well as those of generations to come. Thus to God's people in exile, tempted to despair and give up, Ezekiel's vision of God as the good shepherd gave hope. But to the generation addressed by Zechariah 9-14, tempted to comfortable mediocrity now that the Temple had been rebuilt and Jerusalem restored, alongside a reiteration of the message of God as good shepherd (Zc. 10:3-5), comes the message that blessing is not automatic. If the good shepherd is rejected, bad shepherds will follow (Zc. 11:4-16). Those who fail to learn from the past history of Israel will be doomed to repeat it.

These diverse images are drawn together in the New Testament and applied to Jesus. Just as many pieces of furniture, fabrics and materials, each of which has their own integrity, may be drawn together in a richly furnished room in the service of a greater integrity, so the different Old Testament images are assembled together in the New Testament. The usage of the Old Testament material is never trivial or artificial,[55] nor is it limited to one or two messianic images. The many different images were freely combined and transformed by the New Testament writers,[56] to show how all the eschatological promises of the Old Testament had been fulfilled in Jesus, who is both final prophet and great high priest, suffering servant and coming king, good shepherd and sacrificial lamb.

The final word of Zechariah 9-14 and New Testament alike is grace not judgement. Though the shepherd be rejected (Zc. 11:8-9) and pierced by his own people (Zc. 12:10; 13:7-9), though the covenant be broken (Zc. 11:10) and a worthless antishepherd be allowed to rule over God's people for a while, yet that is not God's final word. For God brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, so that he might be the God of peace (Heb. 13:20; *cf.* Zc. 9:11). In Jesus, Jerusalem's king has come to speak peace between God and man. He has come to reestablish union: not simply union between Israel and Judah but a union which tears down the wall of division between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14-17). He has come to enable us to be God's holy people, and him to be our God (Zc. 13:9; Rev. 21:3).

[55]T.W. Manson, 'The Old Testament in the Teaching of Jesus', *BJRL* 34 (1951-52) 312-32.

[56]H.C. Kee, 'Messiah and the People of God' in J.T. Butler, E.W. Conrad and B.C. Ollenburger (eds.), *Understanding the Word. Essays in Honor of B.W. Anderson* (JSOTS 37; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985) 356.

CHAPTER 14

MESSIANIC MYSTERIES[1]

Martin J. Selman

Summary

The Old Testament roots of the concept of an individual eschatological Messiah show a number of significant differences from the established views of Judaism and Christianity. A Messiah in the Old Testament was an anointed leader, and the term was originally appropriate to both Davidic kings and Aaronite priests. The Old Testament's portrayals of the chronology, nature and functions of messianic figures are deliberately enigmatic, describing them in terms which were as much historical and political as eschatological and spiritual. The clarification of these enigmas in the New Testament included additional factors not present in traditional Israelite messianic thinking, and led to considerable surprise about the way Jesus fulfilled Old Testament messianic ideas.

[1]An earlier version of this article was delivered in lectures given at Samford University, Birmingham, Al. and William Jewell College, Liberty, Mo., in April 1995.

I. Introduction

The Christian belief that Jesus is the Messiah has a long prehistory. It is not, however, a straightforward matter to trace the progress of this belief from its roots in the Old Testament to the fully developed body of Christian teaching. At least three quite distinct stages can be identified in the process by which the pre-Christian messianic descriptions of the Old Testament were transformed into a fixed set of beliefs associated with Jesus of Nazareth. The earliest stage is obviously that of the Old Testament itself, which is distinguished from the stages that follow by two notable features. The first is that the Old Testament hardly uses the word 'Messiah' at all, and the second is that when it does do so, the term never refers to an eschatological figure who will inaugurate the kingdom of God. On the contrary, the messianic-type vocabulary of the Old Testament refers primarily to contemporary individuals in specific historical contexts rather than to any ideal embodiment of a future hope. It also employs a kaleidoscope of images to describe various messianic roles rather than a single monochrome picture. The second stage of development is represented by the various Jewish understandings of the intertestamental period and the first two Christian centuries. What stands out from these Jewish views is that they make use of only a limited range of the Old Testament's messianic ideas. Further, the scattered references to messianic figures in Jewish literature of this period cannot for the moment be integrated into a standard messianology by which the Jewish beliefs of the period might be categorised.[2] The third stage is represented by the New Testament's application of messianic ideas to Jesus of Nazareth, where one is faced with two contrasting attitudes. On the one hand, the New Testament proclaims Jesus as the fulfilment of the Old Testament's messianic promises and of contemporary Jewish hopes, a view that Jesus himself clearly shared. On the other hand, both first-century AD Jews and the writers of the New Testament recognized that the early Christian view of Jesus' claim to messiahship was significantly at variance with contemporary interpretation of the Old Testament. Indeed, it seems that the most important reason why the majority of Jews of the first century AD rejected Jesus as their Messiah was because he did not interpret the Bible in the way they thought he should and generally did

[2]J.H. Charlesworth, in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 1-35; W.S. Green, 'Introduction: Messiah in Judaism: Rethinking the Question', in J. Neusner, *et al.* (eds.), *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987) 1-13.

not conform to their expectations.[3]

This is not the place to conduct an in-depth assessment of the reasons why Jewish and Christian beliefs on this matter diverged so much from each other and from the traditional messianic ideas of the Old Testament, though the exercise is vital to the whole messianological and Christological enterprise. Rather, this paper will attempt the more limited task of examining the Old Testament contribution to the concept of the Messiah to see what light can be shed on the origins of the divergence. It will be argued that it is in the nature of Old Testament messianic concepts to be expressed in imprecise and mysterious terms, with the result that contrasting interpretations were almost inevitable. Part of the reason for the imprecision is that the Old Testament writers lacked a clear understanding of the total picture and were looking through a glass darkly on this matter as on many others (*cf.* 1 Pet. 1:10-11). This should not be taken to imply that their contributions were confused and incoherent, however. It is simply that their overall view was incomplete. Furthermore, the Old Testament describes a particular set of messianic ideas which are expressed through a series of dualities. Though these dualities have often been treated as contradictory elements, they are in fact an essential feature of the way the subject is expressed.

