Literature" in *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity: Studies in Antiquity & Christianity* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990], pp. 108-123).

²⁶ *11QMelch.* 24-25 citing: Pss. 82:1; 7:8-9; 82:2; Isa. 52:7.

²⁷ *11QMelch.* 18.

²⁸ *11QMelch.* 18.

²⁹ *11QMelch.* 19-25.

It is broadly acknowledged that there is similarity between Melchizedek here and the archangel Michael of the *War Scroll*, though the two are never equated in any Qumran document.³⁰ F. Garcia Martinez has even suggested that Melchizedek may be identified with “the Son of God” from another Qumran document, the *Aramaic Apocalypse*.³¹

William Schniedewind suggests that the Melchizedek tradition at Qumran should be read as a dualism with a rival figure the chief evil angel *Melchiresha* (king of wickedness) in *4QAmran* (4Q543–548) and *4QBenedictions* (4Q280).³² This *Melchiresha* leads an angelic rebellion from God, so that these Melchizedek texts describe their climactic demise at the judgment meted out by Melchizedek.

2 *Enoch* 71–72 describes a Melchizedek tradition that may be later than Hebrews.³³ In 2 *Enoch*, “Melchizedek” is a title, with several “according to the order of Melchizedek,” after the pattern of the greatest Melchizedek described in Genesis. This one great Melchizedek was born “fully developed” as a three year old with birth mark of the high priest upon him, and thus he must have been protectively hidden in the Garden of Eden for seven years by the agency of Michael, the archangel. This great Melchizedek is then established at the center of the creation as the high priest and head of the order of Melchizedeks.³⁴ Abraham comes upon him as in Genesis and is honored by him.

Mainstream Judaism marginalizes the Qumran and Enochian constructs of Melchizedek, reducing him back to a human king-priest. For example, Josephus and Philo describe Melchizedek simply as a human righteous king of Jerusalem after the Genesis pattern.³⁵ The second century Aramaic *Targum Neofiti* and the *Fragment Targum* (and later *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*) identified Melchizedek as Noah’s son Shem, who they say served as high priest before God. All the Ethiopic copies the manuscript *Jubilees* 13:25–29 recount Abraham having a conversation with the king of Sodom, without Melchizedek even entering the story, and only that the Levitical priests have the right to receive tithes in Israel. Latter rabbinic traditions identify that this Shem-Melchizedek high priesthood was transferred to Aaron through Abraham. For example, *b. Zebah*. 62a read Psalm 110:4 as “You [Abraham] are a priest forever.” This might be a Jewish reaction to Christian Melchizedek teaching about Jesus Christ. However, even within mainstream Judaism *b. Sukkah* 52b identifies Melchizedek as a human priest who translated into heaven (like occurred to Enoch) and would reappear in the messianic age.

Likewise, in mainstream Judaism, the Levitical priests took on the role of priest for Israel without an oath because they are born into a genetic lineage of priests. They can operate in this way because God earlier called Aaron and his lineage to this ministry

³⁰ *IQM* 9:14–16.

³¹ *4Q* “Son of God” or *4Q246*; cf. W. M. Schniedewind, “Melchizedek, Traditions of” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, edited by Craig Evans & Stanley Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 694.

³² W. M. Schniedewind, “Melchizedek, Traditions of” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, p. 694.

³³ 2 *Enoch* 71–72 manuscripts A and J. Charles A. Gieschen, “The Different Functions of a Similar Melchizedek Tradition in 2 *Enoch* and the Epistle of Hebrews” in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 148. Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 5*. edited by Craig Evans and James Sanders (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 364–379.

³⁴ 2 *En.* 71:35 [J].

³⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 1.10.2; Philo, *Leg. All.* 3.25–26.

(Heb. 5:4; Ex. 28:1; Num. 3:10; 18:1).³⁶ Obviously, there were a lot of these priests to carry out the sacrifices offered in the court as proscribed by the Law because the task was large and they would eventually die (Heb. 7:23; 9:6). However, by this time in second Temple Judaism, the high priest had become a political appointment at the caprice of the Herodian king or Roman governor. Under this arrangement there were twenty eight high priests from 37 B.C. to A.D. 70, so family members within the best endowed priestly families would pass the role around (Mt. 26:3, 57; Lk. 3:2; Jn. 11:49; 18:13–14, 24; Acts 4:6; 23:2, 4; 24:1). So not only was there continual turnover of the Levitical priests, there was fairly rapid turn over of the high priest.

None of the gospels develop Jesus in a priestly manner. James Dunn suggests that the reasons for this were: 1) Jesus descent was known well enough to establish Him as in Judah and to be Davidic, and to exclude Him from that of a priestly lineage of Aaron (Mt. 1:1–17; Lk. 3:23–33; Heb. 7:14), and 2) the gospel writers considered that it would be inappropriate to create such facts.³⁷ Such is the case, even though Jesus quotes from Psalm 110:1 to elevate their Jewish understanding, “If David calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” (Mt. 22:41–45; Mk. 12:35–37; Lk. 20:41–44).

Hebrews identifies that Melchizedek appears in Genesis as king of Salem to meet Abraham (Heb. 7:1–10). Hebrews identifies that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, because the lesser is blessed by the greater (Heb. 7:7). Additionally, this sentiment is extended to Melchizedek as greater than Aaron through a figurative analogy (Heb. 7:9 “so to speak”/καὶ ὥς ἔπος εἰπεῖν). So this text is not trying to teach a biological and theological seminalism that the subsequent generations are actually within the previous generations, participating in the deeds of the previous generation. However, on a literary analogy (“so to speak”) Levi, who collects tithes from Israel paid tithes to Melchizedek because Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek and literary speaking Levi was within Abraham thus paying tithes to Melchizedek (Heb. 7:4–10). Thus, in Hebrews’ argument Melchizedek being greater than Abraham further identifies that Melchizedekian priests are greater than Levitical priests.

This literary analogy points out that Levi and his sons are mortal humans in order to carry the literary analogy further into the issue of genealogy, whereas in contrast Melchizedek is described to “live on” (Heb. 7:8, ζῆν). Hebrews identifies this Melchizedek in this Genesis narrative as “Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither the beginning of days nor end of life” to present the point that “he abides a priest perpetually” (Heb. 7:1–3, μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές). If Melchizedek actually did not have parentage nor beginning, then he would be a divine or angelic being. Such a view fosters both interpretations of: 1) the Christian interpretation of Melchizedek as a pre-incarnate visitation of Jesus Christ,³⁸ and 2) the angelic dualism of Archangel Michael/Melchizedek³⁹ with a rival figure the chief evil angel *Melchiresha* (king of wickedness).⁴⁰ However, the emphasized metaphors do not speak of the

³⁶ *Sir.* 45.6–7a; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.188–92.

³⁷ James Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 655.

³⁸ J.W. Thompson argues for this position in “The Conceptual Background and Purpose of the Midrash in Hebrews VII.” *NovT* 19(1977): 209–23.

³⁹ *IQM* 9:14–16.

⁴⁰ *4QAmran* (4Q543–548); *4QBenedictions* (4Q280); W. M. Schniedewind, “Melchizedek, Traditions of” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, p. 694.

eternality of Melchizedek, but rather that he is a perpetually living and functioning priest (Heb. 7:3, μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές, 8, ζῆ). Furthermore, nowhere in this text does our author ever identify that Jesus Christ *is* Melchizedek. Instead, Hebrews repeatedly identifies Jesus as fitting into a previous pattern provided by the historical figure of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:15, 17, 21–22). Thus Hebrews’ emphasis is that Jesus is not Melchizedek but in certain ways Jesus follows Melchizedek’s priesthood pattern. Thus the literary analogy is still being developed, and the point is that there is no record of Melchizedek’s human genealogy in Genesis, so one can think of him as appearing and then disappearing, so that he can become a metaphor for perpetually remaining as a high priest (Heb. 7:3, 8).⁴¹ Some interpreters conjecture that this no genealogy move was an attempt to establish Jesus as the “Messiah of Aaron” by a mystical way.⁴² Hebrews does not develop it that way for there is an extended argument developing that the Mosaic Covenant and the priesthood of Aaron must be changed because the mortal men of Aaronic priesthood could not bring about perfection for the people (Heb. 7:8, 11–13, 23; 8:6–10:18). So Jesus perpetuity as a Melchizedekian priest goes further than the climax of a lineage (“Messiah of Aaron”) to the climax of all priests (a perpetual Melchizedekian priest). Hebrews three times quotes portions of Psalm 110:4, but always includes that Jesus is a priest *forever* (Heb. 5:6; 7:17, 21, αἰῶνα indicating perpetuity in time). While the high priests of Aaron were still functioning in series, Jesus became a Melchizedekian High Priest perpetually.

