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The Christological Significance of the Sacramental Character of Holy Orders:
Christ and the Priest as Bridegroom, Image of the Father, Priest, Prophet, and King, and Soldier

A THESIS

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
.....	
Chapter One: Sacramentality in the Old Testament	3
1a.) Circumcision in the Ancient Near East and Israel	3
1b.) Priesthood in Ancient Israel: Two Main Threads	14
1c.) Soldiers, Kings, and Prophets	27
1d.) Sacrifice in the Old Testament—Substitution or Representation?	33
1e.) Summary	39
.....	
Chapter Two: Christ as Bridegroom; Image of the Father; Soldier; Prophet; King; and Priest in the Gospel of John and Letter to the Hebrews	40
2a.) The Logos, the Son: Image of the Father	40
2b.) Jesus Christ: Prophet and Bridegroom	43
2c.) Jesus Christ: King	48
2d.) Jesus Christ: Soldier	52
2e.) Jesus Christ: High Priest in the Last Supper and Crucifixion	55
2f.) Jesus Christ: True High Priest in the Letter to the Hebrews	56
2g.) Analysis	61
.....	
Chapter Three: Sacraments with Character: Eternal Identification in the Body of Christ to Worship	63
3a.) Sacrament and Sacramental Character	63
3b.) Sacraments of Initiation	68
.....	
Chapter 4.) Holy Orders: Eternal Identification with Christ the High Priest, Prophet, King, Warrior, Bridegroom, and Icon of the Father	71
4a.) The Priest as Bridegroom and Father: Fittingness of a Male-Only and Perpetually Celibate Priesthood	72
4b.) The Priest Configured to Christ’s Priesthood and the Authoritative Offices of Prophet, Soldier, and King	77
4c.) Permanency of Priestly Character	85
.....	
Conclusion	83
.....	
Bibliography	87

Intro

From the dawn of time, the notion of sacraments or sacramentals has been ingrained in the psyche and activities of human beings.¹ By sacraments, we mean the use of materials in rituals to bring about or signify a spiritual reality; the Catechism of the Catholic Church, defines sacraments in the Catholic context “efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ, and entrusted to the Church by which divine life is dispensed.”² Although the ancients did not have the full understanding of the Church’s sacramental theology as it is today, they had something of an intuited sense that earthly things could be gateways to the spiritual. Using religious rituals, our ancestors believed they could be united to the divine. Such rituals, of course, would involve the use of sacred objects which held great significance and symbolism. The bodies of participants, too, could be used as signs to signify an interior reality for the individual—whether tattoos, piercings, or a form of scarification. These indelible marks, for many ancient civilizations, signified a belonging to a group, or “setting apart” from the rest of the world, even within their own tribe, and they were given duties that the others would not have.

The sacrament of Holy Orders, along with that of Baptism and Confirmation, entails an analogous, spiritual, supernatural mark. The mark is a character that sets a priest apart for worship and service, identifying him with the Person of Christ in a particular way. As Christ has a variety of roles and exercises powers which are all united in Him, so too does the priest. The purpose of this thesis is to explicate the Catholic Priesthood through and examination of that character.

¹ John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2nd ed, 1131, scborromeo.org.

The first chapter of this thesis discusses the “sacramentals” of the Old Testament. The ancient Hebrews, in particular, were known for their practice of male circumcision, as a sign that a man belonged to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It also conveyed his identity as bridegroom and father, and the importance of the restraint of man’s sexual and procreative powers, which leads to the fulfillment of God’s plan for Israel. Then, from being a circumcised male and being of a particular lineage, priesthood also becomes a significant way for the faithful to be united to God, by means of a physical sacrifice and worship in a designated, sacred space. The offices of king, prophet, and spiritual soldier are automatically linked to this role as well. Lastly, animal sacrifices convey the desire for surrender to God and forgiveness of sin.

The second chapter considers the Incarnation and sacrificial death of the Son of God, and the ways in which these different identities are realized in Him, drawing from the Gospel of John and the Letter to the Hebrews. First, the Second Person of the Trinity, as Son, perfectly images His Father and equally shares His divinity; His becoming man further proclaims this invisible reality. The roles of priest, prophet, king, soldier, bridegroom, and father become tangibly real as well especially in the offering of Himself on the cross, even though they are certainly not obvious to the eyes of the world. Again, these are not mere offices, but supernatural and tangible manifestations of His very being and identity, which finds its source from His Almighty, unseen Father.

In the third chapter, the two, unrepeatable sacraments of initiation are discussed: Baptism and Confirmation. These confer what is known as an “indelible character”—that is, the recipients receive a permanent mark of identity on their souls as belonging to the Body of Christ, the Church, and enables them to participate in worship to God. What is being given through these three sacraments is not only sanctifying grace, but a new identity which enables one to act in and

with Christ. To be grafted onto the Body of Christ means that one's soul is given the ability to perform certain powers, in the thought of Thomas Aquinas.³ This consideration will set the stage for the third, unrepeatable sacrament of Holy Orders.

The fourth chapter focuses on Holy Orders. Drawing from the first two sacraments and all the foreshadowing of the Old Testament, I will examine how this character possesses a new dimension of the roles of priest, prophet, king, soldier, all of which find their origins in Christ the Bridegroom and image of the Father. Sub-topics of discussion are the arguments for a male-only priesthood and permanent celibacy, which find their roots in Christ's identity as Bridegroom and Father of the redeemed race. The three different orders of the sacrament—diaconate, presbyterate, and episcopate— will also be discussed, and how the roles of prophet, priest, and king are present in each one. All these bear likeness to Christ to a certain degree. Essentially, the sacramental character of Holy Orders is an eternal participatory identification in, and likeness to Christ the Priest, with the accompanying roles of King, Prophet, Spiritual Soldier, Bridegroom, and image of the Father. All these identities involve powers which are exteriorly manifested and used, and spring forth from the invisible, interior identity of belonging to God, which is bestowed by Him.

Chapter 1.) Sacramentality in the Old Testament

Before the birth of the Church, in the ancient Jewish tradition, there was no strict theology on sacraments. The ancient Israelites did not understand their rituals as the Church understands its seven in the present age. Still, there can be no doubt that the people of the Old Covenant deeply valued the use of sacred objects and rites to convey or bring about an invisible, spiritual reality, especially as they were instituted by God in the Old Law.

³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.63, a.4, newadvent.org.

1a.) Circumcision in the Ancient Near East and Israel

An ancient rite performed on the bodies of males gave an irreversible sign of one's life-giving powers and belonging to a particular way of living; it was a foreshadowing of the indelible sacrament of Baptism, and ultimately Orders, which gives permanent identification and participation within the Body of Christ. This "sacramental" ritual is that of male circumcision, an act that literally left an indelible, physical mark. Though a rite most associated with the Jewish people, it was also widespread in various cultures in the ancient, Middle Eastern world. Avraham Faust poses that these different peoples who practiced circumcision later evolved into the nation of Israel.⁴ What then, could have been the purpose of this permanent, irrevocable ritual on the male body, if its original purpose was not to distinguish between cultures?

Fertility and sexuality overall seem to have been one major theme for circumcision in the ancient world, even as the people of Israel became more defined as a nation. Noting the different stories involving circumcision in the Old Testament, Goldingay states, "the stories themselves point to more concrete concerns with male sexuality. They point to the disciplining of procreation, of sexual activity itself, and of masculinity."⁵ He also notes that the Priestly source of Genesis "emphasizes circumcision precisely because it epitomizes male privilege in worship and/or because it safeguards patrilineal descent."⁶ In conjunction with this, the mark was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants.

The questions go further: why would belonging to a particular religion or people constitute in the permanent wounding of the male reproductive organ? Goldingay recalls Genesis 17, the first account of circumcision in the Bible: God establishes His covenant with Abraham, calling him to

⁴ Avraham Faust, "The Bible, Archaeology, and the Practice of Circumcision in Israelite and Philistine Societies," *Journal of Biblical Literature* no. 2 (2015): 278.

⁵ John Goldingay, "The Significance of Circumcision," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 88 (2000): 7.

⁶ Goldingay, "The Significance of Circumcision," 4.

change his name and circumcise all males in his household, from eight-day-old infants to adult slaves. He notes the context behind the story is God promising to give the childless Abraham “descendants as numerous as the stars”. This would, at the very least, seem very odd, considering if the procedure went awry, it would certainly effect said promise. Goldingay comments that the circumcision of male infants could be meant as a “disciplining of procreation.” He explains that this “puts such instincts under God’s sovereignty...”⁷ Goldingay adds that this risky surrender of male fertility to God could also “protect” both infertile and hyper-fertile women; it could serve as a reminder for men to not “sow their wild oats”, dominate and use women as mere carriers for offspring, thus commodifying them and feeling entitled to God’s promise.

Another account of the link between circumcision and marriage is the story of Dinah, Jacob’s daughter, and a ruler named Shechem, in Genesis 34. Shechem sees the girl and it is commonly held that he sexually assaults her (the text also states that he is in love with, and “speaks tenderly” to Dinah; though it is not explicit whether she reciprocated his affections eventually). Regardless, Jacob and his sons discover this and are naturally enraged. When the prince asks for Dinah’s hand in marriage, her father asks him and his men to be circumcised in return. Eager to marry Dinah, Shechem agrees to the proposal; he is willing to pay any price to be with the girl. As a result, the sons of Jacob slaughter them in revenge as they recover. Wyatt posits that a text from Indo-European culture could have been integrated into the Ancient Near East that could have influenced Genesis 34: it tells the story of a human bridegroom, married to a divine bride, and the misfortune that befalls the former.⁸ However, by simply noting how Shechem “seized her

⁷ Goldingay, “The Significance of Circumcision,” 9.