II. Defining the Old Testament Messiah

It is important that some attempt is made to define what the Old Testament writers understood by the word Messiah. This is an urgent issue, since merely to concentrate on the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ ('anointed [person]') and its related words inevitably results in a limited view of what even from an Old Testament perspective is much more than an exercise in lexicography. The chief problem is that the absolute use of מָשִׁיחַ, *i.e.*, 'the Messiah', occurs in only one passage throughout the Old Testament, namely Daniel 9:25-26, where its meaning is particularly obscure. The only point of agreement among interpreters is that the passage refers to an historical individual of the pre-New Testament

[3]Though Jewish understandings of the messianic concept went through similar developments, the problem is more acute in Christianity because of its specific application of messianic ideas to Jesus. For Jewish messianic views, see *e.g.*, J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel: From its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah*, (ET; New York: Macmillan, 1955); J. Neusner, *et al.* (eds.), *Judaisms and their Messiahs*; G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1971).

period, but the range of options for identifying this messianic figure is wide, including various high priests and civil leaders. It is not even certain whether the separate references in vv. 25 and 26 are to one or two anointed figures.[4] Elsewhere מָשִׁיחַ is always qualified, as in the expressions 'Yahweh's Messiah' (= 'the Lord's anointed'; 1 Sa. 24:7, 11; 2 Sa. 26:9, 11; *etc.*) and 'my/your/his messiah' (1 Sa. 2:10, 35; Ps. 2:2; Is. 45:1), and always refers to an historical person. Though some of these references can and should also be interpreted in a future sense, מָשִׁיחַ as such in the Old Testament is a neutral term applicable to a range of individuals and contexts and is not limited to a single fixed ideology. Further exegesis is required to determine the characteristics of any particular anointed individual and to ascertain to which period of time each context may refer.

Rather than confine the concept of the Messiah to a single Hebrew word, another possible approach is to examine the messianic images and symbols found in a fixed range of texts. This is in fact how both Jewish and Christian commentators have generally proceeded, and it is notable that this tendency is reflected in ancient as well as modern times.[5] The standard list of texts is certainly more extensive than a collection of lexical items and reaches from Genesis (3:15) to Malachi (3:23 [Heb. 4:5]), but on its own this approach is no more successful than the previous one in providing a framework for understanding messianic ideas in the Old Testament. The chief difficulty is that establishing such a list usually depends on criteria external to the Old Testament. Another approach would be to examine the various functions attributed to messianic figures throughout the Old Testament, but the problems associated with this line of enquiry are no less critical. Not only does this approach suffer too from the difficulty of externally-imposed categories, there is much less agreement about the role of messianic figures in the Old Testament than about identifying the passages in which they are portrayed. Debate has centred in particular round the question of whether messianic functions include suffering and death, as in Isaiah's portrait of the Suffering Servant[6] or

[4]See the various interpretations adopted in *e.g.*, L.F. Hartman and A.A. di Lella, *The Book of Daniel* (New York: Doubleday, 1978) 251; N.W. Porteous, *Daniel* (London: SCM, 1965) 140-43; J.E. Goldingay, *Daniel* (Dallas: Word, 1989) 261.
[5]J.J.M. Roberts, 'The Old Testament's contribution to Messianic expectations', in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah* 39-51, esp. 41. See also J. Becker, *Messianic Expectation in the Old Testament* (ET; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980) 11-13.
[6]*E.g.*, S. Mowinckel, *He that Cometh* (ET; Oxford: Blackwell, 1956) 187-257; H. Ringgren, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1956) 39-67.

the various descriptions of suffering leaders in Zechariah 9-14,[7] and the extent to which the kingly rule of the son of man figure in Daniel 7 is associated with the line of David.[8]

The most practical solution seems to be to adopt aspects from each of these approaches. Any investigation, however, must begin by examining the use of Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ, since the significance attached to anointing ceremonies and anointed persons is fundamental to the whole range of messianic concepts. This can be the only secure basis for assessing whether the conventional messianic texts and traditional messianic roles make a genuine contribution to the Old Testament view of the Messiah. Using a range of approaches should also produce a more rounded picture. There is the additional advantage of being able to make comparisons between texts dealing specifically with anointing and those which deal with related but broader concepts.

III. Dualities in Messianic Thinking

A major difficulty in interpreting any messianic text is deciding whether the passage concerned refers to the present or the future. Traditional messianic interpretation of the Old Testament by the church has usually ridden roughshod over the historical context of many passages, and assumed that each passage looks only to the time of the future. The consequence has been to produce a messianological maximum, which in its uncontrolled forms is liable to find messianic expectation almost anywhere in the Old Testament. Critical scholarship, on the other hand, has been so concerned to underline the particular contexts in which so-called messianic texts have arisen that it has produced a messianological minimum. A further consequence of this latter approach has been to bring forward the date at which belief in a Messiah emerged until at least the exile[9] or even the second century BC[10] The contrasting approaches seem irreconcilable, though it is important to recognize that they both assume the passages concerned have only one main application.

[7]R.A. Rosenberg, 'The Slain Messiah in the Old Testament', *ZAW* 99 (1987) 259-61.
[8]*E.g.*, J. Coppens, 'Le Serviteur de Yahvé et le Fils d'homme daniélique sont-ils des figures messianiques', *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses* 39 (1963) 104-14; W. Horbury, 'The Messianic Associations of "the Son of Man"', *JTS* 36 (1985) 34-55; S. Mowinckel, *He that cometh* 346-450; R.D. Rowe, 'Is Daniel's "Son of Man" messianic?', in H.H. Rowdon (ed.), *Christ the Lord* (Leicester: IVP, 1982) 71-96.
[9]S. Mowinckel, *He that cometh* 155-59.
[10]J. Becker, *Messianic Expectation* 79.