Jesus is identified as a superior high priest because He did not glorify Himself to become high priest, but became a Melchizedekian priest with an oath that God initiated: “The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, Thou art a priest forever like Melchizedek” (Heb. 5:5–6; 7:20–21; Ps. 110:4). The oath with regard to Jesus’ priesthood is fused with His kingship in that Psalm 2:7 is also seen as the divine oath to initiate Jesus into priestly ministry, since it initiates Jesus into kingly ministry and the Melchizedek role is King-Priest: “Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee” (Heb. 1:5; 5:5; Ps. 2:7). Within the chapter on “Jesus as King” I will develop that the Son affirmations from the Father at Jesus baptism and transfiguration as evidence that the Sonship role of Psalm 2 is operative. In both Psalm 2 and 110 there is military conquest imagery prefiguring the judging role of messianic priest and king within second Temple Judaism, but Hebrews does not develop this of Jesus within the priestly imagery, like Hebrews does for Jesus as King. Whereas, the priestly development coming after a prolonged section of Hebrews warning about the need for *today* entering into faith and rest by following Christ in His exodus way to Kingdom (Heb. 3:7, 13, 15; 4:7), the *todayness* is emphasized showing the perpetual need to be faithful. Likewise, this same *todayness* is emphasized for divine support and authority to Jesus’ Priesthood role. Not

⁴¹ Bruce Demarest develops this position (“Hebrews 7:3, A Crux *Interpretum* Historically Considered,” *EvQ* 49[1977]: 141–62) and argues additionally that if Melchizedek was a historical figure other than Christ (not Thompson’s view) that he would encroach upon the eternal priesthood of Christ.

⁴² Y. Yadin, “The Dead Scrolls and the Epistle of Hebrews,” *ScrHier* 4(1958): 36–55; M. Delcor, “Melchizedek from Genesis to the Qumran Texts and the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *JSJ* 2(1971): 115–35; C. A. Gieschen, “The Different Functions of a Similar Melchizedek Tradition in 2 Enoch and the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals. JSNT Sup. 148*, ed. C.A. Evans and J.A. Sanders (Sheffield: JSOT, 1997), pp. 364–79.

only has God unusually initiated Jesus by an oath into Melchizedekian Priesthood, but God affirms this distinct role which Jesus performs on a daily basis of *today*.

Levitical priests offer gifts and sacrifices for sins to purify the flesh of the worshipper, but the benefits from these don't transform the worshipper (Heb. 5:1; 9:13). However, such priests "can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; and because of it he is obligated to offer for sins, as for the people, so also for himself" (Heb. 5:2–3). Through these means the priest can help the people of the old covenant with the possibility of drawing near to God (Heb. 10:1; 11:6). However, Levitical priests are described as weak and thus useless in their inability to perfect the worshipper within their conscience (Heb. 7:11, 18–19, 28; 9:9; 10:2–3). That is, there is no guarantee of internal transformation for the worshipper through the ministry of the Levitical priests. In fact, with the repeated sacrifices, there is repeated reminder of their sins, which can work against a conscience that is cleansed (Heb. 10:2–3).

Jesus becomes identified as a Melchizedekian priest on the basis of an indestructible life (Heb. 7:16). He does not become a priest by some physical requirement like a genealogy. Rather, in the same internal manner in which the New Covenant transforms our lives, so Jesus likewise is determined to be a priest like Melchizedek due to the character of His life. So Jesus character is critical to His station as High Priest. "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (Heb. 7:26–27).

Jesus is both victorious as High Priest and sympathetic to our weakness. The word "sympathize" (συμπαθεῖν) always includes an element of active help (Heb. 4:15; cf. 10:34).⁴³ Which concept goes further in benefiting us than the priest's "gentle" (μετριοπαθεῖν) activity which is a *restraint and moderation of his feelings so that he can gently* help the ignorant and misguided (Heb. 5:2).⁴⁴ In this context the emphasis is that as High Priest, Jesus helps we who are helpless, weak, ignorant, misguided and prone to be judged. Jesus capacity to provide this significant help is because He as human "has been tempted (πειρασθείς) in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 2:17–18; 4:15; 5:2). The tribulation (πειρασθείς) which Jesus experienced made Him unusually able to come to the aid of other humans in temptation (πειραζομένοις, Heb. 2:18). In fact, Jesus in His humanity grew through the process of temptation such that it was instrumental in developing human maturity, especially equipping Him to be a merciful (ἐλεήμων) and faithful High Priest, so as to accomplish *merciful forgiveness* (ἰλάσκεσθαι)⁴⁵ for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:17–18). That is, Jesus learned

⁴³ 4 Macc. 4:25; 13:23; T. Sim. 3:6; T. Benj. 4:4.

⁴⁴ E. J. Yarnold, "Metriopathein apud Heb. 5, 2" VD 38(1960): 149–55; the fact that this gentleness is extended to the ignorant and misguided may show a further limitation of the Levitical high priest who limited such atoning aid to sins committed in ignorance (Heb. 5:2; 9:7; Lev. 4:2, 13, 22, 27; 5:2–4; Num. 15:30–31), while Jesus sacrifice transforms us in rebellion.

⁴⁵ Heb. 2:17, ἰλάσκεσθαι is similar in meaning to the other N.T. instance in the sinner's prayer "God be merciful to me the sinner" (Lk. 18:13, ἰλάσθητί).

obedience from the things which He suffered (Heb. 5:8). This suffering included beyond the initial temptations, all the way through His Gethsemane prayer to His death on a cross (Heb. 5:7; Phil. 2:7–8). The Gethsemane prayer develops the cup of God’s wrath, a wrathful metaphor usually of severe judgment and in this case of His impending death (Mt. 26:37–38; Mk. 14:33–34; Pss. 11:6; 75:8; Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15, 17, 27; 49:12; 51:7; Rev. 16:1–18:6). In fact, in Hebrews such suffering (ἐπαθεν) especially indicates Jesus death (Heb. 2:9–10; 9:26; 13:12), though Jesus followers join Him in experiencing suffering while continuing to follow Him alive (Heb. 10:32). One aspect of this is that He can come to the aid of those who are tempted (Heb. 2:18). This tested perfection remains Jesus’ human moral condition thus extending beyond the grave into His current condition of priest (Heb. 5:9; 7:28). It is this condition of an indestructible life that makes Jesus uniquely qualified to be the Melchizedekian High Priest (Heb. 5:8–10; 7:16). From this vantage point Jesus offers Himself to help in our time of need (Heb. 4:16). It is thus from this lived basis, that Jesus became the source of everlasting salvation for all who obey Him.

The exhortation to obey takes a particular priestly⁴⁶ direction to prayer. The force of the verb “draw near” (προσερχώμεθα) is present tense indicating in this context the repeated activity to draw near in prayer (Heb. 4:16; 7:19; 10:19–22). “Let us *again and again draw near* with bold frankness to the throne of grace” is cultic imagery through which we followers of Jesus enter into a priestly activity of prayer and God’s generosity, so that we may receive this help from Him in our time of need. However, the throne imagery speaks of accessing the Ark of the Covenant and thus alludes to benefits of the Day of Atonement, which we developed in the chapter of “Jesus as Sacrifice” as benefits to meet our needs. Whereas, in the Day of Atonement only the high priest would draw near to God’s throne/ark, now all the followers draw near to God’s throne in prayer because Jesus remains at the heavenly throne of God (Heb. 4:14; 1:13).

Jesus as Priest has become the guarantee of a better covenant (Heb. 7:22; 8:6). In Jesus’ High Priest ministry, He has completed His sacrifice⁴⁷ and sat down at the right hand of God’s throne with continued access to God in the true heavenly tabernacle (Heb. 8:1–2; 9:11; 10:12). This heavenly tabernacle supersedes the earthly real tabernacle, since the earthly is merely a copy.⁴⁸ Furthermore, with the temple still standing before

⁴⁶ In Peter the priesthood is primarily a corporate functioning thing as the church suffers persecution, while declaring God’s glory and doing good (1 Pet. 2:5–3:17), but Jesus offers up Himself as a hint to His priestly ministry (1 Pet. 2:23).

⁴⁷ Cf. chapter on “Jesus as Sacrifice” for comparisons of Jesus’ New Covenant sacrifice as superior than Mosaic Day of Atonement sacrifices.

⁴⁸ Often the better place of heaven is developed through a Platonic framework but this is foreign to the text. In Platonism the heavenly forms are the only reality, with the earthly objects being merely a shadow of this reality imposed upon our senses through the recollection of our souls’ pre-incarnate life among those heavenly forms. In a Platonism if the truth is present in the heavenly then it is present in the earthly as well, because the earthly is a mere shadow of the heavenly. Here in Hebrews 9:23–25 both the heavenly Tabernacle and the earthly copies of the heavenly Tabernacle are real as evidenced by the Hebraic pattern of Merkabah mysticism. That is, both the heavenly and earthly Temples are real and different things may be occurring in these different realities. For example, the heavenly Temple is normally thought to be where God’s presence dwells (e.g., Isa. 6:4) but the amazing thing is that with the cleansed Tabernacle God dwells on earth, with the Ark of the Covenant serving as His throne (e.g., Ex. 40:34–38). However, the uncleanness of the earthly Temple dislodges the divine presence from the earthly temple, while it remains in the heavenly Temple (e.g., Ezek. 1:4–28; 11:22–25). The different conditions of the pure heavenly

the Jerusalem destruction, Hebrews identifies that the Holy Spirit has not disclosed the way into the Holy Place while the Tabernacle is still standing (Heb. 9:8). Presumably this condition changes with the Romans destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. and Jesus institution of the New Covenant in His death sacrifice offered in the heavenly Tabernacle. This sacrifice of Himself is better than the Levitical sacrifices because It cleanses the conscience from dead works (Heb. 9:14; 8:10; 10:16, 22). With this cleansing under way, Jesus only needs to offer Himself once for all time (Heb. 9:28; 10:10–12). This cleansing is the internal transformation of conscience to match our real condition of forgiven by God grounded in Jesus' sacrifice (Heb. 8:12; 9:28; 10:10, 12, 17–18). This cleansing of conscience is the perfecting accomplished (τετελείωκεν) for those who are set apart (Heb. 10:14). With this New Covenant cleansing accomplished, we can draw near to God with confidence, corporately encouraging each other to do so (Heb. 10:22–25). In contrast, Peter identifies this role to be that of our responsibly maintaining a good conscience (1 Pet. 3:16, 21). However, Hebrews urges his readership to pray that the author could maintain this good conscience (Heb. 13:18).

