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MELCHIZEDEK

The purpose of these notes is to help identify and correlate information about Melchizedek and related topics with non-Biblical sources.

The opinions expressed are my own. A special thanks to all the scholars who spent thousands of hours in order to make the quoted sources so accessible. All corrections and criticisms welcomed.

D. Julio Edwards
2351 Ogden Street
Denver, Colorado 80205
(303) 861-1186

May 17, 1989

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MONOTHEISM WITHOUT MELCHIZEDEK?

Considering Melchizedek is mentioned only 11 times in Biblical text(1), by and large he remains a mysterious figure to the average student of the Scriptures. He makes most of his appearances within the Jewish (Old Testament) Pseudepigrapha(2), the Dead Sea Scrolls(3) and Hellenistic Synagogal Prayers.

Little exists of the record of him and his missionaries(4), and it is due to this lack of knowledge that many historians and theologians can not satisfactorily resolve the issue of the Semitic origins of monotheism. The debate over whether the Hebrews, the Egyptians, or perhaps another race discovered the one-God concept is as arguable today as is how the idea--however conceived--was shared between segregated cultures. It is seldom considered whether there could have been a common source of monotheism for both or all cultures. For example, Egyptologist John Wilson believed "that there is a direct connection between" the instruction of Amen-em-Opet and the Hebrew Book of Proverbs(5), "and that Amen-em-Opet was the ancestor text."(6) On the other hand, Christian writer and scholar, K. A. Kitchen, of the University of Liverpool, writes: "By a thoroughgoing examination of both Amenemope and Proverbs against the entire realm of ancient Near Eastern Wisdom, recent research has shown that in fact there is no adequate basis for assuming a special relationship either way between Amenemope and Proverbs."(7) To further complicate the evolution of this concept, and although Wilson recognized connections which he could not put his finger on, he related, "...it may be stated flatly that the mechanism of transmission from the faith of Akh-en-Aton (Ikhnaton) to the monotheism of Moses is not apparent."(8) In other words, the various relationships between these two cultural belief systems (as well as others) appear evident, but, for lack of physical evidence (and good theories) as to what they were and how they were made, the association remains obscure.

Many scholars do not believe that Egypt ever achieved any form of monotheism--much less originated it, however, Egyptologist Wallis Budge disagrees; ".....among the other titles the god Amen was called the 'only One,' but the addition of the words 'who hast no second' is remarkable as showing that the Egyptians had already conceived the existence of a god who had no like or equal, which they hesitated not to proclaim side by side with their descriptions of his manifestations. Looking at the Egyptians in their simple meaning, it is pretty certain that when the Egyptians declared that their God was One and that he had no second, they had the same ideas as the Jews and the Muhammadans when they proclaimed their God to be 'One' and alone. It has been urged that the Egyptians never advanced to pure monotheism because they never succeeded in freeing themselves from the belief in the existence of other gods, but when they say that a god has 'no second,' even though they mention other 'gods,' it is quite evident that like the Jews, they conveyed him to be an entirely different being from the existences which, for the want of a better word, or because these possessed superhuman attributes, they named 'gods.'"(9) This is not too different from the Trinitarian VS the Unitarian concept.

To the many people, Part III of The URANTIA Book effectively resolves the question of how monotheism was revived--practically brought back to life--and disseminated through the teachings of Melchizedek and his missionaries during this period, but until archeological finds confirm the claims in the UB, it will not be accepted as any more than an unsubstantiated theory to researchers.

When I started comparing The URANTIA Book with ancient texts, I was left with a sense of awe at the information these people had available to them in their own day. Although it is mixed with some of the silliest mythology, and by comparison you can understand the reasons for the eventual canonization of the Christian Bible, it still stands as a remarkable feature of that era that some of the data and lore from the first, second and third epochal revelations to Urantia were still intact up until Michael's bestowal. Much has been lost and even less rediscovered since that time, evidence the fact that few Jews today read books such as The Book of Enoch, which was readily available and often read in Jesus' day, witness its reference even in the New Testament (Jude 14-15/Enoch1:9).