Neither approach, however, has produced an entirely satisfactory exegesis of the relevant texts, since it is a common feature of messianic passages that they are capable of more than one interpretation. Psalm 72, for example, clearly refers to the contemporary king but also takes a broader view. Phrases such as 'may he endure as long as the sun... may his name endure for ever, may it continue like the sun' (Ps. 72:5, 17) must be regarded as either totally unrealistic and idealistic hyperbole, or as part of a hope for the future that also acted as a challenge to the present. Though it is true that analogous texts from the ancient Near East often made use of hyperbole, Israel's theology about a dynastic promise that David's house, kingdom and throne would last for ever (2 Sa. 7:13, 16) suggests that passages of this kind involved more than simply exaggerated language.[11] From its origin in the Jerusalem cultus, the psalm's meaning seems to be based on an inbuilt duality involving both the present and future dimensions of reality, and should not be restricted to either the pre-exilic monarchy or an eschatological king. It refers to an anointed leader with God-given significance for his own time and the time to come. Since the duality present in this psalm is also evident in other passages dealing with messianic figures, it will now be explored further. It seems to operate at five different levels.

1. The Messiah as Present and Future

Passing reference has already been made to Nathan's oracle to David in 2 Samuel 7:11b-16. This passage is often rightly regarded as the foundation of Israel's messianic hope, even though the extent of its original core has been a matter for extended debate. One of the most interesting features about this oracle is that although it is not explicitly messianic in the eschatological sense, it does contain a repeated divine promise that David's house or dynasty will stand 'for ever' (vv. 13, 16, 16). This interest in an apparently eternal dynasty, however, is in direct contrast to another of God's promises, that David's successor will build a temple for Yahweh. Assuming that both promises are integral to the prophecy, the point seems to be that one of David's sons will be the temple-builder and the first in a continuing line of descendants that will last for ever. In other words, David's successor will be important

[11] 'The language of the Psalm and the actual reigns of the successive Davidic kings, are such as to suggest that the Psalm must have looked not only to the present but also to the future' (A.A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, Vol. 1 (London: Oliphants, 1972) 518-19). *Cf.* also H.J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (ET; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989) 80-81.

both for his own sake and as a pointer to the future.

What this might mean in practice is not discussed, and if anything, the potential contradictions intensify as the oracle progresses. On the one hand, the statement (v. 14) that wrongdoers will be punished is a clear indication that David's family will continue as ordinary fallible human beings rather than be specially endowed with superhuman qualities. On the other hand, this is followed immediately by God's unequivocal guarantee to David's successor: 'I will never remove[12] my steadfast love from him as I removed it from Saul whom I removed before you' (v. 15). The only hint about how the problem of God's permanent commitment to a dynasty of sinners might be resolved is found in the unusual threefold repetition of first person verbal forms: 'I will never remove... as I removed Saul whom I removed...' This repetition suggests that the decisive responsibility for maintaining the dynasty lies in God's hands. Having made possible David's accession to the throne (vv. 8-9a), it was now up to God to ensure the dynasty's continuity.

A similar emphasis about anointed Davidic kings being caught up in God's long-term purposes is found in several other passages related to the Davidic covenant. Interestingly, the idea is found more frequently in the Psalms than in the prophets.[13] The preponderance of references in the Psalter suggests that a belief that Davidic kingship would last for ever was a regular feature of Israel's worship, perhaps articulated at a king's coronation or at an annual festival celebrating God's promises to the Davidic dynasty. Psalm 89 clearly demonstrates that these convictions about the Davidic monarchy were firmly established. The psalm opens with a divine promise addressed to the king, 'I will build your throne for all generations' (v. 4), which was then amplified by a series of covenant oaths:

> I will establish his line for ever,
> his throne while the heavens endure (v. 29 [30])...
> his line will continue for ever
> and his throne will be like the sun before me;
> like the moon it will be established for ever...
> (vv. 36-37 [37-38]).

[12] With 1 Ch. 17:13; LXX, Syr, Vulg and most recent commentators, against MT 'my steadfast love will not depart'. *Cf.* A.A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (Dallas: Word, 1989) 112; P.K. McCarter, *II Samuel* (New York: Doubleday, 1984) 194.

[13] *E.g.*, Pss 18:50[51]; 45:6[7]; 72:5, 17; 89:4[5], 28-37[29-38]; 110:4; 132:11-12.

Yet the promises affirming the dynasty's longevity do not ignore its failings. As in 2 Samuel 7, those who commit sin and iniquity will certainly not escape punishment (vv. 30-32 [Heb. vv. 31-33]). Even in these circumstances, however, God will not renege on his commitment: 'I will not take my love from him... I will not profane my covenant' (vv. 33-34[34-35]). It is hard to imagine a more emphatic expression of hope for the anointed sinners of David's line.

The prophetic literature contains further examples of a hope centred on the contemporary line of David. Ezekiel links the idea with the return from exile (37:24-27), and Hosea applies it to the last days (3:5). The most explicit promise occurs in Isaiah 9:7 [6] in relation to the future messianic king: 'of the increase of his government there will be no end', but by setting this hope in the time of king Ahaz (Is. 7:1-9:7 [6]), its meaning is clearly contrasted with the fortunes of the reigning monarch.

In fact, messianic thinking in the prophets is frequently tied up with specific historical events, and much more so than in the Psalms. Though the family of anointed kings would be subject to judgment (Is. 7:13-25), their line would be restored after the exile (Am. 9:11-12; Je. 23:5-6; Ezk. 34:23-24) and they would take a leading role in rebuilding the temple (Zc. 4:1-14; 6:9-15). It seems that whereas the Psalms concentrated on the idea that the Davidic line would last for ever, the prophets tended to show how the promise was to be interpreted in particular historical circumstances, especially in contexts where the line was threatened with extinction.