Jesus as Priest saves completely⁴⁹ those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:25). Thus *completeness of salvation from Jesus* is not accomplished in Jesus past activity in His death, but *in Jesus' continued life in praying*⁵⁰ for those who follow Him in drawing near to God. Which means that as High Priest, it is Jesus' effectiveness in prayer that is critical in completing our salvation. The Gethsemane prayer (when Jesus offered up prayers for God to save Him from death) becomes an example of Jesus piety and also priestly effectiveness in prayer (Heb. 5:7; Mt. 26:37–44; Mk. 14:33–41; Lk. 22:42–44). Jesus prayed, "If it is possible let this cup pass from Me" (Mt. 26:39, 42, 44; Mk. 14:36, 39, 41; Lk. 22:42). Jesus is not trying to get out of His death in a moment of weakness. Rather He knows His death is imminent. He has been prophesying throughout His ministry and just a few moments before at the Passover that He was about to die. So since Jesus is not asking "Rather do not let Me die" then His request must be: "Father let the wrathful judgment pass on from Me after I die." That is, Jesus is praying for His own resurrection on the other side of the judgment.⁵¹ Matthew 26:42 implies that the cup cannot pass away unless He drinks it. This would mean that Jesus' "will" is for release from judgment to obtain resurrection, though He is open to the Father's will if it should run counter and damn Him. As understood, Jesus actually received from the Father the passing on of the cup in resurrection after His death, as Jesus had asked for in His prayer. This interpretation best fits the description of the Gethsemane prayer in Hebrews 5:7 as being

Temple and the occasionally unclean earthly Temple show that they are both real in this multidimensional Hebraic framework rather than the idealism of the earthly shadows, that a Platonism would portray.

⁴⁹ The completeness of salvation (Heb. 7:25 σωζειν εις το παντελες δυναται) shows no lack since it is salvation to the fullness of power, but it is not built upon completed fact or accomplishment of Christ, but rather the continued character of Jesus life which evidences His persistence as High Priest praying for those who follow Him in drawing near to God.

⁵⁰ Heb. 7:25, παντοτε ζων εις το εντυγχανειν υπερ αυτων; this identifies that Jesus joins the Holy Spirit in interceding for the saints (Rom. 8:26–27).

⁵¹ Cf. Craig Blaising, "Gethsemane a Prayer of Faith," *JETS* 22(1979): 333–43; this view is not sufficiently countered by the disjunction (contrary to Gundry, *Mark A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], p. 870) because Jesus is willing to be damned (as the alternative to resurrection) if the Father wills, but Jesus asks for resurrection.

answered in the affirmative since the word “heard” means a positive answer (e.g., 1 Jn. 5:14–15 and in the Psalms). So while the cup briefly alludes to the precariousness of Jesus’ death, the passage actually emphasizes the effectiveness of Jesus’ prayer life to obtain resurrection on the other side of death. So as a High Priest He is unusually effective in praying because of His piety (Heb. 5:7). This is a profound encouragement for it means in His Priestly ministry that Jesus saves completely those who draw near to God through Him, since *He always lives to make intercession for them* (Heb. 7:25).

Jesus would likely be praying for the believer’s welfare especially in the ways He is accomplishing for them in the context. So Jesus is likely interceding that the believer could continue within the suffering they endure. A likely petition is that the believer would be transformed in the New Covenant to a good conscience and obedience. Jesus would likely be praying that we enter into an intimate prayer life with God, extending His priestly ministry into our own. Assuredly, Jesus is praying for our needs. As Melchizedekian High Priest, Jesus lives to make intercession for us.

Jesus Prayer of John 17

After the upper room discourse, we have an extended prayer which Jesus prayed showing His concern for relationship and petition for His disciples. Some commentators follow Cyril of Alexandria in identifying this as Jesus’ High Priestly prayer, but there is nothing in the text to specifically identify this prayer as an expression of Jesus’ priestly ministry.

Jesus prayed for the glorification of Himself through His death (Jn. 17:1). While the synoptic gospels and Acts describe His ascension to the divine throne room, with His Kingship and divinity as glorification (Mt. 19:28; 24:30; 25:31; Mk. 10:37; 13:26; Lk. 9:26, 32; 21:27; 24:26; Acts 7:55), Jesus in the Gospel of John identifies that His death is His hour of glorification (Jn. 7:39; 12:16, 23–24; 13:31; 16:14; 17:1, 5). The death becomes a glorification in that like a seed it enables Jesus to bear much salvific fruit (Jn. 12:23–24). The fruit for which Jesus prays concerning His glorification is the opportunity to glorify the Father, as Jesus has already been doing in accomplishing the work that God gave Him to do (Jn. 17:1, 4–5). Jesus acknowledges that this glorification of Himself is already occurring in that He has been granted all authority over all life⁵² (Jn. 17:2). However, Jesus asks the Father that this glorification would entail the glory that He had in His pre-birth divinity (Jn. 17:5). This glorification entails God giving people to Jesus, so that Jesus might give them everlasting life. Such everlasting life, like other soteriological metaphors in John are presented usually in the present tense as ongoing. The recipient’s already have everlasting life as a present knowing relationship with the true God and Christ Jesus whom He sent (Jn. 17:3, 25–26). These disciples receiving Jesus’ message have come to know that all that Jesus said was given Him from the Father, so Jesus’ message is also that of the Father Who sent Him (Jn. 17:7–8, 14). Their reception of this message entering them into this unique relationship with God, has glorified Jesus in His relationship with the Father (Jn. 17:10). Their reception of this message has also marked Jesus’ disciples off as not of the world, since Jesus is not of the

⁵² The word in the text is “flesh.”

world (Jn. 17:14, 16). That is, Jesus has sanctified⁵³ or set Himself apart from the world for the benefit of sanctifying the disciples in truth (Jn. 17:19). The disciples' reception of Jesus' message sanctifies them or sets them apart from the world. Thus the world hated Jesus, the Father and His disciples, in that they were not part of the world (Jn. 15:19, 23–25; 17:14). Jesus sends His disciples out into the world to continue His ministry which the Father initiated by sending Him out into the world (Jn. 17:18).

In light of this, Jesus prays for the disciples because they are His and the Father's people, and because Jesus will be no longer in the world bodily to protect them (Jn. 17:9–11). Jesus' petition is that these disciples would be mystically kept within God's name with Trinitarian unity (Jn. 17:11). This prayer is extended beyond the eleven to all those who believe in Jesus through their word (Jn. 17:20). Jesus prays for five specific requests to implement this prayer. First, Jesus' petitions for His disciple's protection within the divine name (Jn. 17:12, 15). This request reflects the Isaianic theological idea that "name" stands for the person of God (Isa. 4:1; 26:8; 52:6). This divine protection is an extension of that which Jesus gave the disciples when He was with them bodily, so that only the son of perdition⁵⁴ should perish that the Scripture might be fulfilled (Jn. 17:12). This prayer for protection especially focuses on God keeping them from the evil one⁵⁵ (Jn. 17:15). A second request is that the disciples might have Jesus' joy made full in themselves (Jn. 17:13). That is, this joy serves as protection and comfort for the disciples in the midst of the world hating them. Jesus' third request is that the disciples would be sanctified or set apart in God's truth (Jn. 17:17). This petition is realized in the disciples continuing to follow Jesus' life pattern of the Father's truth as they go out into the world. So not only has Jesus left us an example but the Spirit is our enabler while Christ continues to uphold us in prayer for this end. A fourth request that Jesus prays for His disciples is that of a mystical interpenetrating unity (Jn. 17:11, 21). This unity is as intense as the Trinitarian unity in that of the mystical interpenetration. Jesus prays "that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they may be in Us" (Jn. 17:21). There is no division in this unity. There is no one beyond the concern and presence of the others in this interpenetration. In this we are mystically protected within the Father and Christ. The Father's and Christ's concerns include our welfare, joy, growth, glory, and expression within Them. While we Christians are not rendered into God in this mystical mutual interpenetration, Jesus glory extends to us as well. That is, we become divinely born children of the light, who reflect the revelational salvific light

⁵³ Normally ἁγιάζω is not used as a sacrifice, though it is used of the consecration of the first born (LXX: Ex. 13:2; Deut. 15:19). That Jesus does this consecration for their sake (ὕπὲρ αὐτῶν) does not mean that this is a vicarious sacrifice image, for it is used in John 11:51 as simply a replacement for the nation and John 15:13 generically or maybe mimetically. That the disciples are to be sanctified as well in this context argues that the sanctification that Jesus has accomplished in the context is a living separation from the world that the disciples are to follow in without dying.