An English friend of mine recently shared an extremely critical written review of the UB by a lecturer friend of his at Cambridge University, which at its best reads, "This Urantia Work is a MAJOR WORK OF ITS KIND in respect of having been extensively worked-over (by Computer analysis and aided compilation), in respect of the time and effort spent on creating it, in respect of the breadth and width of its content," and he goes on to condemn the book based on an initial and very partial review. However, he hits the nail right on the head, since there were no computers available in the 1930-50's, not even a simple word processor. For the skeptic, if the book is not what it claims, how are these dozens, if not hundreds, of intense correlations, not to mention scientific coincidences, to be accounted for?

To illustrate this point, as well as the wealth of knowledge and the value of the well-translated and researched Pseudepigrapha, Volume I, Page 479, Footnote 33 states: "Jesus' birth, according to critical research, is placed between 8 and 6 B.C.; in 7 B.C. there was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn three times.....in late May and early June, throughout October, and in early December." Then are listed the publications that verify these findings. Compare with the extremely similar findings in the UB on 1352C.

Another example might be on Page 187, Footnote f: "Origen (On First Principles 2.11.6) describes the ascent of the soul through the various heavens." "Origen does not enumerate the heavens. He does, however, call each heaven a sphere or globe." "The process is essentially intellectual. The soul's ascent is a process of education as it passes to higher and higher grades of enlightenment."

Also of interest is Page 155, Footnote b: "We have only to remember that in the Koran (Sura 2:35-36), Adam and his wife begin in a garden not of this world."

My point is, although the reliability of these ancient texts is questionable, the information which The URANTIA Book suggests as being factual is impressive considering the fragmentary remnants existing of these documents, their considerable altering and editing by later Christian and Jewish scribes, and the multiple manuscripts from which the works have been combined into each intelligible text.

Jewish Pseudepigrapha

Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch
(2 Enoch)

2 Enoch 71:1-19: Amid some fantastic explanation of Melchizedek's initial appearance from the womb of an elderly, sterile lady named Sothonim (Melchizedek's mother in this story), who has just died at the time, he appears "fully developed physically, like a three-year-old....and behold the badge of priesthood was on his chest, and it was glorious in appearance." (10) Compare with the UB: "....on his breast he wore an emblem of three concentric circles.....(which) became regarded as so sacred by his followers that they never dared to use it, and it was soon forgotten with the passing of a few generations." (11)

Later, Nir (Melchizedek's father in this story), in a dream in which Michael appears to him, is instructed to produce the child (Melchizedek) so that Michael may bring him to the paradise of Edom. (12) In 2 Enoch 72:7, "And from that Melkisedek the priests will be 12 in number until the great Igumen; that is to say, Leader, will bring out everything visible and invisible." Compare with the UB: "....it was by preagreement that the Melchizedek observers, twelve in number, were sent as advisers to the Life Carriers and as overseers of the planet until the subsequent arrival of the Planetary Prince." (13)

Concerning 2 Enoch, F. Y. Andersen writes: "The Melchizedek legend constitutes a special problem. The fantastic details about this priest conflict with both Christian belief in Jesus as God's sole legitimate priest in heaven and with the Jewish idea that the descendants of Aaron (or Zadok) are God's sole legitimate priests on earth. The miraculous conception of Melchizedek without human father (not strictly virginal, and with no mention of a divine agent, such as the Holy Spirit) is a typical wonder story, made somewhat ridiculous to our taste by the circumstances of the spontaneous delivery of the infant from his mother's corpse." "The Melchizedek materials from Qumran, regrettably fragmentary, do not line up with the Melchizedek story in 2 Enoch, except in the very general sense of being Midrashim." "If 2 Enoch does preserve ideas from an early setting in Palestine or nearby, its main importance would be its manner of interpreting the Torah. In particular, its various comments on the creation passages in Genesis could represent one of the earliest attempts to reconcile Scripture with science." (14)