⁸ Nick Wyatt, “Circumcision and Circumstance: Male Genital Mutilation in Ancient Israel & Ugarit. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* no. 33 (2009): 419.

and lay with her” (Gen. 34:2 RSV)⁹⁹, the circumcision followed by the slaughter insinuates the immorality of letting one’s sensual passions run without restraint.

Another instance where circumcision plays a significant role is in Exodus 4. Moses’ wife, Tzipporah, performs the procedure on their son, and touches the boy’s blood on her husband, thereby strangely saving Moses from God’s apparent attack. This happens after the Lord commands Moses to go to Pharaoh and warn him that if the Israelites are not freed, the Lord will kill Pharaoh’s firstborn. The blood shed from his son spared him, and Tzipporah declares, “you are a bridegroom of blood to me” (Ex. 4:25)! Perhaps Tzipporah knew what it meant to be “integrated” into the religion of Moses’ people, and therefore took proper action, because her husband most likely would not have circumcised their child (Scripture does not say whether Moses practiced the faith of his blood family after murdering an Egyptian and fleeing to Midian). After that warning from God—which Moses must have disclosed to her—and seeing that his life was in danger in a supernatural way, she may have had prior knowledge that circumcision, according to the Abrahamic faith, would be the best way to “protect” him, and therefore their entire family. She would be helping him fulfill his responsibility to integrate his son into the covenant of his fathers and fulfill the promise of God to Abraham. With her comment of him being her “bridegroom of blood”, the theme of marriage, and therefore fertility and sexuality, continues to be present.

Nick Wyatt points out another interpretation of the text: the context of the Exodus—which he notes is about redeeming the firstborn son— would likely lean towards the child being the main subject of the circumcision *and* the attack. He writes, “For it suggests that the circumcision, possibly occurring in the context of a marriage, was in some way a prophylactic

⁹⁹ *The Bible: Revised Standard Version* (New York: American Bible Society, 1970).

against fate awaiting a bridegroom.”¹⁰ He brings up the ancient superstitions of “bad luck” befalling someone about to marry (which then implies that Moses’ son was of such age, and certainly not an infant), and circumcision could have been that which saves him. Wyatt points out that marriage was not merely a rite of passage, but a “threat” to one’s autonomy.¹¹ Why would circumcision be the antidote to being supernaturally targeted? Perhaps for the same reasons as implied in Genesis: that man must properly harness his sexual and virile powers, which ultimately point to the identity bestowed upon him by his Creator.

However, Goldingay also brings up another instance when God “attacks” Jacob, in the wrestling with an angel all night long, which did not have anything to do with a supposed lack of circumcision. Goldingay speculates that even though Jacob would surely have been circumcised—thus possessing the outward sign of the submission of his sexuality to God—he had not truly surrendered this facet, nor had the courage to make reparation to Esau. In the years that led up to this climactic moment, Jacob had stolen his older sibling’s blessing from their father, married two women (strongly preferring one over the other) and taking on their two maids as concubines, while being unreconciled to his brother. Right before this wrestling match, Jacob had decided to bring his entire clan to finally reunite with Esau and hope for reconciliation; thus, the fight between Jacob and the angel, in which he was struck “below the belt”, could have been a rite of passage for his overall masculine purpose. Goldingay states that, “In Jacob’s case... the timing means that YHWH is not asserting authority over Jacob’s capacity to procreate, but he could be well asserting authority over his masculinity.”¹² After this, Jacob is given the name Israel, and reconciliation with Esau proves successful. Applying this broader interpretation of

¹⁰ Wyatt, “Circumcision and Circumstance,” 417.

¹¹ Wyatt, “Circumcision and Circumstance,” 417.

¹² John Goldingay, “The Significance of Circumcision,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* no. 88 (2000): 12.

masculinity to the attack against Moses as well, Goldingay points out that after the event, Moses is now more a “decisive figure, rather than someone who shirks God’s call and incurs God’s wrath.”¹³ He is free to return to Egypt and stand up to the might of Pharaoh. In these interpretations, sexual temperance is still a theme, but there is also the theme of fulfillment of God’s will through these male leaders, as their strength and courage mature. They can move forward without fear and conquer their enemies. The rite itself, and the examples of the patriarchs in relation to it, foreshadow the rise of a great, masculine figure, the Messiah, who will be a descendant of Abraham.

The next instance of circumcision is in Joshua 5. Joshua has succeeded Moses and is preparing to enter the Promised Land after forty long years of wandering in the desert. The Lord then commands Joshua to circumcise the people a second time; they were not circumcised like their fathers who came out of Egypt, as the former group were the generation born in the wilderness. After the men recover from the procedure and celebrate the Passover, Joshua meets a man who identifies himself as “commander of the army of the LORD” (Jos 5:14). Joshua falls in worship and is commanded to reverence the holy ground by removing his shoes, reminiscent of Moses’ encounter with God in the burning bush. The next chapter recounts the famous battle of Jericho, in which the Lord hands the victory over to the Israelites just as He promised. Joshua is another example of a patriarchal leader with an explicit connection to the rite who is a key instrument in the fulfillment of the Lord’s plan for Israel.

Goldingay notes the common thread in the outcome of all these stories: after the men are circumcised, it is then that God’s brings His promises to them to fruition. Before their circumcision, Goldingay points out that each of these patriarchs have achieved certain significant

¹³ Goldingay, “The Significance of Circumcision,” 13.

outcomes: Abraham siring a son with Hagar, his wife's maid, Moses killing an Egyptian, and Joshua crossing the Jordan River.¹⁴ However, while these things may have been possible and achievable in human efforts, God's promises would have been considered impossible, considering their respective circumstances: Abraham and Sarah being past childbearing age and conceiving and bearing Isaac, therefore becoming the father of countless descendants; Moses, by the power of God, freeing Israel from the grasp of Pharaoh; and the budding nation of Israel overtaking the might of the Canaanite city. Goldingay states, "In each story the cutting back of the flesh with its potency might imply the subordinating of human strength to the divine plan."¹⁵ In other words, circumcision would perhaps serve as a reminder to the Israelite men that their key identifiers as men—their sexual and procreative powers, physical strength, etc.—must ultimately be under the sovereignty of their Creator, which leads Israel to flourish and bear fruit (both physically and spiritually).

It is also important to note that after Moses, only the Israelites who were circumcised—and therefore their family by extension—were allowed to celebrate the Passover. Goldingay points out the parallel in Exodus 4, where the blood of the circumcision deters Moses (or his son) from danger, as all firstborn who are under the blood of the male Paschal lambs are shielded from the Angel of Death. Joshua 5 is basically a repeat of Moses' journey: traveling from the wilderness into the Promised Land, the men are circumcised before they celebrate the Passover, cross the Jordan, and eventually conquer Jericho by the power of God. It is the Lord who gives Joshua this explicit command to circumcise the men, before all these events take place. Therefore, there seems to be a connection to the procedure with salvation and the fulfillment of God's promises:

¹⁴ Goldingay, "The Significance of Circumcision," 11.

¹⁵ Goldingay, "The Significance of Circumcision," 14.

blood shed from the man's reproductive organ, and from the male lamb itself—both a sacrifice—lead to deliverance from death and the gift of a new life from the Lord.

Lastly, circumcision later becomes a way to distinguish Israel from other nations, and a sign that the salvation of the world would be won from the Jews; hence, Thomas Aquinas explains, “circumcision did not contain the perfection of salvation, but signified it as to be achieved by Christ, Who was to be born of the Jewish nation.”¹⁶ Avraham Faust writes about the Israelites encountering the Philistines, who did *not* circumcise their men.¹⁷ In this case, the Israelites are righteous and belong to God, in contrast with the barbaric, pagan Philistines. Something similar happens later in the Book of Maccabees: when the Greeks take over and begin to Hellenize Jerusalem, the Jewish men feel shame over the marks of their circumcision and attempt to hide them; they want to “fit in” with the Greeks, who are obviously not circumcised. In this instance, circumcision is more than simply about fertility and marriage, but an entire way of life; it is a distinction between the people of the Abrahamic God, and the powerful nations that attempt to subjugate them. The one who resists this denial of their heritage and faith is Judas Maccabeus, who leads the revolt and restores the Temple, acting as a type of the Messiah. Those who follow his lead, refusing to deny their faith, oppose the hedonistic, pagan powers that surround them. Ultimately, this sign also points to the fullness of salvation into which all people can be baptized, which sets them apart from the rest of mankind.

An analysis: Man's primary identities as Bridegroom and Father

What insight can be gained from the Jewish understanding of such a procedure? At the very basic, primal level, even before Israel was “officially” a people, this ritual demonstrated the

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.70, a.2, newadvent.org.

¹⁷ Avraham Faust, “The Bible, Archaeology, and the Practice of Circumcision in Israelite and Philistine Societies,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 2 (2015): 279.

anthropology of the cultures who practiced it. The mark on the male reproductive organ displayed the primal identities of man: as husband and father. Recognizing that such powers and roles can be easily abused, circumcision served as a reminder to exercise these faculties with responsibility and submission to the Almighty God.