⁵⁴ "Son of perdition" is a semitic idiom (ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας) for "the man destined for death" or "under the influence of death." It is similar to that in Isaiah 57:4 LXX τέκνα ἀπωλείας which describes the lying leaders to be judged by God during Israel's captivity and is identical to the description of the Man of Sin in league with Satan in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας.

⁵⁵ With the article, τοῦ πονηροῦ is more likely to mean "the evil one" as in Matthew 6:13 rather than ambiguous evil.

of the Son (Jn. 1:5, 9–13; 8:12). Such a mystical concept of community shared revelational salvific glory is present in Qumran's *Community Rule*:

All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all the children of falsehood are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness...And as for the visitation of all who walk in [the divine] spirit, it shall be healing, great peace in a long life, and fruitfulness, together with everlasting blessing and everlasting joy in life without end, a crown of glory and a garment of majesty in unending light.⁵⁶

While this mystical glorification at Qumran especially extends to their community worship,⁵⁷ Jesus' mystical glorification of His disciples is especially accomplished in the unified love relationship in the Christian community (Jn. 17:21–26). So that, as Christians love, they are reflecting the divine glory present in God's love for the Son and Their (Father and Son's) love for these Christians. A fifth request that Jesus prays is that His disciples may be where He is, as it will facilitate this mystical interpenetrating unity and love (Jn. 17:24). How would this last request be realized, for Jesus is bodily with the disciples only a few more hours until His death? Perhaps it is a prayer for Jesus' resurrection discipleship time. However, if prayed today by Christ, it would be a prayer for the disciples afterlife continuation in Kingdom and everlasting life with Jesus.

Jesus' petitions extend to the world, so that the world might see this intimate unifying love within Jesus' disciples, so that some among the world might believe that God sent the Son, and enter into this relationship with them (God, Jesus and the disciples; Jn. 17:21).

Jesus Advocacy Role in 1 John 1:1–2:2

In 1 John the prayer and advocacy by Jesus penetrates to a deeper level of salvation than in Hebrews. The fact that Jesus is described as Paraclete in this instance, could fit the Greek legal "defender" advocate role in this unique Biblical instance but the metaphors here are mixed with priestly imagery and elsewhere in John and the O.T.

παράκλητον stands primarily for the roles of help, comfort, and prophesy (e.g., LXX: Gen. 24:67; Job 2:11; Isa. 10:32; 21:2; 22:4; 35; 38:16; 40:1–2, 11; Jn. 14:16–18, 26; 15:26–27; 16:7–14; Acts 2:33; 1 Jn. 2:1; 4:6; 5:6).⁵⁸ In John propitiation (ἰλασμός) is described as referring to Jesus Himself⁵⁹ but it is tied to his ministries of advocacy⁶⁰ in

⁵⁶ *Com. Rule* columns 3 and 4.

⁵⁷ *1QH* 11.19–38.

⁵⁸ *Jubilee* 25:14; 2 Macc. 6:12; *Testament of Judah* 20.1, 5; Qumran's *Com. Rule*, column 3, 4.21; *IQS* 2.3; 3.13–26; *4Q381* frag. 69, line 4; cf. George Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John*. *SNTSMS* 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

⁵⁹ Grammatically, the personal pronoun (αὐτός) focuses the attention on the person of Jesus (Stanley Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* [Worcester: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992], p. 129, paragraph 2.1.1; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934], p. 676), even though grammarians argue on whether such use would make it emphatic (some for emphasis: F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and revised by Robert Funk [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961], p. 145, paragraph 277; G. B. Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of NT Greek*, trans.

the context (which would be then a priestly function) and providing everlasting life (1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10). While Hebrews and Pauline propitiation focuses on the death of sacrifice Jesus, in John this propitiation is extended into His continued advocacy role, from the basis of having died for our sins (1 Jn. 1:7; 2:1–2). So this Johannean advocacy theme extends Hebrews' role of priestly intercession soteriologically. That is, Hebrews frames our life on the narrow way as heading toward Kingdom,⁶¹ while John places the salvation motifs as primarily in the present tense: on going believers remain within everlasting life as a present possession.⁶²

Like most of John's larger writings, 1 John is anchored by an introduction of the historical Jesus (1 Jn. 1:1–4). The Word of Life was in the beginning, heard, seen, handled and proclaimed as everlasting life from Father to us. This proclamation of Christ is the gospel because it results in everlasting life received by its audience (1 Jn. 1:2). This everlasting life proclamation results in fellowship (1 Jn. 1:3 κοινωνία). That is, John's concept of fellowship is not a higher level of spirituality within the Christian life; fellowship is the Christian life with the emphasis on relationship. Fellowship is akin to saying relationship. Such a relationship is on going with God, Christ and Christians. Reception of the proclaimed gospel brings "fellowship with us" (John, perhaps apostles or other Christians). Yet this fellowship with one another also connects the gospel receiver in a fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 1:3, 7). John is overjoyed as his readers realize that receiving gospel brings them into fellowship with God, Christ and other Christians.

This gospel message heard from Christ and announced identifies God as light, such that all darkness is excluded (1 Jn. 1:5). This approach continues the sectarian Jewish way of light at Qumran developed in the previous section, in opposition to the broad way of darkness. This Johannine gospel approach sets up tests of life⁶³ which extends for the rest of the epistle. We don't know who the alternative to true fellowship with Christ is, for it might be several alternatives rather than one (e.g. Cerrinthian Gnosticism). What we do know is that 1 John 1:5–10 develops alternating statements of inclusion and exclusion. So that if someone claims to have a relationship with Christ (as in 1 Jn. 1:6) there is enough to test whether in fact the claimant has this everlasting life. These tests are apparent in instances of exclusion (such as 1 Jn. 1:6, 8, 10). For example, if one claims to have a relationship with Christ but his life identifies him as within a lifestyle of darkness (not receiving Christ's revelation, nor reflecting Christ's life in his

W. F. Moulton [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882], p. 190; others usually see emphasis but not true in all examples: Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 676; J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of NT Greek. I. Prolegomena* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908], p. 85).

⁶⁰ Propitiation is tied to Jesus' advocacy, rather than Jesus' death in the 1 John 2:1–2 statement:

παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον· **2** καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν.

⁶¹ Doug Kennard, "Warnings in the Book of Hebrews: The Two Ways Tradition," a paper presented at ETS, March 1998.

⁶² This point is not built from taking the present tense as absolute time but on the context of 1 John that identifies the propitiation with Jesus' continuing advocacy. Cf. John's perspective of discipleship in the chapter on "Discipler."

⁶³ Robert Law, *The Tests of Life. A Study of the First Epistle of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968) is an excellent Biblical theology which develops this theme throughout the whole of 1 John. One of the major purposes of the writing of 1 John is that the readers might know that they have everlasting life (1 Jn. 5:13).

life) then he lies and does not practice the truth.⁶⁴ Furthermore, if anyone claims that they are in a condition of no sin or as though they have not sinned, they deceive themselves and the truth is not in them. God's Word declares that we do sin. So such a liar, attempt to make God a liar and in the end identifies that God's Word is not in such as these.

In contrast, if we walk in the light as God Himself is in the light, our lives demonstrate the righteous quality as to identify that we have relationship with God and one another. Or if we characteristically publically acknowledge our sins,⁶⁵ God demonstrates Himself to be faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins. In fact, unlike the reluctant pagan gods who need to be cajoled into forgiveness, God initiated propitiation by sending His Son as an expression of His love (1 Jn. 4:10). Faithfulness and righteousness are demonstrated as present characteristics of God in His forgiving condition.⁶⁶ These things are written so that John's audience could be characterized by not sinning but if they do sin there is encouragement.

Here John also emphasizes the presentness⁶⁷ of salvation, in that Jesus Christ presently provides salvific forgiveness as Advocate (1 Jn. 1:7, 9; 2:1–2). Jesus historical death provides the metaphor of the blood of Jesus which makes cleansing possible. However, such salvific forgiveness (in contrast to those who don't have fellowship and everlasting life) is developed in the present⁶⁸ and discussed as present time realizations (of cleansing, forgiveness, propitiation) for the one who presently identifies with God and Christ, and publically acknowledges that they sin. That is Jesus *presently cleanses us* from all sin (1 Jn. 1:7 present tense: καθαρίζει). Likewise, God *is* characteristically faithful and righteous (1 Jn. 1:9 present tense: ἐστίν) in the cleansing and forgiveness process that takes care of all unrighteousness.

That is, Jesus Christ as Advocate is the solution if any of John's readership should sin. As advocate (παράκλητον),⁶⁹ Christ provides a role of championing the believer's cause before God, a real present consolation and encouragement to deal with present salvific needs of sin.

