5:5–6; *Jub.* 30:18–20; 31:11–17; *T. Levi* 5:2). Consequently, Mason plausibly concludes that:

> it is reasonable in light of the positive correspondences to assert that the author's conception of Jesus as a heavenly priest was prompted at least in part by an intellectual context in which a priest called משיח was expected and the priestly endowment of Levi in the Hebrew Scriptures was understood in heavenly terms. Jesus is *not* the 'messiah of Aaron' of Qumran or the Levi of *Jubilees* and *ALD*, but those conceptions – along with the broader heavenly temple cult supposed in Jewish apocalyptic texts – provided a precedent for the author of Hebrews to conceive of Jesus similarly as a priest making atonement and eternal intercession in the heavenly sanctuary.[38]

5.1.5 Melchizedek Speculation

The role of Melchizedek speculation is also clearly relevant for understanding the high priesthood of Jesus in Hebrews, something that has also been recently revisited by Mason.[39] Most of the references to Melchizedek in Second Temple Jewish literature are of the 'mundane' variety and are essentially rewritten versions of Genesis 14 (e.g. 1Q20 XX–XXII; *Jub.* 13; *Ps.-Eup.* [Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.17.5–6]; Philo, *Abr.* 235; *Congr.* 99; *Leg.* 3:79–82; Josephus, *J.W.* 6:438; *Ant.* 1:179–81). It is only in the scrolls from Qumran that we find a heavenly Melchizedek, and possible allusions to Psalm 110. Although the name Melchizedek must be partially restored, it seems likely that the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* portray this figure as an angelic (high) priest of the celestial temple.[40] This seems to be confirmed in 11QMelchizedek, which portrays Melchizedek as an angelic warrior who mediates eschatological judgment (cf. 4Q544 [*4QVisions of Amram*^{b} *ar*]; 1Q33 XIII; XVII), although, as we have seen, this is associated with an eschatological Yom Kippur (11Q13 II 7–9), which implies a high priestly status for Melchizedek.[41]

With regard to Hebrews, Mason, among others, notes that, like the more 'mundane' presentations, Melchizedek in Hebrews was a king-priest of Salem who encountered Abraham and received tithes (Heb 7:1–2), and, like Philo (*Leg.* 3:79) and Josephus (*J.W.* 6:438; *Ant.* 1:179–81), the author plays with the etymological significance of Melchizedek's name (Heb 7:2). In 7:3 Melchizedek is said to be like the Son of God and an eternal – presumably angelic – priest (cf. 7:8, 15–17).[42] These statements clearly indi-

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[38] Ibid., 199.

[39] Ibid., 138–90.

[40] 4Q401 11 3, for example, refers to צדק כוהן בעד[ת אל]מלכי, 'Melchi]zedek, priest in the assemb[ly of God' (cf. 11Q13 II 10; Ps 82:1). See also Alexander, *Mystical Texts*, 56–57; Davila, *Liturgical Works*, 166–67; Newsom, *Songs*, 37–38.

[41] See above, Chapter 5.1.3.

[42] See also Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, 122–27; Dey, *Intermediary World*, 189–91.

cate an exalted status for Melchizedek in the thought of the author and strongly echo the conception of Melchizedek as an angelic heavenly priest in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* and 11QMelchizedek. Moreover, the fact that the author asserts on numerous occasions that Christ's priesthood is of the Melchizedekian order (e.g. 5:10; 6:20; 7:17), and ascribes to Christ certain prerogatives given to Melchizedek at Qumran (e.g. heavenly exaltation, eschatological redemption),[43] suggests some familiarity with the kind of Melchizedek speculation evident at Qumran.[44]