Why did women not have an equivalent procedure? In a patriarchal society, the man always stood as the head and main representative of the family; therefore, to be “one flesh” with a circumcised man automatically ensured a woman—and by extension, their offspring— to be integrated into the Jewish covenant (the sons would have to be circumcised to perpetuate the sign, but this integration would have covered the daughters of the family). Though it was also believed that Jewish identity derived from the mother later in Jewish history, the males possessed the visible sign of the covenant and only was “solidified” as women brought forth the children. It In the eyes of this society, it seems that the man had greater responsibility in creating life and nurturing it; again, it would be easy for a man to “plant his seed” in any woman he could find, and not necessarily have to suffer the consequences of carrying a child in his body for nine months then painfully bring it into the world. The ancients recognized that the masculine abilities to copulate, procreate, and dominate could easily go unchecked and cause problems at the very least. Male circumcision alone surely did not fix problems for women, or grant them equality in Hebrew society, but there was at least some truth in the anthropology in the ritual.

Fertility is obviously intrinsically linked with sexual intercourse, which was only proper within the context of marriage. To create life, a man must first be a bridegroom to a bride. In a time when polygamy was practiced, this ability to “collect” as many women as possible for a man’s own pleasure was certainly not considered righteous in the eyes of God. One could argue that Abraham, Jacob, and others in the Old Testament had concubines, but their stories clearly

demonstrate the grave consequences of having relations with women other than one wife (severe jealousy, favoritism of wives *and* children, etc.), which the Lord certainly never commanded them to do. Because the Hebrew faith taught monogamy and proper restraint of sexuality, as opposed to the surrounding pagan cultures, circumcision in this context could be used to demonstrate that the very basic identity of man was to be a husband...and to be a husband to one wife. In this way, he was to exercise true love and fidelity when it would be easier to use several women for his pleasure. As Genesis states, “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. And the two shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). Not only is this strong evidence for monogamy (a man cannot be truly one flesh with his bride if he is also one flesh with another woman), but it also hints at the role of being a bridegroom: one that initiates union with his beloved. And this is physically evident in the purpose of the male anatomy in the act of intercourse.

The second core identity of man that the ancient Israelites recognized is Father. This is a result of being a bridegroom: uniting with his bride, they create new life together. His part in creating this new life is done outside himself, within the body of another. With both identities of Bridegroom and Father present, the two can be united under the one reality that man is, at the very least, the first biological source from which all human life and relationship flows. Of course, the part of the woman’s receptivity for this to take place; but as stated before, it is the man who initiates unity, and from this primal action something new comes into being. This too, was an immense power that had to be disciplined; to create new human beings bore grave responsibilities, and not simply for woman.

The cases where the blood shed from circumcision seems to achieve God’s promises and salvation from harm also demonstrates something significant. The Israelites believed that the life

of the animal was contained in the blood (Lev. 17:11). Therefore, it could be used as a deterrent against death, as evidenced in the first Passover. For blood to be shed from the one body part that is meant to produce life is doubly significant. It seems that the irony here is that man must cause that part of himself to “die” that God may bring about an abundance of gifts never received before. At the heart of something as beautiful as love and the creation of life, man must recognize two things: first, he does not achieve these good things by his own power, but by the will of God; and second, these goods must cost him that which is originally precious to him: his entire self. Because of the fallenness of the world, and the tendency to take things on his own terms and pleasure, man must learn how to sacrifice his selfish desires to the will of God. When his very identity is submitted to the Lord’s plan and design, it is then that human society flourishes.

Circumcision in the Old Covenant was a literal, physical sign on its males that their lifegiving powers would lead to the salvation of Israel. This is evidenced in the several stories of the patriarchs who, after an event relating to the rite, advanced in the fulfillment of God’s plan of victory for Israel. To be a bridegroom and father are intrinsically related identities—a mirror image of God’s initiating and creative love to mankind and specifically to Israel—that God uses to affect reality and history for the good of His people and for His glory. Therefore, this ties back to the original point: a sacramental character as a statement of the identity—particularly the male— whose body is inherently a living, visible sign of the invisible Father’s unitive and begetting love—under which the other roles of soldier, prophet, king, and priest follow.

From these two primal, indelible identities of man, flows the identity of Priest. From the earliest civilizations, specific people were tasked with leading religious ceremonies, especially offering sacrifice on behalf of their people. Many pagan cultures in the Ancient Near East had

both priests and priestesses, but the Jews strictly adhered to an all-male, tribal priesthood—once more going against the grain of major cultural influences surrounding them. For the Hebrews, priesthood inherently entailed specific actions—worship and sacrifice in the context of a sacred space—all geared towards the sanctification of the priest himself and of his people. This comes from the reality that man was created in the image and likeness of God and must act in accordance with that reality by maintaining holiness of the sacred dwelling and himself. When his relationship with God is severed, then expiatory sacrifice becomes the prime, tangible attempt to sanctify the priest and the people to make them worthy to commune with God (Lev. 9:7). The High Priest acts as mediator between humanity and God: a representative of mankind to God as a male, the origin of all human life, demonstrated by Adam; and a conduit of the Divine to the rest of the faithful.

1b.) Priesthood in Ancient Israel—Two Main Threads

Eden as the First Temple and Adam as the First Priest

Even before there were specified requirements and rites for ancient Israelite priesthood, certain figures in the Old Testament were already acting in accordance with such an office. Doing so seemed built into human nature. For example, Cain and Abel are the first recorded men in Scripture to explicitly offer sacrifices, a key action of the priesthood, although there was unlikely a formal rite of ordination in the earliest days of history.

First, Andrew Malone discusses the idea of maintaining holiness as the foundation of being a priest. He mentions the post-Exodus Tabernacle, with the Ark of the Covenant at the center, and “courtyards” radiating outwards.¹⁸ The Temple in Jerusalem reflects this structure as well; only particular people could go past certain points. Anyone could enter the Court of the

¹⁸ Andrew Malone, *God's Mediators: A Biblical Theology of Priesthood* (London: Apollos, 2017), 20.

Gentiles, but only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year (and only after he had fulfilled the rituals to make him worthy enough to enter). The Temple's structure demonstrates gradations in holiness—the degrees in which something is like God—and only that which is on par with the levels of sanctity is fit to enter the sacred spaces. As Malone explains, “Being more holy marks someone or something as more like God or more suited to being in God's presence.”¹⁹

Therefore, there were restrictions as to who was permitted to enter these sacred spaces. Malone states, “On the scale of graded holiness for tabernacle access to God, the priests are at the top of the list with the high priest holding the highest rank.”²⁰ These priestly positions involved varying degrees of sacred duties, such as sourcing the oil for the lampstand that burns all night and assisting the High Priest;²¹ and only the High Priest was meant to offer atoning sacrifice once a year on the horns of the altar (Ex. 30:10), undoubtedly the most sacred task, as it meant the forgiveness of sins and therefore helping the priest and his people become more holy. In conclusion, it seems that being a priest is more than a set of functions, but a state of closely resembling God. All the priestly functions are then an outflow or further incarnation of being closely like the Lord.

With this concept of priesthood in mind, Malone discusses interpretations of the Garden of Eden as man's first temple. Eden's sections are gradated of significance, just like the Temple in Jerusalem with its courtyards that surround the Holy of Holies. For example, one perspective is that Eden is a “region” on Earth; it contains a garden where Adam and Eve dwell and commune with God. When the Tabernacle/Ark of the Covenant came to be, Levitical priests

¹⁹ Malone, *God's Mediators*, 20.

²⁰ Malone, *God's Mediators*, 20.

²¹ Malone, *God's Mediators*, 20.

were charged with tending the sacred spaces surrounding it, and only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year. It would follow that although they are not priests in the strict sense, the first parents—in particular, Adam, being the prime representative of humanity— have a sacerdotal calling. This involves keeping the garden holy, by making sure nothing unfit enters God’s presence. And because Adam and Eve dwell in the “inner sanctum” of Eden—and even “walk with God”—we can be sure that they are wholly like God, as they are made in His image and likeness, undefiled from sin.

It follows that priesthood is also one of the primordial identities of man, following Bridegroom and Father. The Creation accounts in Genesis alludes to this. Though the examples in Genesis do not call Adam a priest, he—and his wife, Eve—are commissioned by God for a specific task in the first Creation account: to “be fruitful, and multiply,” and to have dominion over all the earth and its creatures (Gen. 1:28). Malone notes that this begins a pattern in the book of Genesis of God appearing to patriarchs, commissioning them for a specific purpose, after which said patriarchs build an altar to worship “often near Bethel (House of God).”²² Adam and Eve specifically have been commissioned to perpetuate the image and likeness of God on Earth by reproducing (with Adam fulfilling his calling as bridegroom and father), be responsible for the natural temple of creation, and eventually extend the sacredness of the Garden to the rest of the world.²³ All of this is geared toward the flourishing of God’s glory and dominion. George K. Beale addresses the command from God to Adam to subdue the earth, saying,

“As [Adam] was to begin to rule over and subdue the earth, he was to extend the geographical boundaries to the Garden of Eden until Eden extended throughout and covered the whole earth. This meant the presence of God that was limited to Eden was to be extended throughout the whole earth.”²⁴

²² Malone, *God’s Mediators*, 58.

²³ Malone, *God’s Mediators*, 58.

²⁴ George K. Beale, “Adam as the First Priest in Eden as the Garden Temple,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 22.2, 2018. 14.