⁶⁴ Such a condition is akin to the Jews who did not abide in Christ's word, but sought to kill Christ (Jn. 8:31, 37). They were of their father the devil, who as a liar has no truth in him (Jn. 8:44). They sought to convict Christ of sin while justifying that in such a move they were not sinners (Jn. 8:46). Christ teaches the truth, so that if anyone does not keep Christ's word they do not practice the truth (Jn. 8:45–46, 51–52). If they claim to know God in such a condition they are liars (Jn. 8:55).

⁶⁵ The word ὁμολογῶμεν means "confess" as in public declaration, never as a form of prayer (Jn. 1:20; 9:22; 12:42; 1 Jn. 1:9; 2:23; 4:2–3, 15). Usually the public declaration is a characteristic of acknowledging Christ. In this instance, the present tense takes on a public characteristic of acknowledging I am a sinner in contrast to the liars who deny their sin.

⁶⁶ From the characteristic use of the present tense and the near context.

⁶⁷ This point is not built from taking the present tense as absolute time but on the context of 1 John that identifies the propitiation with Jesus' continuing advocacy role.

⁶⁸ This point is not built from taking the present tense as absolute time but on the context of 1 John that identifies the present reception of salvific benefits from Jesus' continuing advocacy.

⁶⁹ The word παράκλητον is used repeatedly by John. The Holy Spirit and Christ are similar comforters who provide this kind of encouragement (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:7, 13–14; 1 Jn. 2:1).

Christ is Himself the propitiation in this advocacy role. That is, the reflexive pronoun αὐτὸς identifies that it is Christ *Himself*⁷⁰ and not a historically past deed done. That is, the propitiation is in His contextually developed advocacy role. A historical pattern for this is evident in *4 Maccabees* 6.28–29 where Eleazar the priest fused the role of intercession into the martyrs’ (including his own) mimetic atonement for the sins of the people, thus the priestly intercession continued to apply the atonement to the believer. However, Christ provides a vicarious atonement in John, as was developed in the chapter “Jesus as Sacrifice.” Instead of the Maccabean instance of advocate and death for atonement, *Jesus death provides the means* decisively in a vicarious manner (1 Jn. 1:7 “blood of Jesus”) *by which Jesus present advocacy role as priest propitiates presently for the sins of His people* (1 Jn. 2:2). *The present tense of the propitiation* further identifies Christ Himself in the *present advocacy role as being an ongoing provision to deal with divine appeasement concerning sin* (1 Jn. 2:1–2; 4:10 ἱλασμός).⁷¹ This is an unusual present framing of the issues we saw developed within the chapter “Jesus as Sacrifice” as tied to a deed of offering a sacrifice and climactically Jesus offering Himself. However, the present salvation emphasis in Johannine theology and the advocacy context within which Jesus is referred to as propitiation in person, shift the action to an ongoing ministry of Christ on our behalf. This shouldn’t surprise us because elsewhere (in his gospel and epistles) John presents salvation in the present tense as well. Likewise, the priest’s intercession and sacrifice roles can fuse.⁷² Here they do as Jesus continues to function as Priest. Such a propitiation salvifically deals with sin in the present and brings cleansing and forgiveness for all one’s sin (1 Jn. 1:7, 9; 2:1–2; 4:10). Christ as propitiation is available not merely for those who are already identified with Him and His everlasting life, but for those of the whole world (1 Jn. 2:2). So there is an unlimited availability of Christ as a present salvific propitiation for people’s sins. However, only those who are identified as in relationship with Christ as come in the flesh are beneficiaries of His everlasting life (1 Jn. 1:2–3; 2:2–23; 4:10–16); limiting the extent of propitiation realized to those who actually benefit from it. Furthermore, John has moved the atonement from past historical event of Jesus death to the present active advocacy role of Christ available for all but only efficacious for those who actually benefit by identification with Him. This is consistent with his previous extent of atonement passage (Jn. 3:16 developed in chapter on “Jesus as Sacrifice”) which identified Christ’s salvation as divinely intended to be available for all but only efficacious for those presently believing. Both passages recognize a historical sacrifice event, however 1 John 2:1–2 develops Jesus present advocacy role that forces us to broaden our categories of the extent of atonement. Christ’s propitiation is available for all through His advocacy role but this propitiation is only applied to actual beneficiaries who have faith in Christ.

⁷⁰ F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. Funk (*A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961], p. 148, sect. 283) identify that the reflexive pronoun is “used almost exclusively as the direct complement of the verb referring to the subject.”

⁷¹ This point is not built from taking the present tense as absolute time but on the context of 1 John that identifies the propitiation with Jesus’ continuing present advocacy.

⁷² *4 Macc.* 6.28–29; and in Hebrews we have seen the New Covenant cleansing of conscience to be partly due to Jesus’ sacrifice and partly due to Jesus’ priestly intercession.

Jesus Temptation in the Synoptics

The temptation accounts in the Synoptic gospels serve as a preparation of Jesus for ministry, however Hebrews emphasized the ability to remain faithful during temptation vindicated Jesus' character such that He was divinely declared to be a Melchizedikian High Priest, so I discuss the temptations here because it fits with the emphasis of His priesthood. However, the tempter's repeated gauntlet "if you are the Son of God" in Matthew and Luke could also place this discussion as within the chapter of Messianic King, for it also demonstrates Jesus' impeccability for that role as well. This Kingship emphasis would especially be the case in Matthew's account since the temptations build to the third temptation about kingdoms,⁷³ whereas the Luke version has the second and the third temptations reversed, thus diffusing the kingdom quality and perhaps enhancing Jesus as rival to the Temple⁷⁴ and priests.

The pattern of a temptation including the quoting of Scripture is common in Judaism. For, *b. Sanh.* 89b and 97b are examples in which Satan,⁷⁵ a fallen angel,⁷⁶ tests Abraham by quoting Scripture.⁷⁷ Abraham responds with similar quotations from Scripture. However, Jesus focuses His quotes⁷⁸ more from the core of Deuteronomy's commentary on the first command. So the issue in Jesus' temptation account is more acutely an issue of loyalty to God.

In the wake of Jesus' baptism, Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit and led by the Spirit into the wilderness⁷⁹ to be tempted by the devil (Mt. 4:1; Mk. 1:12–13; Lk. 4:1–2). After⁸⁰ Jesus had been fasting for forty days, Jesus was hungry (Mt. 4:2; Lk. 4:2). The tempter came challenging Him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." This temptation challenges Jesus to be sufficient in Himself as King, rather than depending upon God's provision and truth. To which Jesus responded by citing Deuteronomy 8:3, "Man shall not live on Bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the Mouth of God" (Mt. 4:3–4; Lk. 4:3–4).⁸¹ Then the devil took Jesus into Jerusalem and stood Him on the pinnacle of the Temple⁸² and quoted Psalm 91:11–12 to Jesus "He will give His angels charge concerning you; and on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone." There is some evidence that

⁷³ cf. W.D. Davies and Dale Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), vol. 1, p. 352.

⁷⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1:364.

⁷⁵ Hebrew for "adversary."

⁷⁶ By this time in second Temple Judaism, Satan had become viewed as a fallen angel (Rev. 12:17–12; *Wisd.* 2.24; *LAE* 14–16; *2 En.* 29.4–5; *Pirqe R. El.* 13.14).

⁷⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, vol. 1, pp. 352–3 includes these Jewish texts.

⁷⁸ The quotes are close renditions of LXX.

⁷⁹ The wilderness was a dangerous haunt of evil spirits in Jewish and Christian religion (Isa. 13:21; 24:14 LXX; *Tob.* 8.3; *1 En.* 10.4–5; *4 Macc.* 18.8; *2 Bar.* 10.8; Mt. 12:43=Lk. 11:24; *Tg. Yer.* 1 to Deut. 32:10 and the desert monks went to the desert to combat demons).

⁸⁰ Matthew clearly indicates that the temptation is after the forty days of fasting but some other accounts claim that the temptation occurs during the forty days (e.g., *Ps.-Clem. Hom.* 11.35; 19.2).

⁸¹ Matthew has a fuller citation by Jesus emphasizing Matthew's affirmation of the Mosaic Covenant more fully than Luke's simple disposal of the issue of hunger.

⁸² Perhaps the southeast corner of the temple, creating a drop of 450 feet (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.11.5; Darrel Bock *Luke* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], vol. 1, p. 379). Some also suggest a parallel account of Simon Magus flying over the temples in Rome until Peter's word brings him crashing to the ground (*Acts of Peter* 32, ca. 180–190 A.D.).

personal protective miracles were expected by miracle workers in the first century.⁸³ However, Jesus responded by citing Deuteronomy 6:16, “You shall not tempt the Lord your God” (Mt. 4:5-7; Lk. 4:9-12). Again, the devil took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory in a moment in time, and said, “All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me.”⁸⁴ At that demand, Jesus said, “Begone, Satan!” and then cited Deuteronomy 6:13, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Serve Him only” (Mt. 4:8-10; Lk. 4:5-8). Then the devil left Him and the angels began to minister to Him (Mt. 4:11; Mk. 1:13). Luke reminds us that this expression of temptation was finished but that the devil only departed until an opportune time to continue with temptations (Lk. 4:13). Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit to carry on His ministry (Lk. 4:14). Matthew continues to have Jesus tested (using the same word πειράζω, as here) throughout his ministry by the religious leaders attempting to discredit Him (Mt. 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35). Each time Jesus responds by quoting Scripture to His tempters, and thus showing His dependency upon His Father.