It is worth noting in passing that the idea of a future leader who would establish God's sovereign rule preceded the rise of the monarchy, and was therefore independent of the concept of an anointed or messianic ruler. The classic Jewish and Christian messianic traditions have both recognized the importance of certain premonarchic texts where the idea occurs, even though from an Old Testament point of view the texts concerned are not properly messianic. The main passages are found in poetic portions of the Pentateuch and are prophetic in character.[14] In Genesis 3:15 an unidentified human being will achieve the ultimate defeat of the snake and all that he represents, Genesis 49:10 refers to a ruler from the tribe of Judah to whom the nations will submit, and Numbers 24:17-19 predicts a future ruler who

[14]Though all three passages are often treated as being of monarchic date, the lack of reference to a king or to the Davidic line is strong evidence that they may well be premonarchic.

will rise like a star in the night sky to defeat Israel's enemies. It is possible that the two latter passages need refer to nothing more than a single historical event, and all three have been understood as either 'exaggerated hopes about the glorious future of the people Israel'[15] or 'fictive prophecies of the Davidic monarchy'.[16] But the reference to 'the obedience of the nations' in Genesis 49:10 has in mind more than just an ordinary victory, and the defeat of the snake is certainly viewed as a permanent reversal of the damage inflicted on the created world. Even in Numbers 24, the anticipated champion seems to belong to a distant future: 'I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near.' In all three cases a human being achieves a victory with consequences that are more long-term than immediate.

These pre-messianic passages in the Pentateuch prepare the way for the messianic promises made about David's dynasty, since they both share the idea that certain historical leaders would play a part in establishing God's future rule. But there are also significant differences between the two groups of passages. Whereas the Pentateuchal passages are mainly concerned with future events, the Davidic promises are about specific individuals. The introduction of the concept of anointing also adds three distinctive elements. Firstly, instead of a general hope of a leader who would arise from the nation of Israel (Nu. 24:17) or the tribe of Judah (Gn. 49:10), an anointed leader would arise from a named family. Secondly, whereas the Pentateuchal promises are primarily concerned with the future, the Davidic promises often focus more on contemporary leaders. Thirdly, the anointed line of David was expressly said to last for ever, in contrast to the rather unspecific future of the Pentateuchal passages. In comparison with the Pentateuchal hope, therefore, the messianic concepts attached to David's dynasty brought about a much sharper focus in relation to both the present and the future.

2. *The Messiah as Political and Spiritual*

Messianic texts are rarely concerned with a purely idealistic hope about the continuation of the Davidic line. The exercise of some form of political authority is usually mentioned as well, involving at least the nation of Israel and sometimes the whole world. A common theme

[15]J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel* 32; *cf.* S. Mowinckel, *He that cometh*, 11-13.
[16]J. Becker, *Messianic Expectation* 32-36, in relation to Gn. 49:8-12; Nu. 24:15-24. *Cf.* also J.J.M. Roberts, 'The Old Testament's Contribution to Messianic Expectations', in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah* 39-51 ('they found their fulfilment in the monarchic period').

is that an anointed king will rescue Israel from her enemies, as indicated by the following words addressed to a contemporary king:

> Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one...
> May your arrows be sharp, may the peoples fall beneath you,
> May your arrows be sharp in the heart of the king's enemies.[17]

Another frequent theme is the involvement in of anointed leaders in Israel's restoration from exile:

> For this is what Yahweh says: "David will not fail to have a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, nor will the Levitical priests fail to have a man before me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to offer sacrifices continually."[18]

Several of the royal psalms even express the confidence that the kings of David's line will rule over the whole world:

> He will rule from sea to sea
> From the River to the ends of the earth...
> All kings will bow down to him,
> All nations will serve him.[19]

Finally, some passages include anointed priests alongside anointed Davidic descendants as playing a crucial role in rebuilding the temple and reestablishing worship in Jerusalem:

> The word of Yahweh came to me: 'The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple. His hands will also complete it.'
>
> Set the crown on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadaq. Say to him, 'This is what Yahweh of Hosts says: "Here is the man whose name is the Branch. He will branch out from his place and he will build Yahweh's temple."'[20]

[17]Ps. 45:3-5 [4-6]; *cf.* Mi. 5:1-5; Ps. 110:5-7 (though the last of these passages may be concerned with Yahweh's defeat of foreign kings on behalf of Israel's anointed king). *Cf.* also Nu. 24:17-19 in relation to a leader who is not anointed but who carries out a similar function.

[18]Je. 33:17-18. In Je. 33;14-26 and Ezk. 34:23-24, a Davidic descendant (and in the case of Je. 33:17-26, the anointed priests) is reinstated to leadership as a result of the restoration, but he does not actually bring about the restoration. In Is. 11:10-11 and Am. 9:11-12, the association between the Davidic house and restoration is more general.

[19]Ps. 72:8-11; *cf.* Pss. 2:8-12; 89:27 [28].

Though all these incidents were firmly rooted in the actual political and religious life of ancient Israel, what distinguishes them from other Old Testament events is the manner in which the anointed leaders were to behave. Many passages describe these leaders acting or ruling with righteousness and justice.[21] These are important qualities that belong to the covenant between God and Israel, and they reflect the character of God and the standards he expects in his kingdom. Further, almost all the prophetic passages make a direct contrast between the unacceptable unrighteousness and injustice of contemporary rulers, who were usually Israelite, and the divinely approved standards of the leaders who will replace them. This point comes across particularly clearly in Jeremiah 23:5-6, where the promise to raise up a 'righteous Branch' in David's line is set against the wicked ways of Judah's leaders (or 'shepherds' as they are called in 23:1-2), especially the unrighteous behaviour of the last few Judahite kings severely criticized in ch. 22 (see especially Je. 22:13). In the matter of establishing the Davidic dynasty's rule over the nations, Psalm 2 also emphasizes the importance of spiritual values. This achievement is not seen in military or political terms, but as a gift from God brought about through belief in effective intercessory prayer: 'Ask me, that I may give you the nations as your inheritance' (Ps. 2:8).