Thus, Adam is meant to be a tangible representative of God on earth; and it would follow from this that he would have to bear similarity and likeness to his Creator; the image and likeness of God that the man bears in his human nature enables him to have a share in the power and authority of the One who made him.

In the second Creation account of Genesis, which provides a “zoomed-in” look compared to the first, God commands Adam to tend and keep the Garden. The verbs employed are “abad” and “samar” which are later used to describe the duties of the Levites. Beale states,

“When these two words occur together later in the [Old Testament] without exception they have this meaning and refer either to Israelites “serving and guarding/obeying God’s word (about 10 times) or, more often to priests who “serve” God in the temple and “guard” the temple from unclean things entering it.”²⁵

It is important to note the difference, though, between this pre-fall priesthood and the Israelite priesthood: because Adam and Eve had not yet sinned, they did not need to offer expiatory sacrifice. Instead of entering the inner sanctum once a year, and having it only be restricted to a man of a particular tribe, they dwell with God without barriers. It is only after the Fall that priesthood culminates in the offering of sacrifice, the prime means of reconciling man to God, and making mankind holy once more. With these things in mind, one can conclude that the foundation of priesthood is resembling God in their being and extending that resemblance to the rest of creation by making sure nothing defiles it. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were expelled from the Garden of Eden because their resemblance to God was marred. After this, one who could fittingly represent the entire people was the only one designated to enter the sacred spaces and attempt to reconcile himself and the people to God by means of sacrifice.

²⁵ Beale, “Adam as the First Priest,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 22.2, 2018. 10.

However, Malone points out that while God's expectations of the first parents can be later traced to and incarnated in the ministerial priests of the Mosaic covenant, they can still be applied to the general faithful.²⁶ Therefore, there exists a spiritual priesthood to which all of God's people belong, and Adam and Eve seem to represent this, by virtue of their humanity and being made in God's image and likeness. This is essentially the priesthood of all in God's covenant. The ministerial priesthood—in both the Old and New Covenants and restricted only to certain members— is the incarnation of the general priesthood that is inherent in the faithful. For the Old Covenant, this recapitulation plays out in two different threads: the Levitical order, and the Order of Melchizedek.

The Aaronic-Levite Priesthood

The concept of a sacred space and ritual sanctification becomes more solidified when the Hebrews are delivered from slavery in Egypt. The people of Israel now must learn to have a new identity as they begin this relationship—Covenant— with their Creator. This is the purpose of all regulations in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy: to introduce a new way of living and relating to their Creator and Redeemer.

First, it is important to recognize the uniqueness of Israel's male-only priesthood. Though many societies in the Ancient Near East were patriarchal, their religions often incorporated women as priestesses, unlike the Israelites. These cultures were polytheistic and included goddesses in their pantheons; their origin myths, too, involved sexual intercourse between deities²⁷ for the creation of the universe and therefore the "female" divine beings needed physical representation in and association in worship. Worship of

²⁶ Malone, *God's Mediators*, 67.

²⁷ "Gender and Religion: Gender and Ancient Near Eastern Religions." *Encyclopedia of Religion*. *Encyclopedia.com*. (November 29, 2022).

these goddesses—most who represented love, sexuality, or fertility—often involved temple prostitution, clearly condemned by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Though there is no explicit reason as to why the Israelites restrict their priesthood to men, one can infer the reason: if likeness to the God—who is the prime source and head of all creation—is a prerequisite for worship and tending to sacred space, then only men can be the spiritual heads of the people. Second, because God requires no female “equivalent” to create and sustain the universe, there is no need for a female priesthood to serve and represent any goddess; He is omnipotent and transcends any sort of carnal imagery that people may attempt to impose on their deity.

In the Mosaic texts, there seems to be a distinction between Aaron’s office and the Levites who serve the Tabernacle. One thing both groups have in common is being born of the tribe of Levi. However, not any male Levite can simply take up Aaron’s priesthood; they must descend from his line. The other Levites—those who tend and keep the sanctuary—descend from three of Levi’s sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.²⁸ It is important that these distinctions be made; those who are assigned to the sacred spaces are not all considered to possess the priesthood as Aaron and his sons do.²⁹ One must consider the purpose of the priestly office.

In Exodus 20 after the Ten Commandments are given, the presence of the Lord is made known to the Hebrews through a grandiose, fiery display of the elements. Frightened, the people tell Moses: “You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die” (Ex. 20:19). Perceiving the infinite, mighty power, and holiness of God, they naturally appoint the man who led them out of Egypt to be a mediator between them and the Lord. This implies that as

²⁸ Malone, *God’s Mediators*, 14.

²⁹ Malone, *God’s Mediators*, 15

the people feel their unworthiness and inability to be in God's presence, there can be one person to be a "go-between," or mediator, between the two parties.

The Lord then commands Moses to approach Him, with Aaron, Nadab, Abi'hu, and seventy elders of the people worshipping from afar (Ex. 24:1). At the foot of the mountain, Moses leads ritual worship, and when the rest of the chosen men approach, they feast in the presence of God safely. After this episode come the highly detailed instructions on building the Tabernacle, creation of priestly vestments, and ordination rituals (Ex. 26, 27, 28, 29). "Aaron and his sons" now become the subject of God's instructions to Moses on consecrating men for service to the Tabernacle and sacrifice.

Exodus 28 contains the description of Aaron's "holy garments." The purpose of these richly colored, bejeweled vestments is "for glory and for beauty" (Ex. 28:2). The Lord then says to Moses, "you shall speak to all who have ability...that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood" (Ex. 28:3). In essence, this type of extravagant clothing and its accompanying pieces are meant to signal the priest being set apart from the rest of the people and demonstrate his proximity to God. In fact, the main colors and type of the fabric that array the Tabernacle—blue, purple, scarlet, and "fine twined linen" (Ex. 26:1, 31, 36)—are also used in Aaron's garments. All these beautiful objects—from the Tabernacle to the clothing—are meant to convey and point to the holiness of the Lord, and to demonstrate that the things and the persons who wear them bear at least some resemblance to the incomprehensible majesty of YHWH.

Exodus 29 and Leviticus 9 describes the sacrifices required prior to priestly ordination: sin, holocaust, peace, and cereal offerings (Ex. 29, Lev. 9: 3-4). When the ritual is finished, the Lord manifests to the Israelites. Aaron continues to be the main actor in these rituals, assisted by

his four sons. To prepare for ordination, the priests must be purified, ritually and morally: Aaron and his sons are washed with water before being clothed in the holy garments (Ex. 29: 4). When it comes to the sin offering, he offers it for himself and for the people (Lev. 9: 7). Aaron is also the only one designated to approach and use the altar in the Tabernacle for his sacrifices. These passages further reiterate the holiness required, or similarity to God, to commune with Him. They also implicitly demonstrate the mediating and representative roles that the priests play.

Malone also focuses on the “lesser-in-rank” Levites, which become more of the emphasis in the first chapters of the book of Numbers.³⁰ In it, the Lord instructs Moses,

“appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over all its furnishings, and over all that belongs to it; they are to carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings, and they shall tend it, and shall encamp around the tabernacle...the Levites shall encamp around the tabernacle of the testimony that there may be no wrath upon the congregation of the people of Israel” (Num. 1: 50-55).

Out of all the twelve tribes of Israel, the Levites are quite literally set apart and are in closest proximity to the Tabernacle. Malone notes their “prophylactic” role: they are called to guard God’s dwelling place on Earth from anything or anyone unfit to enter His presence.³¹ Although they do not offer sacrifice in the way that the High Priest—and even the “lower rank” priests—these descendants of Levi still have a share in the sacerdotal duties of keeping the sacred space undefiled.

As one can see, there are even “gradations” or degrees of similarity to God in these priestly roles: the Levites and priests for keeping and tending the sanctuary—with the latter being able to offer some sacrifices and directly assist the High Priest—and the High Priest being able to offer atoning sacrifice on the Tabernacle. Each group is closer to the innermost sanctum

³⁰ Malone, *God’s Mediators*, 39.

³¹ Malone, *God’s Mediators*, 39.

of God's dwelling on Earth. They are not merely meant to demonstrate God's likeness in themselves, but to also bring the rest of His people deeper into that likeness. The Lord explicitly tells them the purpose of their priesthood:

“You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by Moses” (Lev. 10:10-11).

Thus, the main ends of the Levitical priesthood are identified: sanctification through worship by offering sacrifice, and teaching. However, it was not the only order of priesthood in the Old Covenant. There was one more transcendent and mysterious: the Order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek and Abram: Priest, King, and Warrior

Even before the Aaronic-Levitical priesthood, there is an explicit mention of a priest after Adam and Eve: Melchizedek. He is the priest-king of Salem, who offers bread and wine and blesses Abram after the latter rescues his nephew Lot from enemies of Sodom. This mysterious figure is briefly mentioned in the chapter that recounts political strife between rulers, in which Abram gets involved when Lot is captured. Melchizedek is also mentioned in Psalm 110. Who is this priest, and what significance does he hold?

One must consider the context in both Genesis and Psalm 110. Gard Granerod speculates that the “Melchizedek Episode” in Genesis was inserted at a later period, after the Babylonian Exile, in the Second Temple period. Felipe Ramirez, SJ, discusses how the Genesis 14 narrative was composed with themes of warfare and conquest, with Abram being portrayed a warrior.³² Granerod notes that while the scene between Abram and the king of Sodom is its own plot, the Melchizedek Episode is its own, as well.³³ He mentions some of the possible purposes and

³² Felipe Ramirez, SJ, “Melchizedek: A Minor Character of Great Importance,” *Landas* no. 33 (2019): 21.