Conclusion

Jesus is the impeccable High Priest after the pattern of Melchizedek. He is able to offer a superior sacrifice in the heavenly tabernacle. He is able to bring in the New Covenant with its transformative and cleansing of the believer’s conscience. As priest He is an effective advocate to propitiate the believer’s sin by His ongoing advocacy ministry. In all these ways Jesus shows Himself to excel as Messianic Priest.

Echoed in Literature

The literary echoes of images of Christ’s priestly ministry are universally deficient of the true character and consistency that He is. So I present these other priest images, realizing that among them Christ excels them all.

Ivan Karamazov in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s, *The Brothers Karamazov*⁸⁵ presents a poem called “The Grand Inquisitor” which includes the following inquisitor’s review of Jesus temptation:

“The wise and dread spirit, the spirit of self-destruction and non-existence,” the old man goes on, “the great spirit talked with Thee in the wilderness, and we are told in the books that he ‘tempted’ Thee. Is that so? And could anything truer be said than what he revealed to Thee in three questions and what Thou didst reject, and what in the books is called ‘the temptation’? And yet

⁸³ *Acts of Peter* 32; *Lucian*, *Lover of Lies* 13; *Josephus*, *Ant.* 20.5.1; cf. J.M. Creed, *The Gospel According to Saint Luke* (London: Macmillan, 1930), p. 63; J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (i-ix)*. *Anchor Bible* 28 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), p. 511.

⁸⁴ F. W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke’s Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p. 102-3 gives a beautiful contrast to Jesus’ refusal by appealing to Alexander the Great’s claim to deity as developed in *Lucian’s Dialogues of the Dead* 14.

⁸⁵ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), pp. 130-135.

if there has ever been on earth a real stupendous miracle, it took place on that day, on the day of the three temptations. The statement of those three questions was itself the miracle. If it were possible to imagine simply for the sake of argument that those three questions of the dread spirit had perished utterly from the books, and that we had to restore and to invent them anew, and to do so had gathered together all the wise men of the earth-rulers, chief priests, learned men, philosophers, poets-and had set them the task to invent three questions, such as would not only fit the occasion, but express in three words, three human phrases, the whole future history of the world and of humanity-dost Thou believe that all the wisdom of the earth united could have invented anything in depth and force equal to the three questions which were actually put to Thee then questions which were actually put to Thee then by the wise and mighty spirit in the wilderness? From those questions the whole subsequent history of mankind is, as it were, brought together into one whole, and foretold, and in them are united all the unsolved historical contradictions of human nature. At the time it could not be so clear, since the future was unknown; but now that fifteen hundred years have passed, we see that everything in those three questions was so justly divined and foretold, and has been so truly fulfilled, that nothing can be added to them or taken from them.

“Judge Thyself who was right-Thou or he who questioned Thee then? Remember the first question; its meaning, in other words, was this: ‘Thou wouldst go into the world, and art going with empty hands, with some promise of freedom which men in their simplicity and their natural unruliness cannot even understand, which they fear and dread-for nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man and a human society than freedom. But seest Thou these stones in this parched and barren wilderness? Turn them into bread, and mankind will run after Thee like a flock of sheep, grateful and obedient, though for ever trembling, lest Thou withdraw Thy hand and deny them Thy bread.’ But Thou wouldst not deprive man of freedom and didst reject the offer, thinking, what is that freedom worth, if obedience is bought with bread? Thou didst reply that man lives not by bread alone. But dost Thou know that for the sake of that earthly bread the spirit of the earth will rise up against Thee and will strive with Thee and overcome Thee, and all will follow him, crying, ‘Who can compare with this beast? He has given us fire from heaven!’ Dost Thou know that the ages will pass, and humanity will proclaim by the lips of their sages that there is no crime, and therefore no sin; there is only hunger? ‘Feed men, and then ask of them virtue!’ that’s what they’ll write on the banner, which they will raise against Thee, and with which they will raise against Thee, and with which they will destroy Thy temple. Where Thy temple stood will rise a new building: the terrible tower of Babel will be built again, and though, like the one of old, it will not be finished, yet Thou mightest have prevented that new tower and have cut short the sufferings of men for a thousand years; for they will come back to us after a thousand years of agony with their tower. They will seek us again, hidden underground in the catacombs, for we shall be again persecuted and tortured. They will find us and cry to us, ‘Feed us, for those who have promised us fire from heaven haven’t given it!’ And then we shall finish building their tower, for he finishes the building who feeds them.

And we alone shall feed them in Thy name, declaring falsely that it is in Thy name. Oh, never, never can they feed themselves without us! No science will give them bread so long as they remain free. In the end they will lay their freedom at our feet, and say to us, 'Make us your slaves, but feed us.' They will understand themselves, at last, that freedom and bread enough for all are inconceivable together, for never, never will they be able to share between them! They will be convinced, too, that they can never be free, for they are weak, vicious, worthless, and rebellious. Thou didst promise them the bread of Heaven, but, I repeat again, can it compare with earthly bread in the eyes of the weak, ever sinful and ignoble race of man? And if for the sake of the bread of Heaven thousands shall follow Thee, what is to become of the millions and tens of thousands of millions of creatures who will not have the strength to forego the earthly bread for the sake of the heavenly? Or dost Thou care only for the tens of thousands of the great and strong, while the millions, numerous as the sands of the sea, who are weak but love Thee, must exist only for the sake of the great and strong? No, we care for the weak too. They are sinful and rebellious, but in the end they too will become obedient. They will marvel at us and look on us as gods, because we are ready to endure the freedom which they have found so dreadful and to rule over them-so awful it will seem to them to be free. But we shall tell them that we are Thy servants and rule them in Thy name. We shall deceive them again, for we will not let Thee come to us again. That deception will be our suffering, for we shall be forced to lie.

"This is the significance of the first question in the wilderness, and this is what Thou hast exalted above everything. Yet in this question lies hid the great secret of this world. Choosing 'bread,' Thou wouldst have satisfied the universal and everlasting craving of humanity-to find someone to worship. So long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship. But man seeks to worship what is established beyond dispute, so that all men would agree at once to worship it. For these pitiful creatures are concerned not only to find what one or the other can worship, but to find something that all would believe in and worship; what is essential is that all may be *together* in it. This craving for *community* of worship is the chief misery of every man individually and of all humanity from the beginning of time. For the sake of common worship they've slain each other with the sword. They have set up gods and challenged one another. 'Put away your gods and come and worship ours, or we will kill you and your gods!' And so it will be to the end of the world, even when gods disappear from the earth; they will fall down before idols just the same. Thou didst know, Thou couldst not but have known, this fundamental secret of human nature, but Thou didst reject the one infallible banner which was offered Thee to make all men bow down to Thee alone-the banner of earthly bread; and Thou hast rejected it for the sake of freedom and the bread of Heaven. Behold what Thou didst further. And all again in the name of freedom! I tell Thee that man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature is born. But only one who can appease their conscience can take over their freedom. In bread there was offered Thee an invincible banner; give

bread, and man will worship thee, for nothing is more certain than bread. But if someone else gains possession of his conscience-oh! Then he will cast away Thy bread and follow after him who has ensnared his conscience. In that Thou wast right. For the secret of man's being is not only to live but to have something to live for. Without a stable conception of the object of life, man would not consent to go on living, and would rather destroy himself than remain on earth, though he had bread in abundance. That is true. But what happened? Instead of taking men's freedom from them. Thou didst make it greater than ever! Didst Thou forget that man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil? Nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience, but nothing is a greater cause of suffering. And behold, instead of giving a firm foundation for setting the conscience of man at rest for ever. Thou didst choose all that is exceptional, vague and enigmatic; Thou didst choose what was utterly beyond the strength of men, acting as though Thou didst not love them at all-Thou who didst come to give Thy life for them! Instead of taking possession of men's freedom, Thou didst increase it, and burdened the spiritual kingdom of mankind with its sufferings forever. Thou didst desire man's free love, that he should follow Thee freely, enticed and taken captive by Thee. In place of the rigid ancient law, man must hereafter with free heart decide for himself what is good and what is evil, having only Thy image before him as his guide. But didst Thou not know that he would at last reject even Thy image and Thy truth, if he is weighed down with the fearful burden of free choice? They will cry aloud at last that the truth is not in Thee, for they could not have been left in greater confusion and suffering than Thou hast caused, laying upon them so many cares and unanswerable problems.