Although 2 Enoch is full of mystical mythmaking and luminating legends, there are tidbits of real correlation with the UB, in the very least semantically. There is much more relating to Heaven and Michael topics of which I will include a few in the appendix, but an example of a Melchizedekism might be: "Does the LORD demand bread or lambs or sheep or oxen or any kind of sacrifices at all? That is nothing, but he (God) demands pure hearts, and by means of all those things he tests people's hearts." (15) Isn't this the message of Melchizedek's 2nd creed to the Salmmites? ".....covenant with the Most High, which bestows the favor of God on my faith, not on sacrifices and burnt offerings." (16)

Hellenistic Synagogal Prayers

These prayers, written around 150-300 A.D., probably in Alexandria, sparsely mention Melchizedek. In the Instruction for Catechumens, Melchizedek is a saint, even when used in sentences naming others such as Phinehas the priest, and he is one of the "holy ones in each generation. And how God, though he foresaw, did not abandon the race of men, but summoned them at various times from error and folly into the understanding of truth."(17) How does this compare with the concept of the five epochal revelations, and especially with "This emergency Son of Nebadon inaugurated the third revelation of truth on Urantia"?(18)

In A Prayer of Praise to God for His Greatness, and for His Appointment of Leaders for His People and in A Prayer of Praise to God, Rehearsing the Grounds in Redemption and in Creation Which Make Praise So Fitting for God's Redeemed Creature, Man, Melchizedek returns to his priestly roles.(19)

Dead Sea Scrolls

"The Qumran biblical documents cover the whole Hebrew Bible, with the exception of the book of Esther, and are about a thousand years older than the most ancient codices previously extant. With this newly discovered material at their disposal, experts concerned with the study of the text and transmission of the Scriptures are now able to achieve far greater accuracy in their deductions and can trace the process by which the text of the Bible attained its final shape."--G. Vermes(20)

The Heavenly Prince Melchizedek (11QMelch)

"In this text Melchizedek appears as being exalted over all the angels." "In view of the priestly functions of Melchizedek in the Bible (Gen 14:8, Ps 110:4), van der Woude(21) has conjectured that at Qumran Melchizedek may have been regarded as the high priest of the heavenly Temple and identified with the archangel Michael".(22) If this fragmentary document, or its original manuscript, predate Michael's bestowal (it is considered 1st century B. C.), could the Qumran community have known prior to the fact (or for that matter even after the fact) that Melchizedek's Indwelling Spirit "is the only Thought Adjuster who ever functioned in two minds on Urantia"?(23) After all, "The twelve Melchizedek receivers knew of Michael's impending bestowal on their planet."(24) It is conceivable that Machiventa might have indicated that either his Spirit and/or the Creator Son would be coming to Urantia sometime in the future; this could account for some of the Messianic prophecies and the confusion of Michael with Melchizedek.(25) Regardless, the interest in Melchizedek at Qumran is apparent(26) and compared to the two meager mentions he gets in the Old Testament of the Bible, the information is fascinating.

The Genesis Apocryphon
(1QapGen)

The Melchizedek of this text is basically identical with the person in Genesis 14:17-20, and the story is almost verbatim. It does confirm that at least this part of the story has remained faithful in the Bible version from Jesus' day to present times.

Appendix

From The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume I

1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) ENOCH
(200 B. C. - 100 A. D.)

The complete text is only existent in Ethiopic but fragments have been found in Aramaic, Greek and Latin. This, or a similar version, may be the Book of Enoch of Jesus' day.

Chapters 6-7: The fall of angels. This could be a description of the Prince's staff, or Adam and Eve, or their decedents mating with humans, giving birth to the giant legends.