These ideals were not just for future Davidic kings, but were equally applicable to the pre-exilic monarchy. David expressed the view, apparently in relation to himself as well as to his successors, that: 'The one who rules over people in righteousness, who rules in the fear of God, is like the light of a cloudless morning at sunrise' (2 Sa. 23:3-4).[22] In similar vein, the psalmists' hopes of universal sovereignty were focused on the king who had been installed on God's holy hill in Zion (Ps. 2:6-9). To some extent of course, these political hopes were fulfilled in Old Testament times, particularly through specific military victories and the return from exile. But if they were partly fulfilled, they also remained partly unfulfilled, and not even David could be said to have remotely measured up to them. For that reason, many prophecies of this kind were open to the possibility of further interpretation. Multiple prophecies about the return from exile, for example, as in Jeremiah 33:14-26 or Ezekiel 37:24-28, continued to emphasize that a Davidic king would again reign over Israel. The key factor, however, was not

[20]Zc. 4:8; 6:11-12;*cf.* Je. 33:14-26; Zc. 3:8; 4:1-14; 6:9-15.

[21]2 Sa. 23:3-4; Pss. 45:4 [5], 6-7 [7-8]; 72:2-4, 12-14; Is. 9:7 [6]; 11:3b-5; Je. 23:5-6; 33:15-16.

[22]*Cf.* also Pss. 45:4 [5], 6-7 [7-8]; 72:2-4, 12-14.

simply that a son of David would 'sit on the throne of the house of Israel' (Je. 33:17, *cf.* vv. 21, 26), but that he would demonstrate the necessary spiritual qualities. In Jeremiah's words, he would be a 'righteous Branch' who would 'execute justice and righteousness in the land' (33:15). To those who were actually involved in the political restoration of Israel, the fact that part of the prophets' words had been fulfilled already must have encouraged at least some of them that the time would still come when God's rule would be fully established, not just in Israel but among the nations.

3. *The Messiah as Human and Divine*

The passages considered so far have underlined the fact that the messianic texts of the Old Testament generally refer to actual human leaders. In some passages, however, this understanding is combined with a clear indication that anointed leaders would in some way be divine. In terms of the number of passages in which this point of view occurs, it cannot be argued that it is a major feature of Old Testament messianic thought. On the other hand, since any text that describes a person with human and divine qualities is of considerable significance wherever it occurs, the comparative infrequency of the references should not be the sole basis of their evaluation.

Two passages stand out in this regard, Isaiah 9:6-7 [5-6] and Jeremiah 23:5-6, though Psalm 45:6 [7] should probably also be included. In the case of Isaiah 9:6-7 [5-6], the gift of the epithets 'Mighty God' and 'Everlasting Father' to a human child of David's line clearly implies that he will possess divine qualities, even though the exact meaning of both phrases has been widely debated. For example, the fact that the only other occurrence of the expression אֵל גִּבּוֹר in Isaiah clearly refers to God (Is. 10:21) is strong support for translating 'Mighty God' here,[23] though the alternative renderings 'Divine Hero'[24] or 'Divine Warrior'[25] also draw attention to the child's godlike qualities. In the phrase 'Everlasting Father', the presence of divine characteristics may be deduced both from the use of the Hebrew noun for 'eternity, perpetuity' and from the fact that an Israelite king is never spoken of elsewhere in the sense of the father of his people. 'Father' is also an established title for Israel's God,[26] and the use of the epithet 'of eternity' for a person is applicable only to God. Though neither of these phrases is elucidated any further in the context, this must not be allowed to detract from the distinctiveness of this claim about a child of David's line.[27] This conclusion is not affected by whether these names are regarded as throne names on the Egyptian pattern[28] or names given to the child at birth,[29] since the issue of whether the child is divine is based on the meaning of the names and not on the time when the child received them. On either view, 'the child is a ruler, a king, with divine attributes and divine equipment'.[30]

[23] *Cf.* also Dt. 10:17; Je. 32:18.
[24] *E.g.*, O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12* (2nd ed; ET; London: SCM, 1983) 204. Kaiser (213) notes that the king is designated God elsewhere in the Old Testament only in Ps. 45:6 [7].
[25] *E.g.*, R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1980) 108.

A second possibility that an anointed king of David's line possessed divine features is found in Jeremiah 23:5-6, and as in Isaiah 9, the issue revolves around a king's name. The name 'Yahweh-our-righteousness' is certainly divine, since it contains the full tetragrammaton rather than an abbreviated form of Yahweh's name as in Zedekiah or Jehozadaq, but it is not immediately clear whether the person to whom the name is given is also considered to be divine. Other Yahweh names of this type such as 'Yahweh-is-there' (Ezk. 48:35) or 'Yahweh-is-peace' (Judg. 6:24) are given to places or objects with no thought of them being treated as divine, most notably in Jeremiah 33:16 where the city of Jerusalem is also given the name Yahweh-our-righteousness. Two factors suggest that Jeremiah 23:5-6 should be treated differently, however. Firstly, only here is a Yahweh name applied to a human being, and secondly this king will be the epitome of justice and righteousness in contrast to all his pre-decessors. Though ordinary names like Zedekiah (= 'Yahweh is righteousness') normally expressed nothing more than the parents' pious hopes for their newborn child, because this child would be the ideal righteous king, his name would uniquely be a true reflection of his character and personality. Another notable feature which this passage shares with Isaiah 9:6-7 [5-6] is that both promises are eschatologically oriented. Isaiah 9 refers to a king who will reign 'from that time on and for ever' and whose government would have 'no end', while Jeremiah 23 refers

[26] *E.g.*, Dt. 32:6; Pss. 2:7; 89:26 [27]; Is 63:16; Je. 3:4, 19; Mal. 2:10.
[27] *Cf.* S. Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 104-106; H. Wildberger, 'Die Thronnamen des Messias Jes 9,5b', *TZ* 16 (1960) 316-17.
[28] A. Alt, 'Jesaja 8,23-9,6. Befreiungsnacht und Kronungstag', in W. Baumgartner *et al.* (eds.), *Festschrift für Alfred Bertholet* (Tübingen: J.C.B . Mohr, 1950) 29ff.; G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* Vol. II (London: SCM, 1965) 171-72.
[29] *E.g.*, J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 245-47.
[30] Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 106.

to the time when 'the days are coming'. The fact that these promises are set firmly against the background of separate historico-political crises, namely the eighth century Assyrian invasion of Judah and the threat of exile in the early sixth century, raises sharply the conflict between present reality and future hope frequently evident in Old Testament messianic thought.