“So that, in truth Thou didst Thyself lay the foundation for the destruction of Thy kingdom, and no one is more to blame for it. Yet what was offered Thee? There are three powers, three powers alone, able to conquer and to hold captive for ever the conscience of these impotent rebels for their happiness-those forces are miracle, mystery and authority. Thou hast rejected all three and hast set the example for doing so. When the wise and dread spirit set Thee on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Thee, ‘If Thou wouldst know whether Thou art the Son of God then cast Thyself down, for it is written: the angels shall hold him up lest he fall and bruise himself, and Thou shalt know then whether Thou art the Son of God and shalt prove then how great is Thy faith in Thy Father.’ But Thou didst refuse and wouldst not cast Thyself down. Oh, of course, Thou didst proudly and well, like God; but the weak, unruly race of men, are they gods? Oh, Thou didst know then that in taking one step, in making one movement to cast Thyself down, Thou wouldst be tempting God and have lost all Thy faith in Him, and wouldst have been dashed to pieces against that earth which Thou didst come to save. And the wise spirit that tempted Thee would have rejoiced. But I ask again, are there many like Thee? And couldst Thou believe for one moment that men, too, could face such a temptation? Is the nature of men such, that they can reject miracle, and at the great moments of their life, the moments of their deepest, most agonizing spiritual difficulties cling only to the free verdict of the heart? Oh, Thou didst know that Thy deed would be recorded in books, would be handed

down to remote times and the utmost ends of the earth, and Thou didst hope that man, following Thee, would cling to God and not ask for a miracle. But Thou didst not know that when man rejects miracle he rejects God too; for man seeks not so much God as the miraculous. And as man cannot bear to be without the miraculous, he will create new miracles of his own for himself, and will worship deeds of sorcery and witchcraft, though he might be a hundred times over a rebel, heretic and infidel. Thou didst not come down from the Cross when they shouted to Thee, mocking and reviling Thee, 'Come down from the cross and we will believe that Thou art He.' Thou didst not come down, for again Thou wouldst not enslave man by a miracle, and didst crave faith given freely, not based on miracle. Thou didst crave for free love and not the base raptures of the slave before the might that has overawed him for ever. But Thou didst think too highly of men therein, for they are slaves, of course, though rebellious by nature. Look round and judge; fifteen centuries have passed, look upon them. Whom hast Thou raised up to Thyself? I swear, man is weaker and baser by nature than Thou hast believed him! Can he, can he do what Thou didst? By showing him so much respect, Thou didst, as it were cease to feel for him, for Thou didst ask far too much from him-Thou who hast loved him more than Thyself! Respecting him less, Thou wouldst have asked less of him. That would have been more like love, for his burden would have been lighter. He is weak and vile. What though he is everywhere now rebelling against our power, and proud of his rebellion? It is the pride of a child and a schoolboy. They are little children rioting and barring out the teacher at school. But their childish delight will end; it will cost them dear. They will cast down temples and drench the earth with blood. But they will see at last the foolish children, that though they are rebels, they are impotent rebels, unable to keep up their own rebellion. Bathed in their foolish tears, they will recognize at last that He who created them rebels must have meant to mock at them. They will say this in despair, and their utterance will be a blasphemy which will make them more unhappy still, for man's nature cannot bear blasphemy, and in the end always avenges it on itself. And so unrest, confusion, and unhappiness-that is the present lot of man after Thou didst bear so much for their freedom! The great prophet tells in vision and in image, that he saw all those who took part in the first resurrection and that there were of each tribe twelve thousand. But if there were so many of them, they must have been not men but gods. They had borne Thy cross, they had endured sores of years in the barren, hungry wilderness, living upon locusts and roots-and Thou mayest indeed point with pride at those children of freedom, of free love, of free and splendid sacrifice for Thy name. But remember that they were only some thousands; and what of the rest? And how are the other weak ones to blame, because they could not endure what the strong have endured? How is the weak soul to blame that it is unable to receive such terrible gifts? Canst Thou have simply come to the elect and for the elect? But if so, it is a mystery, we too have a right to preach a mystery, and to teach them that it's not the free judgment of their hearts, not love that matters, but a mystery which they must follow blindly, even against their conscience. So we have done. We have corrected Thy work and have founded it upon *miracle*, *mystery* and *authority*. And men rejoiced that the terrible gift that had brought

them such suffering was, at last, lifted from their hearts. Were we right teaching them this? Speak! Did we not love mankind, so meekly acknowledging their feebleness, lovingly lightening their burden, and permitting their weak nature even sin with our sanction? Why hast Thou come now to hinder us? And why dost Thou look silently and searchingly at me with Thy mild eyes? Be angry. I don't want Thy love, for I love Thee not. And what use is it for me to hide anything from Thee? Don't I know to Whom I am speaking? All that I can say is known to Thee already. And is it for me to conceal from Thee our mystery? Perhaps it is Thy will to hear it from my lips. Listen, then. We are not working with Thee, but with *him*-that is our mystery. It's long-eight centuries-since we have been on *his* side and not on Thine. Just eight centuries ago, we took from him what Thou didst reject with scorn, that last gift he offered Thee, showing Thee all the kingdoms of the earth. We took from him Rome and the sword of Caesar, and proclaimed ourselves sole rulers of the earth, though hitherto we have not been able to complete our work. But whose fault is that? Oh, the work is only beginning, but it has begun. It has long to await completion and the earth has yet much to suffer, but we shall triumph and shall be Caesars, and then we shall plan the universal happiness of man. But Thou mightest have taken even then the sword of Caesar. Why didst Thou reject that last gift? Hadst Thou accepted that last counsel of the mighty spirit, Thou wouldst have accomplished all that man seeks on earth-that is, someone to worship, someone to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting all in one unanimous and harmonious ant-heap, for the craving for universal unity is the third and last anguish of men. Mankind as a whole has always striven to organize a universal state. There have been many great nations with great histories, but the more highly they were developed the more unhappy they were, for they felt more acutely than other people the craving for world-wide union. The great conquerors, Timours and Ghenghis-Khans, whirled like hurricanes over the face of the earth striving to subdue its people, and they too were but the unconscious expression of the same craving for universal unity. Hadst Thou taken the world and Caesar's purple, Thou wouldst have founded the universal state and have given universal peace. For who can rule men if not he who holds their conscience and their bread in his hands? We have taken the sword of Caesar, and in taking it, of course, have rejected Thee and followed *him*. Oh, ages are yet to come of the confusion of free thought, of their science and cannibalism. For having begun their tower of Babel without us, they will end, of course, with cannibalism. But then the beast will crawl to us and lick our feet and spatter them with tears of blood. And we shall sit upon the beast and raise the cup, and on it will be written, 'Mystery.' But then, and only then, the reign of peace and happiness will come for men. Thou art proud of Thine elect, but Thou hast only the elect, while we give rest to all. And besides, how many of those elect, those mighty ones who could become elect, have grown weary waiting for Thee, and have transferred and will transfer the powers of their spirit and the warmth of their heart to the other camp, and end by raising their *free* banner against Thee. Thou didst Thyself lift up that banner. But with us all will be happy and will no more rebel nor destroy one another as under Thy freedom. Oh, we shall persuade them that they will only become free when

they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us. And shall we be right or shall we be lying? They will be convinced that we are right, for they will remember the horrors of slavery and confusion to which Thy freedom brought them. Freedom, free thought, and science will lead them into such straits and will bring them face to face with such marvels and insoluble mysteries, that some of them, the fierce and rebellious, will destroy themselves, others, rebellious and weak, will destroy one another, while the rest, weak and unhappy, will crawl fawning to our feet and whine to us: 'Yes, you were right, you alone possess His mystery, and we come back to you, save us from ourselves!'

"Receiving bread from us, they will see clearly that we take the bread made by their hands from them, to give it to them, without any miracle. They will see that we do not change the stones to bread, but in truth they will be more thankful for taking it from our hands than for the bread itself! For they will remember only too well that in old days, without our help, even the bread they made turned to stones in their hands, while since they have come back to us, the very stones have turned to bread in their hands. Too, too well will they know the value of complete submission! And until men know that, they will be unhappy. Who is most to blame for their not knowing it?-speak! Who scattered the flock and sent it astray on unknown paths? But the flock will come together again and will submit once more, and then it will be once for all. Then we shall give them the quiet humble happiness of weak creatures such as they are by nature. Oh, we shall persuade them at last not to be proud, for Thou didst lift them up and thereby taught them to be proud. We shall show them that they are weak, that they are only pitiful children, but that childlike happiness is the sweetest of all. They will become timid and will look to us and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen. They will marvel at us and will be awe-stricken before us, and will be proud at our being so powerful and clever that we have been able to subdue such a turbulent flock of thousands of millions. They will tremble impotently before our wrath, their minds will grow fearful, they will be quick to shed tears like women and children, but they will be just as ready at a sign from us to pass to laughter and rejoicing, to happy mirth and childish song. Yes, we shall set them to work, but in their leisure hours we shall make their life like a child's game, with children's songs and innocent dance. Oh, we shall allow them even sin. We shall tell them that every sin will be expiated, if it is done with our permission, that we allow them to sin because we love them, and the punishment for those sins we take upon ourselves. And we shall take it upon ourselves, and they will adore us as their saviors who have taken on themselves their sins before God. And they will have no secrets from us. We shall allow or forbid them to live with their wives and mistresses, to have or not to have children-according to whether they have been obedient or disobedient-and they will submit to us gladly and cheerfully. The most painful secrets of their conscience, all they will bring to us, and we shall have an answer for all. And they will be glad to believe our answer, for it will save them from the great anxiety and terrible agony they endure at present in making a free decision for themselves. And all will be happy, all the millions of creatures except the hundred thousand who rule over them. For only we, we who guard the mystery, shall be unhappy. There will be thousands of