³³ Gard Granerod, *Abraham and Melchizedek: Scribal Activity of Second Temple Times in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110*, (Berlin: New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 157.

origins of such a scene: a teaching lesson on the right to receive tithes for the pre and post-exilic priesthood or a cult in Jerusalem.³⁴ Arguing for a later composition of Genesis 14 and the Melchizedek Episode, Granerod also speculates that three texts were used as foundations: 1 Samuel 30, Genesis 10 (which recalls the Table of Nations), and the Post-Exodus, wilderness wandering texts.³⁵ He also proposes that the text in question was written in the second to fifth centuries BCE, during the Persian period.³⁶ With these time periods in mind, one can begin to understand the purpose of the Melchizedek episode. In addition, however, one must also take a closer look at the protagonist of the story: Abram.

Granerod states that “In Biblical Literature outside the Pentateuch from the Persian and Hellenistic periods, Abram probably functioned as more than a distant figure of the past”³⁷ adding that he was a “role model” to emulate, particularly in his devotion to God.³⁸ Abram’s leaving of Mesopotamia also incorporates the people of Israel and anticipates the Exodus from Egypt, the desert wanderings thereafter, and the post-Babylonian exile wanderings of the people.³⁹ Micah 7:20, which states, “Thou wilt show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old” is also a post-exilic text which mimics two things: Abram’s oath to the king of Sodom after the priest’s appearance, and the Lord’s oath to King David in Psalm 110: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psa 110:4). Therefore, Abram is being held up as an archetype of sorts.

³⁴ Granerod, *Abraham and Melchizedek*, 156.

³⁵ Granerod, *Abraham and Melchizedek*, 130.

³⁶ Granerod, *Abraham and Melchizedek*, 132.

³⁷ Granerod, *Abraham and Melchizedek*, 132.

³⁸ Granerod, *Abraham and Melchizedek*, 132.

³⁹ Granerod, *Abraham and Melchizedek*, 133.

Of what exactly is he considered an archetype? Considering the themes of Genesis 14 and Psalm 110—kingship and warfare, with the insertion of Melchizedek’s eternal priesthood—one can deduce what Abram’s exalted role might be. First, though, considering the context of the period in which Genesis 14 was possibly written, Granerod speculates that the kings named in the text probably symbolized a nation of the post-exilic period. Therefore, Genesis 14 could have been written with the intention to portray Abram as a leading warrior of his people, defending them against the powers that be. He is the model to emulate when considering the foreign nations surrounding Judah in the post-exilic period, threatening the humble nation with their might.

In addition to this warrior theme, what does Abram’s role mean when considering the very brief Melchizedek Episode? First, it is worth noting the details of the appearance: Melchizedek is called “priest of God Most High” (Gen. 14:18)—with “God Most High” translated to the Hebrew, El-Elyon. El is attributed to the God of the Abrahamic Covenant, but in the days of ancient Canaan, there were other deities being worshipped; hence, “Elyon” could be a clue that the mysterious priest served a different god. However, according to Ramirez, the Abrahamic God (later known as YHWH), eventually assimilated the attributes of El-Elyon; in verse 22, Abram swears to “the LORD God Most High, maker of heaven and earth” (Gen. 14: 22) that he would not take anything from the king of Sodom, demonstrating that he and Melchizedek are probably worshipping the Israelite God.⁴⁰ Ramirez states,

“This identification of El Elyon with YHWH, therefore, made it possible for later scribes and Bible readers to regard Melchizedek as a priest of the God of Israel before Moses, the founder of the YHWH religion, designated the Levites to serve YHWH”⁴¹

⁴⁰ Felipe Ramirez, SJ, “Melchizedek: A Minor Character of Great Importance,” *Landas* no. 33 (2019): 24.

⁴¹ Ramirez, SJ, “Melchizedek,” 24.

In other words, Melchizedek as priest is set up to be a precursor to the Levite priesthood with the association to Abram's God, as they interchangeably use the terms when speaking about their respective deity.

As a teaching tool, Ramirez posits that Abram tithing to Melchizedek, priest-king of Salem, would encourage the Judahites of the author's day to submit and give tax to the Davidic King in Jerusalem. Perhaps this was why he was named as the king of Salem, even though there was speculation that the original text called him king of Sodom.⁴² Not only does this give the audience incentive to follow their role model Abram, but also reinforces Jerusalem with its Temple as the place of worship, even with the Zadokite priests replacing the Levites in the Second Temple period.⁴³ Ramirez points that the names of Zadok and Melchizedek even contain the word "zedek" meaning righteousness, implying their connection.⁴⁴ Therefore, the episode could be an attempt to teach a few points: to follow Abram's act of worship—tithing—through the priest of Salem...which to a Second-Temple era audience would connect Jerusalem as still the prime place of worship, despite the change in leadership with Zadok's priests. And with Melchizedek's identification with the God who later revealed Himself as YHWH to Moses, Jewish readers would more easily associate the Zadokite priesthood to the Mosaic Covenant, of which the trusted Levite priesthood descended.

The other text which mentions Melchizedek is Psalm 110. Considered a "royal psalm", Ramirez states that this would have been sung during the enthronement ceremony of the king.⁴⁵ This psalm heavily insinuates the role of the king, and by extension, Melchizedek; not only was this Judean ruler an authority in the secular sense, but also in the spiritual. Ramirez explains,

⁴² Ramirez, SJ, "Melchizedek," 23.

⁴³ Ramirez, SJ, "Melchizedek," 25.

⁴⁴ Ramirez, SJ, "Melchizedek," 25.

⁴⁵ Ramirez, SJ, "Melchizedek," 26.

“The king was regarded as the ultimate authority in both civil and religious spheres, and so exercised some priestly roles. When David brought the Ark to Jerusalem, for example, he sacrificed oxen and danced in the procession...His sons were called priests...The Davidic king administered the maintenance of the temple buildings and supported sacrificial worship.”⁴⁶

Ramirez says that God’s oath to David in Psalm 110 reiterates God’s previous oath to him in 2 Sam. 7:16: “Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.”⁴⁷ Not only will David’s reign last for eternity—explained generations later by an archangel to one of his descendants, a teenage girl—but so will his accompanying priesthood. And Melchizedek is the reference point for the Judean King; his priesthood lasts forever. There may not have been an explicit, legal designation of the priesthood to the tribe of Judah’s kings, like there was for the tribe of Levi, but it seems that King David particularly was able to exercise priestly duties in addition to his kingship.

After the disintegration of the Davidic throne, and in the Second Temple era, a type of priestly Messianism develops. Ramirez explains that a king from the line of David would be “anointed”—in other words, a Messiah—and that this king would also be considered a priest; Ramirez also cites the Dead Sea Scrolls which “presents Melchizedek as an eschatological divine being (*elohim*) who will proclaim the final Day of Atonement, atone for the sins of all the people in his lot, and judge them.”⁴⁸ Josephus regarded him as both priest and warrior, and the philosopher Philo held him in such high esteem that he was considered both priest and the Divine Word.⁴⁹ In essence, Melchizedek was more than just a distant figure these ancient Jews—he was considered an ideal representative and advocate of the Jewish people, as a ruler, warrior, and

⁴⁶ Ramirez, SJ, “Melchizedek,” 27.

⁴⁷ Ramirez, SJ, “Melchizedek,” 28.

⁴⁸ Ramirez, SJ, “Melchizedek,” 30.

⁴⁹ Ramirez, SJ, “Melchizedek,” 31.

priest. And in other strands of tradition, he was basically an embodiment of the Divine, whose purpose was to sanctify the people from their sin.

The priesthood of Melchizedek evidently differs from the Aaronic-Levite priesthood, the latter of which arose from the Mosaic Covenant. The two certainly possess foundational commonalities: the intrinsic tie to a sacred space, including duties to keep it holy and sanctify the people, and offering sacrifice. However, the Aaronic-Levite priesthood was strictly based on tribe and bloodline. The Order of Melchizedek, however, emphasizes three prominent themes: kingship, warfare, and transcendence. Specifically, it was an order that was reserved for the tribe of Judah's line of Davidic kings. Where and how did this priesthood originate? The answer is not entirely clear as it is with the Levites, but it is further explained in the Letter to the Hebrews.

Nevertheless, for both orders, it seems that the role of priest automatically contains the roles of warrior—guarding and fighting against evil—king—possessing authority in leading the people—and prophet—sanctifying through proclaiming and teaching God's word, and offering sacrifice; therefore, falling under the category of Bridegroom/father for the male. Returning to the original point, all these roles are visible and tangible manifestations of the priest's interior identity, bestowed on him by God.

1c.) Soldiers, Kings, and Prophets

Warriors, kings, and prophets emerge as Israel becomes more solidified as a people and nation. Some of these roles become necessary in attempt to keep holy the covenant between the Israelites and God; warfare to drive out all abomination, and prophets to warn the people of their erring ways. In the age of the Judges, God warns His people of the dangers of having a human king as demonstrated in the story of the prophet Samuel; however, no doubt did God work with the stubbornness of His people as great kings such as Solomon and David came to power. All

these roles, in some way shape or form, did not merely make conquering, ruling, and teaching as ends in themselves. They were also symbolic of a more transcendent reality.