14:8-19 "...drew near to a great house which was built of white marble (hailstone crystals in The Other Bible translation), and the inner wall were like mosaics, of white marble, the floor (ground) of crystal, the ceiling like the path of the stars..." Could be a description of a mansion world abode.

15:9-12 "The dwelling of the spiritual beings of heaven is heaven; but the dwelling of the spirits of the earth, which are born upon the earth, is the earth." Could be a description of rebel midwayers.

17: Enoch ascends, tours the levels of heaven.

21: "This place is the prison house of the angels; they are detained here forever."

39:1-2 "And it came to pass in those days that the children of the elect and the holy ones (will descend) from the high heaven and their seed will become one with the children of the people." Could be description of Adam and Eve.

46:1 ".....the One to whom belongs the time before time." Literally Head of Days, Chief of Days, Beginning of Days, First of Days, Antecedent of Time

47:3 ".....the Antecedent of Time, while he was sitting upon the throne of his glory, and the books of the living ones were open before him."

70: Enoch translates.

71: Enoch's ascension and visions of the heaven of heavens.

94-96 The Woe Attitudes

Appendix (2)

2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) ENOCH
(Late First Century A. D.)

(Michael is mentioned on practically every other page throughout so I have sparsely noted his appearances.)

1:4 "Two huge men appeared to me, the like of which I had never seen on earth." Footnote j: "The coming of angels in pairs is an ancient tradition, going back to the two "messengers" who conventionally accompany a god on a journey in Canaanite mythology."

3: "And they took me up onto their wings, and carried me up to the first heaven."

4: "They led before my face the elders, the rulers of the stellar orders."

7: Enoch taken to 2nd heaven, prison world for fallen angels.

8: Enoch taken to 3rd heaven

11: 4th heaven

18: 5th heaven

19: 6th heaven: Angels who study the movements of the stars, the angels who record all human souls and deeds

20: 7th heaven

22: "In the 10th heaven the archangel Michael brought Enoch in front of the face of the LORD." A strange description of God. The explanation of Enoch's change into what may be his Morontia body and the other footnotes on this chapter are breathtaking.

25-26 Possible description of a Master Force Organizer mobilizing energy into matter.

27:3 "And I created seven great circles inside it, and I gave them an appearance of crystal, wet and dry, that is to say glass and ice."

42: Happy Attitudes

55:2 "For tomorrow morning I shall go up to the highest heaven, into the highest Jerusalem."

FOOTNOTES

1. The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Pg 694
2. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, 1985, James C. Charlesworth, editor, Vol II, Pg 976, index
3. The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 1987, G. Vermes
4. Ibid, Pg XIV-XV; see also The URANTIA Book, 1955, URANTIA Foundation, Pg 1023C & 1024A
5. The URANTIA Book, Pg 1046D-1047A
6. The Culture of Ancient Egypt, 1956, John A. Wilson, Pg 303
7. The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 1900, Tyndale, Vol I, Pg 426
8. The Culture of Ancient Egypt, Pg 226
9. The Egyptian Book of the Dead, 1967, E. A. Wallis Budge, Pg CXXVII-CXXVIII
10. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol I, Pg 205-6, compare with The URANTIA Book, Pg 1015A for dissenting opinion.
11. The URANTIA Book, Pg 1015D
12. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol I, Pg 210
13. The URANTIA Book, Pg 735D-736A, see also Pg 1014B and 1016A
14. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol I, Pg 96-7
15. Ibid, Pg 172
16. The URANTIA Book, Pg 1017C.
17. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol II, Pg 687
18. The URANTIA Book, 1007D
19. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol II, Pg 687-694
20. The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Pg XIV
21. Melchizedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt, OTS 14 1965, Pg 354-73
22. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol I, Pg 249-50
23. The URANTIA Book, Pg 1016A
24. Ibid, Pg 1014C
25. The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Pg 300
26. Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11, J. A. Fitzmyer; The Melchizedek Tradition, 1976, F. L. Horton

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