Mason distances himself from those who claim a direct connection between Hebrews and Qumran, but concludes that the two elements contributing to the priestly Christology of Hebrews – namely, 'the notion of a heavenly priesthood and an angelic understanding of Melchizedek – are best paralleled in ideas found in the Dead Sea Scrolls'.[45] Although Mason's analysis of the Scrolls is thorough and perfectly plausible, it is unfortunate that so much rests upon fragmentary texts, some of which may be sectarian in origin. Nevertheless, he makes a cogent case for his modest conclusion. The notions of a heavenly priesthood and an angelic Melchizedek were clearly embraced at Qumran, and the former of these was certainly more widespread in late Second Temple Judaism. The evidence for exalted Melchizedek speculation outside Qumran is lacking, although in view of his role in Hebrews, and a range of later sources (e.g. *2 En.* 68–73; *Melch.* (NHC IX, 1); Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.24; *b. Sukkah* 52b; *Song Rab.* II. 13, 4),[46] it seems likely that this was more widespread (unless Hebrews is directly dependent upon Qumran traditions). Mason is probably correct to identify Melchizedek speculation, as well as elevated Levi traditions and priestly messianism, as precedents to, and possible influences on, the author of Hebrews. It should be stressed, however, that none of this has been merely adopted in an uncritical fashion, but is sifted, modified and remoulded in the service of the author's unique vision of Jesus.

It is surprising that Mason makes no reference to the work of Martha Himmelfarb and her contention that heavenly transformations are often understood in terms of priestly investiture in Jewish and Christian apoca-

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[43] For additional similarities, see Horton, *Melchizedek*, 167–68; Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, 128.

[44] Mason, *You Are a Priest Forever*, 199–203; cf. J. R. Davila, 'Melchizedek, the "Youth," and Jesus', in Davila (ed.), *Dead Sea Scrolls as Background*, 253; Stökl, 'Yom Kippur in the Apocalyptic *Imaginaire*', 358; Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, 115–29.

[45] Mason, *You Are a Priest Forever*, 203.

[46] On Melchizedek in later sources up to the fifth century, see Horton, *Melchizedek*, 87–151. See also A. F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*, Leiden: Brill, 1977, 194–95 n. 33.

lypses.[47] Given the exclusively heavenly orientation of Christ's priesthood in Hebrews, the possibility that this particular antecedent may have facilitated and influenced the conception of Christ's priesthood in Hebrews also deserves to be explored.

5.2 Christ's Priestly Investiture as a Heavenly Transformation

As we noted above, there are a number of heavenly ascents in Jewish apocalyptic literature that result in some kind of transformation, and that this transformation is sometimes understood in terms of priestly investiture (e.g. *T. Levi* 2–5, 8; *2 En.* 22; *1 En.* 14–15; cf. 4Q400 1 i 1–21; 11Q13).[48] We will now consider the evidence to suggest that these traditions helped to facilitate the high priestly Christology of Hebrews

5.2.1 The Heavenly Orientation of Christ's High Priesthood

The exclusively heavenly location of Christ's high priesthood in Hebrews is overtly indicated in at least two passages. First, in 8:4 we read that, 'if he was on earth, he would not even be a priest' (εἰ μὲν οὖν ἦν ἐπὶ γῆς, οὐδ' ἂν ἦν ἱερεύς). This contrary to fact conditional clause imagines an unreal scenario (i.e. the present *earthly* location of Christ) and shows that an earthly location would in fact exclude Christ from the priesthood. As it is, in his heavenly location, he is not only a priest, but the *high* priest (8:1–3). Secondly, in 6:20 the author coordinates Jesus' entry into the celestial Holy of Holies with his assumption of high priesthood: εἰσῆλθεν Ἰησοῦς, κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ ἀρχιερεὺς γενόμενος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. It is possible to take the participle γενόμενος as expressing an action antecedent to the main verb εἰσῆλθεν, meaning that Jesus became a high priest just before he entered the celestial Holy of Holies. On the other hand, since both the main verb and the participle are aorist,[49] and the participle follows the

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[47] Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 29–71. The same could be said of Eskola's study, *Messiah and the Throne*. Although Eskola cites Himmelfarb several times, he largely overlooks, and even dismisses (see p. 268), the connection between priesthood and heavenly ascent. This, together with his pessimistic evaluation of the usefulness of divine agency figures for understanding NT Christology, means that he fails to explore a potentially fruitful background to the priestly Christology of Hebrews.

[48] See Chapter 3.2.2.

[49] Wallace notes that although an aorist participle often denotes an action antecedent to the main verb, when the main verb is also aorist, the participle will often be contemporaneous to the main verb (D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996, 624).