Holy Warfare

Many have been naturally scandalized by the “dark” Scripture passages of God commanding Israel to ravage the Canaanite nations without mercy, when entering the Promised Land. While there have been theories as to why this Divine commandment could be justified, one of them holds on to the notion that the warfare and the Israelites was a harbinger of God’s Justice on the peoples who committed abominations—child sacrifice being one of them. This was one of Philo of Alexandria’s explanations for these passages. Katell Berthelot explains the philosopher’s reasoning, “the Canaanites were to be destroyed because of their abominable religious practices, which included child sacrifice, an act so cruel that it could only be performed by inhuman people who deserved death.”⁵⁰

One other example of a “holy war” is the Maccabean Revolt. Though there is no explicit command from God to Judas Maccabeus to revolt against the Greeks, nevertheless considering the context, the event could certainly be classified as sacred warfare. The Greeks take hold of Judea, and specifically the Temple in Jerusalem, where a statue of Zeus is erected. Not only is the Temple desecrated, but the Jews are forced to assimilate to the Hellenistic culture. As mentioned earlier, many Jewish men undo the mark of their circumcision, that which is supposed to communicate their belonging to the Lord. For those who resist, martyrdom is imminent. As a result, a man named Judas Maccabeus and his brothers eventually gather forces and rise against their oppressors.

⁵⁰ Katell Berthelot, “Philo of Alexandria and the Conquest of Canaan,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007): 50.

The battles recorded in 1 Maccabees explicitly convey the sacred nature of this warfare. The Maccabean brothers declare, “Let us restore our people from their ruined estate, and fight for our people and our sanctuary” (1 Macc. 3:43 NAB)⁵¹! Not only is this a fight for and reclaiming of Jewish livelihood, but also of the Temple, the center of their identity. It is very telling that before attacking the Greeks and restoring the Temple, Judas and his men fast and pray; and when Judas purifies the desecrated sanctuary, he only commissions “blameless priests, devoted to the Law” in the restoration of the Temple and its sacred artifacts (1 Macc. 4:41). This account demonstrates the close tie between worship and warfare for the Jews. Indeed, these men are in a way fulfilling a duty that the first man, Adam, failed to do: to fight against anything that would defile God’s dwelling place...which apparently is a key component of the priesthood, as demonstrated in the Levitical duties.

Often, the wars waged by the faithful in the Old Covenant seem to be a tangible expression of exterminating threats to the holiness of the Jews. Many times, they were faced with mighty, foreign powers, who sought to dominate and threaten the Jewish way of life, centered on being set apart from the pagan ways of living: idol worship, sexual activity outside of marriage, and human—even child—sacrifice. Attacking or fighting back in these circumstances would have been a visible manifestation of an invisible reality: the battle against evil that continues ever since the serpent entered the Garden sanctuary.

Kingship in Ancient Israel

Considering the roles that have been discussed so far, one might be surprised to find a human king was not God’s “plan A” for Israel. One need only remember the dilemma in 1 Samuel 8, when the people demand Samuel to petition God for a king. They explicitly insist,

⁵¹ Ed. Amy Welborn, *Prove it! The Catholic Teen Bible* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 2004).

“But we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:19). This was the reason why God originally refused to give them one—it would be a risk to their sanctity, as Samuel warns in full detail. However, God eventually grants their demands and leads Samuel to anoint the first ruler, Saul (1 Sam 9:17).

There was a ritual of bestowing kingship on a man: anointing the head with oil. This is done in the anointings of Saul and David. Oil in the ancient times was no doubt an incredibly valuable resource. It, too, was used in the ordination of priests, and their heads were also anointed with oil (Ex. 29:7 RSV). The fact that this action was done for both priests and kings says something about the significance—and maybe even connection—of the two offices bestowed upon the recipients. The use of a valuable substance on the head could signify the God-given authority that the priest and king possess. This is sensible, considering that kings held influence in both secular and spiritual realms in the ancient world. Overall, even though having a king as the Israelites demanded was not pleasing to the Lord, nevertheless these rulers became integrated into His plan for salvation. Kingship was a divinely appointed office because it was a tangible representation of God’s dominion over all creation.

Prophets as living signs

The prophets in the Old Covenant are not merely predictors of the future; they are messengers of God who are often commanded to perform specific actions to convey His words to Israel. In this way, the people could better understand what the Lord was trying to say. The prophets are living signs of His Truth, and the Lord’s Word encompassed the whole of their beings—the words they spoke, down to their entire way of life. In fact, their callings as prophets involved a heavy amount of symbolism. These instances demonstrate that the office of prophet is

more than a set of actions or words; it is something that penetrates a man's being and his way of life.

Firstly, although an "initiatory rite" was not recounted for every single one of the prophets, Isaiah and Ezekiel experienced one of sorts in their mystical experiences. Seeing the heavenly glory, the former declares that he is a "man of unclean lips," dwelling "in the midst of a people of unclean lips" and an angel takes a burning coal from the altar and touches it to Isaiah's mouth to forgive his sins (Is 6:4-6 RSV). Ezekiel is commanded to eat a scroll, which becomes sweet to taste, before he begins prophesying. These events that set off the vocation of the prophets imply that to relay God's word to the people, His messengers must be made worthy for the task. To be an instrument of sanctification for others, one must *be* sanctified first; to transmit the word of God to others, one must accept and receive it for himself first.

Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are well-known for actions that are stark, visible signs of God's messages to Israel. Hosea famously marries a woman named Gomer who is continuously unfaithful to him and gives their three children names that declare God's judgment on Israel. One of Jeremiah's commands from God is to leave a loincloth in a rock, leave it for several days, then see how dirty and useless it becomes (Jer 13:1-11). Ezekiel is told to lie down on his side for a set number of days (Ez 4:4-8). All these things are glaring signs meant to give Israel a reality check on the state of their relationship with God and call them to repentance. It was not enough for words to be spoken; the Jews needed something more to jar them out of complacency. These instances demonstrate what it means to be a prophet: not to merely speak God's messages with words, but to convey them with their entire being.

The office of Prophet was by no means a legal role, or occupation, like that of the priest, king, or soldier. Such men were often scorned and persecuted for speaking truths to Israel.

However, at the heart of the vocation—like that of the priest, king, and soldier—was to be a living, teaching sign of God’s word, and His holiness. And to be a fitting sign, the messenger must also resemble God by being morally pure.

Conclusion

The functions of the Priest, King, Soldier, and Prophet in Ancient Israel all have the same end: holiness. Holiness, to reiterate, is the degree to which one resembles God. When their roles are properly exercised, the Prophet is an instrument of sanctification of the people through instructing (after being sanctified himself, of course); the Soldier battles against all that seeks to attack all that is holy; the King is an icon God’s sovereignty over all creation; and lastly, the priest is a combination of all these roles, more so in the spiritual sense. It is no surprise then, that these offices often overlap one another in the Old Covenant: the priest-kings Melchizedek and David, who offer sacrifice and rule over their people; the kings who join their men on the battlefield as warriors; or Ezekiel who was both priest and prophet.

Perhaps the one distinguishing feature of the priesthood from these authoritative offices is its inherently spiritual purpose. The priest is meant to be *like* God, tending to all that is of a spiritual and sacred nature. As discussed earlier, this is primarily the tending and keeping of a place of worship. Further, the one action that a priest could do was offer sacrifice to God for the sanctification of himself and his people. Thus, he possessed a mediatorship that was unlike the king and prophet, whose relationships to the people were primarily a one-way street. The king’s relationship to the people is to govern them; the prophet to preach and teach. However, the priest is made to be a representation of God to the faithful, and a representative of the people to God. He mediates to the people the things of the Divine, and to God, that of humanity.

The priest is a bridge between the people of the Covenant and God. The goal is ultimately the sanctification of the human person, molding him more and more to be like the Lord. Aside from teaching and governing them—all ways that are meant to lead the faithful to be more like God. The one significant function, however, that the priest possesses unique from all the others, is the ability to offer sacrifice (particularly blood sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin). These oblations were believed to atone for one's guilt, which implies that the animal substitutes something of the person(s) offering it, since human sacrifice was obviously forbidden for the Jews and overall, an abomination in the eyes of God. Overall, he possesses authority to keep them united, instruct, and sanctify them—again leading back to the idea that the sacrament of Holy Orders in the New Covenant being a share in Christ's authority, which automatically includes the spiritual roles of Prophet, King, and Soldier and falls under the primal roles of Bridegroom and Father. This is sensible considering that by mediating between the divine and human, God and His people are wed through the sacrifice, and eternal life is received.

1d.) Sacrifice in the Old Testament—substitution or representation?

The specific details on sacrifice can easily be found in the books of the Law following the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. However, even before this event, sacrifice was already taking place, seemingly an action of second nature to anyone who practiced a religion. From the time of the expulsion from the Garden, anything from wheat to bulls were being offered to God as ways to continue being in relationship with Him. Post-Exodus, these were explicitly categorized as cereal, peace, burnt, or guilt offerings (Lev. 1-7). They were an acknowledgement of God's sovereignty over creation; all things ultimately belong to Him, even that which is most dear and valuable to man. It was also a means of sealing the relationship (i.e. Covenant) between God and His people.