Psalm 45 is a royal psalm set in a cultic rather than an eschatological context, in which the opening section extols the king's military prowess and moral virtues (vv. 1-9 [2-10]). The section as a whole is addressed to the king, probably from David's line, but the address suddenly changes in v. 6 [7] to God: 'Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever'. Commentators have often tried to soften the impact of this *crux interpretum*, but the results are not convincing since the actual wording of the Hebrew is not in doubt.[31] A solution is more likely to be found in the theological realm, and since the two passages just discussed envisage a human person with divine characteristics, it is quite possible that the same kind of meaning is appropriate here. Whether the language of the address is explained in terms of hyperbole, prophetic hope, or a conviction about the essential unity of the human and divine thrones, worship in the Jerusalem temple may well have conceived of a human king who was in some way divine.

Two further groups of texts must also be briefly considered. The first group, in which all the passages are associated with the Davidic covenant (2 Sa. 7:14; Pss. 2:6-7; 89:26-27[27-28]), contains explicit references to the king as a son of God and to God as the king's father. Though the king clearly has human characteristics in all three passages, the two psalms attribute qualities to him that are certainly superhuman. In Psalm 2 he is promised universal sovereignty and in Psalm 89 he is portrayed as the first-born, that is preeminent, among all human kings. These special qualities are directly associated with the Davidic king's status as a son of God, and though they do not make him divine, they do indicate his close relationship with God. The second group of texts also refers to a close association between God and a human Davidic king, but not in terms of sonship. One passage refers to an especially generous gift of God's Spirit (Is.11:1-3a), and another speaks in terms of Yahweh's gift of superhuman strength (Mi.

[31]See discussion in A.A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, Vol. I (London: Oliphants, 1972) 349-50; P.C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (Waco: Word, 1983) 335-41; J.H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (SBT 32; London: SCM, 1976) 142-43. The MT is supported by H.J. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (ET; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988) 450-57; A. Weiser, *The Psalms*, (ET; London: SCM, 1962) 363.

5:4-5a). Since the gift the anointed king receives in both instances is part of God's very being, it may well be related to the idea of a father-son relationship.

Unfortunately, the psalmists and prophets of the Old Testament make no attempt to explain any further the meaning of the close relationship between God and the anointed king, whether they thought in terms of a relationship between father and son or the apparent contradiction that a person could be both human and divine. The Israelite authors were content to describe matters as far as they were able, but they left a question mark about whether the relevant passages were to be interpreted as hyperbole or as part of a genuine hope which had not yet found fulfilment.

4. The Messiah as King and Priest

The messianic idea is often treated as a royal concept. For Mowinckel, for example, 'The Messiah is simply the king in this national and religious future kingdom, which will one day be established by the miraculous intervention of Yahweh.' Obviously, considerable Old Testament evidence exists in support of this understanding, especially as the title 'Yahweh's anointed' is used exclusively of kings. But for a period of several centuries, ancient Israel recognised at least two anointed persons, namely the king and the (high) priest or the priests. The phrase 'anointed priest', in fact, is relatively common in the Pentateuch,[32] and the priests were a more permanent messianic institution than the monarchy. In short, an anointed or messianic leader in Old Testament times could be either a priest or a king.

Of special significance in this context, however, are the texts that combine these two messianic functions, namely Psalm 110:4; Jeremiah 33:14-26; and Zechariah 3:8; 4:14; 6:12-14. The earliest is the royal psalm Psalm 110 where one who is presumably an anointed king is acknowledged as a priest for ever in the order of Melchisedek (v. 4). The tradition continues through a promise about the joint restoration of the Davidic monarchy and Levitical priesthood in Jeremiah 33:14-26 to chs. 1-9 in the post-exilic prophet Zechariah.[33] The most detailed of these passages is 6:11-13, where despite repeated efforts by some commentators to avoid the conclusion that the passage refers to a joint kingship and priesthood, Joshua the high priest is given the royal title 'the Branch' and 'will rule on his throne and will be a priest on his

[32]*E.g.*, Lv. 4:3, 5; 6:22 [15]; Nu. 3:3.
[33]Zc. 3:8; 4:1-14; 6:9-15.

throne.'[34]

There can be no doubt therefore that a tradition existed, apparently originating in the Jerusalem temple, that the two anointed offices of king and priest could on occasion be combined. Two versions of this tradition may be distinguished, based upon the two different priestly orders. While Psalm 110 envisages the Davidic king being appointed to the priestly order of Melchisedek and acting as a priest-king, Jeremiah 33 and Zechariah speak of the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood alongside the Davidic monarchy. The latter model is apparently meant in Zechariah 6:11-13, which despite a number of uncertainties, clearly refers to 'harmony' or 'peaceful understanding' (עֵצַת שָׁלוֹם) 'between the two of them' (v. 13). The existence of two versions of the priest-king tradition seems to be significant. On the one hand, the Davidic kings exercised sacral or priestly functions through their activities in blessing, intercession and offering sacrifice. On the other, the messianic tradition included the full range of activities of the Aaronic priests, including the opportunity to offer sacrifice within the temple and to gain access to the Holiest Place. On this view, the hostilities between the priests and the king in the time of Uzziah (2 Ch. 26:16-21) should be regarded as a temporary aberration, though a proper reconciliation took place may not have taken place until the monarchy was displaced at the exile.