millions of happy babes, and a hundred thousand sufferers who have taken upon themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil. Peacefully they will die, peacefully they will expire in Thy name, and beyond the grave they will find nothing but death. But we shall keep the secret, and for their happiness we shall allure them with the reward of heaven and eternity. Though if there were anything in the other world, it certainly would not be for such as they. It is prophesied that Thou wilt come again in victory, Thou wilt come with Thy chosen, the proud and strong, but we will say that they have only saved themselves, but we have saved all. We are told that the harlot who sits upon the beast, and holds in her hands the *mystery*, shall be put to shame, that the weak will rise up again, and will rend her royal purple and will strip naked her loathsome body. But then I will stand up and point out to Thee the thousand millions of happy children who have known no sin. And we who have taken their sins upon us for their happiness will stand up before Thee and say: 'Judge us if Thou canst and darest.' Know that I fear Thee not. Know that I too have been in the wilderness, I too have lived on roots and locust, I too prize the freedom with which Thou hast blessed men, and I too was striving to stand among Thy elect, among the strong and powerful, thirsting 'to make up the number.' But I awakened and would not serve madness. I turned back and joined the ranks of those *who have corrected Thy work*. I left the proud and went back to the humble, for the happiness of the humble. What I say to Thee will come to pass, and our dominion will be built up. I repeat, to-morrow Thou shalt see that obedient flock who at a sign from me will hasten to heap up the hot cinders about the pile on which I shall burn Thee for coming to hinder us. For if anyone has ever deserved our fires, it is Thou. To-morrow I shall burn Thee. I have spoken."

Graham Greene, in *The Power and the Glory*, describes a flawed whiskey priest trying to ensure that his fiscal needs are met, by selling himself to do Catholic ministry for the poor, who can not pay much, but it might be just enough.⁸⁶

There had been a continuous steam of penitents from eight to ten-two hours of the worst evil a small place like this could produce after three years. It hadn't amounted to very much-a city would have made a better show-or would it? There isn't much a man can do. Drunkenness, adultery, uncleanness: he sat there tasting the brandy all the while, sitting on a rocking-chair in a horse box, not looking at the face of the one who knelt at his side. The others had waited, kneeling in an empty stall-Mr. Lehrs stable had been depopulated these last few years. He had only one old horse left, which blew windily in the dark as the sins came whispering out.

"How many times?"

"Twelve, father. Perhaps more," and the horse blew.

It is astonishing the sense of innocence that goes with sin-only the hard and careful man and the saint are free of it. These people went out of the stable clean: he was the only one left who hadn't repented, confessed, and been

⁸⁶ Graham Greene, in *The Power and the Glory* (New York: The Viking Press, 1940), especially pp. 231-232.

absolved. He wanted to say to this man: "Love is not wrong, but love should be happy and open—it is only wrong when it is secret, unhappy... it can be more unhappy than anything but the loss of God. You don't need a penance, my child, you have suffered quite enough," and to this other: "Lust is not the worst thing. It is because any day, any time, lust may turn into love that we have to avoid it. And when we love our sin then we are damned indeed." But the habit of the confessional reasserted itself: it was as if he was back in the little stuffy wooden boxlike coffin in which men bury their uncleanness with their priest. He said: "Mortal sin...danger...self-control," as if those words meant anything at all. He said: "Say three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys."

He said wearily: "Drink is only the beginning..." He found he had no lesson he could draw against even that common vice except himself smelling of brandy in the stable. He gave out the penance quickly, harshly, mechanically. The man would go away saying: "A bad priest," feeling no encouragement, no interest....

Shusako Endo, in *Silence*, portrays a priest in the throes of persecution being pressed to apostatize.⁸⁷ We come upon the priest in the prison being persecuted for being a Christian.

While he had been squatting in the darkness, someone had been groaning, as the blood dripped from his nose and mouth. He had not even adverted to this; he had uttered no prayer; he had laughed. The very thought bewildered him completely. He had thought the sound of the voice ludicrous, and he had laughed aloud. He had believed in his pride that he alone in this night was sharing in the suffering of that man. But here just beside him were people who were sharing in that suffering much more than he. Why this craziness, murmured a voice that was not his own. And you call yourself a priest! A priest who takes upon himself the sufferings of others! 'Lord, until this moment have you been mocking me?', he cried aloud.

'Laudate Eum! I engraved those letters on the wall,' Ferreira repeated. 'Can't you find them? Look again!'

'I know!' The priest, carried away by anger, shouted louder than before. 'Keep quiet!' he said. 'You have no right to speak like this.'

'I have no right? That is certain. I have no right. Listening to those groans all night I was no longer able to give praise to the Lord. I did not apostatize because I was suspended in the pit. For three days, I who stand before you was hung in a pit of foul excrement, but I did not say a single word that might betray my God.' Ferreira raised a voice that was like a growl as he shouted: 'The reason I apostatized...are you ready? Listen! I was put in here and heard the voices of those people for whom God did nothing. God did not do a single thing. I prayed with all my strength; but God did nothing.'

'Be quiet!'

'Alright. Pray! But those Christians are partaking of a terrible suffering such as you cannot even understand. From yesterday—in the future—now at this

⁸⁷ Shusako Endo, *Silence* (Rutland: The Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1969), especially pp. 265–269.

very moment. Why must they suffer like this? And while this goes on, you do nothing for them. And God-he does nothing either.'

The priest shook his head wildly, putting both fingers into his ears. But the voice of Ferreira together with the groaning of the Christians broke mercilessly in. Stop! Stop! Lord, it is now that you should break the silence. You must not remain silent. Prove that you are justice, that you are goodness, that you are love. You must say something to show the world that you are the august one.

A great shadow passed over his soul like that of the wings of a bird flying over the mast of a ship. The wings of the bird now brought to his mind the memory of the various ways in which the Christians had died. At that time, too, God had been silent. When the misty rain floated over the sea, he was silent. When the one-eyed man had been killed beneath the blazing rays of the sun, he had said nothing. But at that time, the priest had been able to stand it; or, rather than stand it, he had been able to thrust the terrible doubt far from the threshold of his mind. But now it was different. Why is God continually silent while those groaning voices go on?

'Now they are in that courtyard.' (It was the sorrowful voice of Ferreira that whispered to him.) 'Three unfortunate Christians are hanging. They have been hanging there since you came here.'

The old man was telling no lie. As he strained his ears the groaning that had seemed to be that of a single voice suddenly revealed itself as a double one-one groaning was high (it never became low): the high voice and low voice were mingled with one another, coming from different persons.

'When I spent that night here five people were suspended in the pit. Five voices were carried to my ears on the wind. The official said: "If you apostatize, those people will immediately be taken out of the pit, their bonds will be loosed, and we will put medicine on their wounds." I answered: "Why do these people not apostatize? And the official laughed as he answered me: "They have already apostatized many times. But as long as you don't apostatize these peasants cannot be saved.'"

'And you...' The priest spoke through his tears. 'You should have prayed....'

'I did pray. I kept on praying. But prayer did nothing to alleviate their suffering. Behind their ears a small incision has been made; the blood drips slowly through this incision and through the nose and mouth. I know it well, because I have experienced that same suffering in my own body. Prayer does nothing to alleviate suffering.'

The priest remembered how at Saishoji when he met Ferreira he had noticed a scar like a burn on his temples. He even remembered the brown color of the wound, and now the whole scene rose up behind his eyelids. To chase away the imagination he kept banging his head against the wall. 'In return for these earthly sufferings, those people will receive a reward of eternal joy,' he said.

'Don't deceive yourself!' said Ferreira. 'Don't disguise your own weakness with those beautiful words.'

‘My weakness?’ The priest shook his head; yet he had no self-confidence.’ What do you mean? It’s because I believe in the salvation of these people...’

‘You make yourself more important than them. You are preoccupied with your own salvation. If you say that you will apostatize, those people will be taken out of the pit. They will be saved from suffering. And you refuse to do so. It’s because you dread to betray the Church. You dread to be the dregs of the Church, like me.’ Until now Ferreira’s words had burst out as a single breath of anger, but now his voice gradually weakened as he said: ‘Yet I was the same as you. On that cold, black night I, too, was as you are now. And yet is your way of acting love? A priest ought to live in imitation of Christ. If Christ were here...’

For a moment Ferreira remained silent; then he suddenly broke out in a strong voice: ‘Certainly Christ would have apostatized for them.’

Night gradually gave place to dawn. The cell that until now had been no more than a lump of black darkness began to glimmer in a tiny flicker of whitish light.

‘Christ would certainly have apostatized to help men.’

‘No, no!’ said the priest, covering his face with his hands and wrenching his voice through his fingers. ‘No, no!’

‘For love Christ would have apostatized. Even if it meant giving up everything he had.’...

Remember, that the Jesus Christ was designated High Priest by the choice of God and an indestructible life to transform our lives to those of obedience with a good conscience (Heb. 5:4–6; 7:16).