The first accounts of sacrifice take place in Genesis, with Cain and Abel, then later Abraham. As the story goes, God favors Abel's offerings over his brother's (Gen 4). The text is silent as to why God prefers the one over the other; one theory suggests that Cain did not offer the best of his harvests as a "tiller of the ground", whereas Abel gives God the "firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions" (Gen 4:4). Perhaps, too, the fact that Abel sacrificed living things as opposed to crops could have been a factor as well. Next, when God makes His covenant with Abraham, animals are cut in half as part of the ritual (Gen 15). Finally, comes the famous account of the (attempted) sacrifice of his son, Isaac.

Going from these accounts of early offerings, one can see that there are different types of oblations to give to God: nonliving things of the earth (such as crops) and living animals. Before there was any sort of codification on what and how to sacrifice, the early patriarchs seem to instinctively know what to do, and the best way to do it; and the shedding of blood seems to hold more weight compared to crops, considering these stories. It plays a significant and mysterious part in the ratifying of the Covenant; and even if God ultimately prevents Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac, He still provides a ram for Abraham to slaughter instead.

Post-Exodus, the laws of sacrifice become clearer and an integral aspect of the Jewish way of living. But why the need for bloodshed and the destruction of a life to supposedly satisfy God? It is the slaughtering of lambs that sets the Israelites on the path to freedom from Egypt. One of the parts of priestly ordination is to have the ordinand place his hands on the head of a bull, to "transfer" his sins onto it, and have the animal be slaughtered (Ex. 29:10). With these examples, it can be inferred that the shedding of blood—which comes only from a living creature—directly relates to the one who is sacrificing, and the annihilation of something within, which ends in right relationship with God. As Thomas Aquinas explains,

“the slaying of animals signified the destruction of sins: and also that man deserved death on account of his sins; as though those animals were slain in man’s stead, in order to betoken the expiation of sins.”⁵²

By slaughtering a substitute for human life—God’s most precious creation yet infected by sin—the one who offers the sacrifice is essentially saying to his Creator, on behalf of his people, “I give back everything that I have withheld from You, and surrender all that belongs to You, including my body and soul.”

While God prohibits human sacrifice, there is an instance in the Old Testament in which a human being becomes an offering for sin. Matthew Levering points out the famous “suffering servant” in Isaiah 53, the man who is “wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities” (Is 53:5)⁵³. Levering mentions the various Jewish interpretations on Israel’s sacrifices: that the rituals themselves did not cause forgiveness of sin but rather is the act of God in response to these actions; and that expiation as a way of purification for worship in the Temple.⁵⁴ However, Levering seeing an inadequacy in these perspectives, brings in Thomas Aquinas’ interpretation of justice and satisfaction as the driving forces of sacrifices for sin.

Levering summarizes Aquinas’ first point of “rectitude”:

“In order for true rectitude to exist, Aquinas recognizes, our lower appetites (the sense appetites and apprehensive powers) must be subject to our higher, rational powers...if the soul is to be just, the senses and the body must share in its justice by being subject to the rational order that the soul makes possible.”⁵⁵

Here, one can see the notion of holiness present: there must be wholeness, integration, and consistency in the human being, just as God is perfectly whole. Justice is the virtue of giving a

⁵² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q.102, a.3, newadvent.org.

⁵³ Matthew Levering and Matthew Webb Levering, *Sacrifice and Community: Jewish Offering and Christian Eucharist*, (Wiley-Blackwell: 2005), 64.

⁵⁴ Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 64.

⁵⁵ Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 70.

person his due, and man must give God His due by living according to the likeness of Him, the purpose for which he was created. When this is fulfilled, communion with God is present. When this obligation of Justice fails (in other words, sin), then the relationship between God and man is ruptured. And because the human person consists both of body and soul, it is not merely the soul that experiences disintegration but the body as well. This explains why, after Adam and Eve fall, death and decay enter the world. It also makes sense that when the relationship is “made right”, after offering pleasing sacrifice, that the Israelites make it a meal and feast, which is an expression of thanksgiving and union with one another and God.

Justice, according to Aquinas, can be broken down into at least two types: commutative and distributive.⁵⁶ The former refers to what is due personally between two parties, whereas the latter concerns the “distribution of goods of the community”.⁵⁷ Levering further explains that commutative justice in some relationships—such as that between God and man, or child and parents—is impossible, because to give the other his due would nowhere be equivalent to what the other party gives him; this is with a caveat that commutative justice would have to be strict.⁵⁸ God’s justice, on the other hand, would be considered distributive, as Levering explains:

“God infinitely transcends all creatures and does not owe them anything. On the other hand, distributive justice can apply to God, since the order of the universe, which is contained within the eternal law, may be said to represent God’s just distribution of goods to each creature according to its degree of being.”⁵⁹

Therefore, Levering explains, the order in which all of creation belongs is a justice rendered by God not simply to the creatures, but ultimately to Himself “as an expression of his goodness.”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q.61, a.1, newadvent.org.

⁵⁷ Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 70.

⁵⁸ Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 71.

⁵⁹ Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 71.

⁶⁰ Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 72.

Sin is then a disruption of this order and an injustice to the goodness of God, because human beings are called to be holy as He is holy.

For humanity to restore what they owe God—that is, perfect fidelity to Him and His design for mankind—it would have to already possess what it lost through sin: charity to God and to one another.⁶¹ And because it would be impossible for the human race to collectively possess charity towards Him who is infinite, and for every single person to have lived or will ever live, what then is the solution? This is where the concept of blood sacrifice comes into play: a living creature to take on the iniquities of the people, and the destruction of its body to put to death their sin, and the shedding of its blood to demonstrate the “handing over” of the lives of all for whom the sacrifice is offered to God. The immolation is meant to symbolize the complete surrender of humanity’s life to God.

The ancient Israelites believed that “the life of the animal is in the blood” (Lev. 17:11). In other words, the presence of blood signifies that the organism is/was an animated, living creature. Therefore, they treated the animal’s body and its blood differently according to their rituals. For example, when the paschal lambs are slaughtered, their flesh is to be roasted then eaten. However, the blood was never meant to be consumed. On the first night of Passover, it is used as a deterrent from the Angel of Death. Post-Exodus, the Law prohibits the Israelites to drink it; rather, in rituals such as priestly ordination, or during the Day of Atonement, it is sprinkled either on the Tabernacle or the congregation. While of course, the whole animal must be handed over to the Lord, the blood has its own role to play. The separation of the blood from the body for the purpose of surrendering one’s entirety to God is sacrifice in the most literal sense. And when one separates the literal lifeblood from the body, death obviously comes...but it

⁶¹ Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 74.

eventually results in a more transcendent life, by communing with the source of all life Himself.

Perhaps therefore the Israelites ate the roasted flesh as well: they recognized the paradox of death as the pathway to new life, after the earthly life is offered to God. Levering sums it best by stating,

“Communion with God is not only life-giving; it is also life-taking, since our lives are owed to God, as expressed by Israel’s sacrificial laws. Authentic communion with God will include this life-surrendering aspect, because in surrendering ourselves to God we receive his life-giving power, rather than our insubstantial claims to autonomy, as the basis of our lives.”⁶²

The sin of Adam and Eve was precisely to claim autonomy, based on a serpent’s word, rather than God. Therefore, immolation is an attempt to reverse this autonomy, by tangibly displaying one’s—hopefully—complete surrender to the design and order of their Creator.

There is one issue, however, with these animal sacrifices: they are all substitutes, not actual representatives. Of course, to an extent they represent something of the person(s) for whom the sacrifice is made, but in the end, they are substitutes; the animals have no consciousness of a moral order, and they serve as an “alternative” to the most appropriate thing: a human being to stand before God on behalf of all mankind. Aquinas states that the goodness and effectiveness of the Old Law’s precepts, “are said not to be good, because they did not confer grace unto the remission of sins, although by fulfilling these precepts man confessed himself a sinner.”⁶³ To be a true representative of the people, for whom the goal is expiation of sin, the sacrifice would have to be one of them, not a creature of a different species. What then, is the solution? If God forbids human sacrifice, how will mankind receive forgiveness of sin? As mentioned earlier, this representative would have to already possess perfect charity to restore what was lost between God and man. In other words, this man would have to be completely

⁶² Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 46.

⁶³ *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q.98, a.1, newadvent.org.

sinless, which is virtually impossible since all men are born into sin. This man would have to be spiritually unblemished, like the physically unblemished Paschal lambs.

These sacrifices would not be considered an identity, or a character, as they were separate creatures from the priest. However, they pointed to something of the priest and those for whom he was acting on behalf: their very lives. The numerous, slaughtered creatures down through Israel's history were signs of a hope that one day, there would be a truly effective sacrifice that would establish an eternal covenant with God. To reiterate, this eternally effective sacrifice must be a willing, perfect member of the creatures it is supposed to redeem, which automatically grants Him the identity of High Priest...again with the other identities that come with it as prophet, king, soldier, bridegroom, and father.

1e.) A summary

It must be made clear that these roles of man and rituals in the Old Covenant are not sacraments in the same sense as the ones in the New Covenant. They were not explicitly instituted by Christ and dispensed the true and full salvific grace won by Him on the cross. Still, they all built upon the natural and physical, pointing to an invisible, yet profound reality, and were effective to an extent of being in relationship with God: with circumcision signifying man's identity as bridegroom and father in relation to his Creator; sacrifice and priesthood as a tangible display of his life's—and his people's—surrender to God; and the preservation of the faithful in God's kingdom through physical protection, governing, and teaching. These were all visible manifestations of the masculine identity. However, none of these things—even the priesthood, the main office of reconciling God and humanity— were truly effective in eradicating the stain of sin and tragedy of death.