In addition to the royal and priestly dimensions of messianic thought, prophecy could also take on a messianic role. The prophetic contribution, like that of the priests, functioned in two ways, through kings and priests speaking prophetically,[35] and through prophets who were said to be anointed. Though only one anointing of a prophet is mentioned in the Old Testament, and it is not absolutely certain that even that event actually took place (1 Ki. 19:16), other passages where anointing by God's Spirit led to prophetic activity (Is. 61:1-2; Joel 2:28-32 [3:1-5]) are sufficient warrant for regarding prophecy in a messianic light. Since these last two references are eschatological in orientation, it seems that the messianic role of prophecy belongs to both the present and future aspects of messianic thought.

[34]There is no textual support for the frequent suggestion originating with Wellhausen to read the name of Zerubbabel rather than Joshua in Zc, 6:11. *Cf. e.g.*, D.L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8* (London: SCM, 1985) 275-78; P.L. Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 78-79. For a defence of MT, *cf.* E. Achtermeier, *Nahum-Malachi* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986) 131-33; C.L. and E.M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8* (New York: Doubleday, 1987) 336-75.

[35]*E.g.*,1 Sa. 10:6; 2 Sa. 23:1-7; Pss. 2:7-9; 95:7b-11.

The fact that anointed priests existed before anointed kings and that Israelite kings functioned in a priestly manner from the beginning of the monarchy suggests that priesthood belongs to the origins of the messianic concept. The same can also be said of prophecy, since it is Saul and David, Israel's first two kings, who demonstrate the strongest connections between anointed kingship and prophetic activity. In the light of this, it is hardly surprising that kingship and priesthood were combined at different times during the Old Testament period, though it is notable that the association was revived in the post-exilic period when Davidic kingship was no longer a political reality.

5. The Messiah as Victorious yet Suffering

Most references to anointed leaders speak of their ultimate triumph in achieving the purpose for which God had chosen them. From the very beginning of the Davidic monarchy, God had promised that David's throne and kingdom would be established for ever (2 Sa. 7:16), and similar promises of success are found in the Psalms and the prophets. The Psalms repeatedly affirm the ultimate victory of God's anointed king over his enemies,[36] and Isaiah includes descriptions of a king whose reign will be one of neverending peace and a 'root of Jesse' through whose rule 'the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea.'[37] This emphasis is perhaps not too surprising, however, since the ceremony of anointing was intended to symbolise God's choice and equipping to carry out his purposes.[38] It is only natural to suppose that God would enable such individuals to complete successfully the task he had given them.

Some passages, however, present a very different picture of God's anointed leaders, describing them as being subject to various forms of humiliation and suffering. The experiences fall into three different categories. The first is straightforwardly concerned with punishments inflicted on wrongdoers among David's family. A cautionary note to this effect was part and parcel of the original dynastic oracle given to David (2 Sa. 7:14), and no leader in the royal family was exempt, not even David (2 Sa. 12:7-10). Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy is also to be understood in this light, for the Immanuel child was to be a sign of God's judgment against the contemporary Davidic king Ahaz (Is. 7:14). The second type of experience was that of undeserved suffer-

[36]*E.g.*, Pss. 2:1-12; 72:8-11; 110:1-2, 5-6; 132:17-18.

[37]Is. 9:7 [6]; 11:9-10.

[38]1 Sa. 9:16; 10:1 (LXX, Vulg); 16:13.

ing inflicted on David's line by others. The clearest example of this is in Psalm 2, where rulers and kings are described as conspiring and plotting against Yahweh and against his anointed king (Ps. 2:1-3). Though the psalm also makes it clear that the Gentile kings will be unsuccessful, the picture of a vigorous premeditated opposition against God's chosen leader is clear enough. A similar concept also seems to lie behind the royal lament in Psalm 89:38-51 [39-52], where although the psalmist blames God for all his troubles, what he actually describes is military defeat, the destruction of his defences and possibly the end of the dynasty at the hand of the Babylonian army.[39] Although the king's lament is similar in language and style to that of laments generally in the Old Testament, indicating that the anointed king was identified with his people in their experiences, as the anointed one he was the particular focus of the people's suffering.[40] It is also significant that the psalm highlights the contradiction raised by the mismatch between God's promise and the actual events which resulted in the king's suffering. Though Yahweh had once given David a promise of an eternal covenant, now he appears to have rejected his anointed king and spurned his covenant (vv. 3-4 [4-5], 35-39 [36-40]).[41]

The third type of experience of suffering is brought about by God himself. It is true that the number of examples is small, and since they are all from the post-exilic period and are to some extent enigmatic, they cannot be said to be central to Old Testament messianic thought. They do, however, again bring to the fore the sense of contradiction involved in the idea of anointed leaders. The two key passages occur in Zechariah 9-14, a collection of eschatological prophecies in which leadership is a major theme. The first passage describes an unexpected picture of a king riding into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt (Zc. 9:9). There seems little doubt in the context that the donkey's colt

[39]For the view that the psalm refers to some historical incident rather than a ritual transformation of the king, see, for example, H.J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989) 202-204, 210-11; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 591-94; against, *e.g.*, A.R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1955) 97-104; J.H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 109-11, 121-22. See also M.E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (Dallas: Word, 1990) 406-30.

[40]The psalm is in fact sometimes regarded as a communal lament. See, for example, T. Veijola, *Verheissung in der Krise: Studien zur Literatur und Theologie der Exilszeit anhand des 89. Psalm* (AASF 220; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1982) 133-43; C. Stuhlmueller, *Psalms* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1983) 62; J.L. Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville: John Knox, 1994) 287-88.

[41]'The present situation is described as an incredible contradiction of the LORD's faithfulness to the covenant with David' (J.L. Mays, *Psalms*, 284).

symbolizes the king's lowliness, though it also indicates that he comes in peace rather than riding on a warhorse (v. 10). The donkey was the ordinary domestic beast of burden throughout the ancient Near East, and the use of Hebrew עָנִי ('humble') together with a corresponding lack of reference to royal majesty leads one to conclude that this king's ability to bring victory and deliverance is closely bound up with his humble appearance. In the second passage,[42] the house of David and the people of Jerusalem are described as looking 'on me the one they have pierced'. Unfortunately, the identity of the pierced victim is not given, though the pierced one seems to be closely associated with a shepherd figure who is said to be struck and described as 'the man who stands next to me' (Zc. 13:7). If in fact the pierced one and the shepherd are one and the same person, it is by no means impossible that this suffering leader comes from the royal Davidic line.[43] A further connection is that in each case the leader's suffering serves God's purposes to restore his people. In Zechariah 12:10-13:1, the people's sins, including those of the house of David, are cleansed by the death of the pierced one, while in 13:8-9, the shepherd will purify the remnant and enable them to renew their covenant.[44] It may be that the suffering inflicted on the anointed one of Daniel 9:26-27 should also be included here, though it is not clear whether God's redemptive or salvific purposes are achieved through his tragic death.

As with the previous dualities, no explanation is given as to how anointed leaders can experience both victory and humiliation. The most that can be said is that whereas the historical figures of the Davidic line suffered God's punishment to some extent like any other Israelite, an element of undeserved suffering seems to have been attached to the anointed kings which in the post-exilic period became focused in a small number of eschatological texts where such suffering became redemptive. These latter texts are obviously related to the Suffering Servant songs of Isaiah 40-55, but the nature of the relationship remains obscure, particularly because there is no evidence

[42]With LXX, Syr, Vulg, against MT's 'on him'.

[43]According to E. Achtemeier, *Nahum-Malachi* , 150-54, 160-64, Zc. 9:9-10; 12:10; 13:7-9 all refer to the Messiah, and represent a continuation of the Branch who is mentioned in Zc. 3:8; 6:12.

[44]Like Ps. 89:38-51 [39-52] this incident is sometimes understood in terms of an Israelite liturgy involving the king's ritual humiliation and restoration; *cf.* B. Otzen, *Studien über Deutero-Sacharja* (Acta Theologica Danica 6; Copenhagen: 1964) 178, 180-82. On the possible divine/kingly associations of the pierced figure of Zc. 12:10, *cf.* K. Larkin, *The Eschatology of Second Zechariah* (CBET 6; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994) 162-64.

in any of the Suffering Servant songs that they describe an anointed leader.[45] It is perhaps safest to say that whereas they too present an image of redemptive suffering and death, they are best treated as a parallel strand to the main lines of Old Testament messianic thinking.

III. Conclusions

(1) The messianic concept underwent a long process of development before attaining its fully fledged form as a series of expectations about an eschatological deliverer. Its origins are to be found partly in the early Israelite concepts of leadership and partly in ideas associated with the ceremony of anointing with oil. A Messiah was nothing more or nothing less than an anointed leader. The anointing ceremony was essentially a sacrament in which a person was designated and set apart by God, given authority to act and equipped to carry out a particular task or set of tasks. These ideas were amplified by psalmists and prophets, who always included some element of expectation about the manner in which anointed figures would carry out their God-given tasks.

(2) Several fundamental ideas associated with anointed leaders were inherently imprecise. The writers of the Old Testament made no attempt to resolve these ambiguities, which were the result neither of intrinsic weakness nor of later interpretation. They arose most probably because the act of anointing did not fully clarify God's intended potential for each anointed individual. Anointing tended to focus on the fact that a person had been divinely chosen rather than on what he had been chosen for.

(3) The imprecision was characterised by a fixed series of dualities, any or all of which may be relevant in individual cases. These dualities are of different kinds, and involved the nature, function and chronology of anointed persons. Some aspects of these dualities have been previously noted by Jewish and Christian scholars, as in Klausner's view that the Messiah was 'spiritual and political at the same time',[46] but the crucial point is to recognize the existence of not one but several interdependent dualities.

[45]*Cf.* Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 213-33, esp. the following statement: 'Since there is also not the slightest indication that the Servant was thought of as a scion of David, it follows that he is not thought of as a "Messiah" in the Old Testament sense' (*ibid.*, 228).

[46]Klaussner, *The Messianic Ideal in Israel*, 10-11.

(4) Old Testament messianic figures were usually earthly, human and time-bound, though the Davidic monarchy from its beginning was associated with the future. The future hopes associated with the Aaronic priests did not become explicit before the exile. Where messianic figures were involved in historical events such as the post-exilic restoration, such events were usually associated with further future expectations. The eschatological dimension of messianic thought arose through a number of specific factors: (a) The combination of idealistic hope expressed in the Psalms with the prophets' awareness of the gap between the failings of contemporary leaders and the ideal standards of future leaders must inevitably have led in some quarters to a longing for a future leader; (b) Israel's repeated political and military crises which threatened the continuation of the line of messianic figures, particularly in the eighth and sixth centuries, would have undermined confidence in contemporary leaders, and encouraged people with faith in God to look for a new form of divinely appointed leadership; (c) In the context of the specifically Jewish form of messianic hope, the crises of the Maccabean revolt and the imposition of Roman rule in Palestine accelerated the development of the idea of an eschatological Messiah.

(5) Actual historical figures who incorporated some combination of messianic functions were not absent in Old Testament Israel. Certainly Moses and David, and probably also Samuel, combined royal, priestly and prophetic functions, brought a spiritual dimension to their political achievements, and made a contribution to the future as well as the contemporary establishment of God's rule on earth. They functioned to some extent as models for the messianic idea, and it is not too surprising that expectations of another figure along these lines arose for the future.

(6) Jesus both fulfilled and expanded the messianic ideas of the Old Testament. He fulfilled all the qualities associated with anointed leaders in the Old Testament and did so as one who was fully human. But he also dramatically extended the messianic concept by including in it the roles of the suffering servant of Isaiah 40-55 and the son of man figure in Daniel 7, both of which centre on a divinely-chosen individual who is both lowly and exalted.[47] The result was that Jesus effectively exploded all previous messianic expectations, so that at one

[47]For an exploration of the idea that the New Testament presents Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah, *cf.* D. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

level it is hardly surprising that many Jews failed to recognise him as their Messiah. It was only after Jesus had risen from death that the apparently contradictory dualities of the Old Testament became clear, that the imprecision became precise, and that mysteries were revealed. But that is another story!

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