Chapter 2.) Christ as Bridegroom; Image of the Father; Soldier; Prophet; King; and Priest in the Gospel of John and Letter to the Hebrews

No one would have expected a simple craftsman born in the small town of Bethlehem and reared in the equally insignificant town of Nazareth to be the perfection of all the main masculine identities as discussed. However, being the Messiah and Incarnate Son of God, come to undo the ways in which the first man failed, it would only be fitting that He would be the exemplar of all these roles. The four Gospels each clearly convey this about Jesus of Nazareth, but the Gospel of John provides a particularly intimate window into the Person in question.

2a.) The Logos, the Son: Image of the Father

The Prologue of John begins memorably:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made (Jn 1:3).”

The Greek for the “Word” is *Logos*, which is generation by way of God’s intellect. This *Logos*, the author explains, is with God, Creator of all things—implying that there is distinction between them—but that He is also God. The Jews certainly believed YHWH as the source of all life, but this Word is also inseparable from the act of creation; He plays a key role in its coming into existence. Stanley Porter and Andrew Pitts make note of the many parallels to Genesis in just the first two chapters of John: for example, the use of the “creational week” in numbering days, and opening with the phrase, “in the beginning”;⁶⁴ fact, the Early Church fathers took notice of this.

Roch Kereszty writes,

“...the early Fathers presented the eternal Logos as universal mediator—even prior to the incarnation—between God the Father and his creation...The divine ideas or “blueprints” according to which every creature was to be made, have always been present in the eternal Wisdom and Word of the Father; however, by

⁶⁴ Chris S. Stevens, “John’s Portrayal of Jesus as the Divine-Adamic Priest and what it means for the Temple Cleansing in John 2:13-25,” in *Johannine Christology* (Brill, 2020), 171.

creating the world, the Father “brought forth” his wisdom, his Son, by manifesting his wisdom in creation.”⁶⁵

In other words, the Logos is like a bridge through whom the Father creates all things. However, the Logos is not inferior to God, as the Arians would have believed; He *is* God, as the writer of the Gospel states. The Logos is not created, but because He is God, He is eternally generated from the un-generated Creator and source of all being; this is why the latter Person is called Father, being the true origin of all existence, as discussed in the first chapter. The One who proceeds from the Father’s intellect is the Logos, the Son. And though the two are distinct persons, they share equally in divinity because the Son proceeds perfectly from His Father. Therefore, because the Logos is eternally begotten from God, having the same divinity, He perfectly images the Father’s creative and outreaching love to the rest of creation. This especially becomes manifest when “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14).

Creation, too, shares in the goodness of being, which finds its fullness in God (“I AM WHO AM”) and comes forth from the Father through His Son. A significant difference from the finite creation is that the eternally begotten Son shares equally in this fullness of being, as He is a Divine Person. Because He and the Father are perfectly united, the Son is inseparable from the act of creation out of nothing, the identifier of God’s fatherhood. His sonship is meant to be a perfect representative of His Father; Gilles Emery, O.P., citing Hebrews 1:2, supports this concept:

“In an even broader manner, sonship regards the whole creation...Creation is the action by which God freely communicates, *ex nihilo*, a participation in being to creatures. As regards the eternal generation of the Son, it is the act by which the Father begets the Son from his own substance...Put otherwise, the generation of the Son, in which the Father communicates to his Son the fullness of divinity, sheds light on the gift of being that God makes to creatures by creation.”⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Roch A. Kereszty, *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology* (Staten Island: Society of St. Paul, 2002), 209.

⁶⁶ Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*. Vol. 1. Amsterdam: Catholic

In addition, the Logos cannot be considered a daughter, despite the “feminine” connotation of wisdom. Emery states, “ “To be Father” is to give life to another of the same nature.”⁶⁷ A daughter images her mother, because of their manner of creating and bearing life. Thus, to perfectly share in the being of the Father and communicate Him, the one who is begotten must be a Son. Again, this is made tangible in the Incarnation, as the Son is born male. But it is brought to completion and consummated in His death on the cross.

The Son has an intimate share in the Father, and is His perfect image, being begotten by the Father. Because of this share in divinity, the Son has the power to become man, and offer His own body on the cross to be the perfect expiation for sin, making Him the perfect High Priest—and of course, all the authoritative, masculine roles discussed which automatically accompany it. This ties to the notion of the character of Holy Orders, in which the man sacramentally shares in Christ’s priesthood, incorporating the accompanying offices of king, prophet, warrior—all encompassed in the identities of bridegroom and father.

2b.) Jesus Christ: Prophet and Bridegroom

Throughout the Old Testament, YHWH is often described as a faithful Bridegroom to wayward Israel, particularly in the book of Hosea. The relationship between God and His chosen people is often portrayed as a husband and an unfaithful wife; He binds Himself to and pursues her despite her infidelity in worshiping false gods. He is the one who initiates relationship with her, in the establishments of covenants time and time again, to bring her back in relationship with Him.

University of America Press (2012). 128.

⁶⁷ Gilles Emery, *The Trinity*, (2012). 115.

In the fourth chapter of John's gospel, what seems to be an ordinary encounter—as ordinary as an encounter can be with Jesus—heavily connotes imagery of marriage. As the story goes, Jesus stops at a well outside the Samaritan town of Sychar at noon, during which a woman comes to draw water. The writer is also quick to note the tense relations between the Jews and Samaritans, so for Jesus to make a stop in the area when all other Jews would not, is significant.

First, it has been recognized that the early patriarchs—Isaac, Jacob, and even Moses—traditionally met their wives at a well. With this context, it is heavily implied that Jesus is in a similar vein as these men: a spiritual leader; a prophet, even. Moreover, His one-on-one interaction with a Samaritan woman would have certainly been scandalous already, but for this encounter to take place at a well would have been suspicious of a marriage proposal to a Jewish audience. Calum Carmichael notes that the chapters that precede and shortly follow this text also imply themes of spiritual marriage and procreation. This is done through the imagery of water:⁶⁸ In the context of Jesus' baptism with John the Baptist, the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus about being born of water and the spirit, Jesus asking the Samaritan woman for a drink and offering her “living water”, and perhaps most explicitly, the miracle at the wedding at Cana.

What does this image of water have to do with marriage and procreation? On a very basic level, water gives life. On a deeper, spiritual meaning, John the Baptist recognizes that his baptism has indeed “given birth” to new followers, but the baptism which Christ inaugurates must be the one to increase (“He must increase, I must decrease”).⁶⁹ John even calls Jesus the Bridegroom before he makes this statement (Jn 3:29). After this scene, Jesus gains new followers and they all go to the wedding at Cana, where He performs His first public miracle: turning water

⁶⁸ Calum M. Carmichael, “Marriage and the Samaritan Woman,” *New Testament Studies* 26, no.3 (1980): 332.

⁶⁹ Carmichael, “Marriage and the Samaritan Woman,” 333.

into wine. Later, Jesus tells Nicodemus that one must be “born of water and the spirit” to enter the kingdom of God, even though the latter is confusing His statement with literal birth (Jn 3:5). Lastly, in His conversation with the Samaritan woman, He offers her “living water”.

It is not merely the fact that water nourishes life that connects it to marriage and procreation, but the act of requesting and giving drink between two parties. In the encounter, Jesus first asks the woman for a drink, a request which she finds incredulous, given their cultural differences. He then tells her “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water” (Jn 4:10). Naturally, the woman wants this water and tells Him to give it to her...although at this point in the conversation, they are talking on different levels and senses. He explains that His living water would give eternal life, and to fetch her husband and come back. The woman admits that she does not have a husband, at which Jesus reveals that she has had five and she is currently not married to the one with whom she resides.

What has happened here is a mutual, spiritual exchange of two persons; considering the passages named in the Gospel of John, water symbolizes the gift of self, and Jesus is the one to initiate the relationship by asking the woman to give Him a drink. In this event, the water is grace, the life of God, which comes through Christ’s gift of self on the cross and unleashing of the Holy Spirit. When the woman realizes that He is offering her immensely valuable water—though she does not realize the full meaning of His words—she enthusiastically asks Jesus to give her His drink. Carmichael observes, “The woman by requesting the gift of living water is becoming, in a sense for the first time, a bride for a bridegroom.”⁷⁰ Therefore, it is not “random”

⁷⁰ Carmichael, “Marriage and the Samaritan Woman,” 338.

that Jesus brings up her five, failed marriages and current co-habiting partner. Still, if Jesus is not proposing an earthly marriage to this woman, why is He bringing this fact to light?

One must delve deeper into the history of the relations between Jews and Samaritans. The latter group, as the woman states, worship God on their mountain and not in Jerusalem, indicating their split from the mainstream Jewish religion; a betrayal or divorce from the original covenant, in other words. Carmichael also mentions that the Samaritans also worshipped other gods in addition to the Lord.⁷¹ Given the way that the prophets of the Old Testament spoke about idolatry and how often they compare it to adultery, it would be fair to conclude that the Samaritans are committing spiritual infidelity against God by not adhering to His Covenant and mixing in pagan worship. Jesus brings this personal detail of this woman's life to the surface, but also points to a generations-old fracture in relationships—with the other ethnic group, and with God. Because of this, she recognizes that He is a prophet and immediately switches to the topic of true worship.

Jesus then explains that salvation comes from the Jews, and in the end, all will worship the Father “in spirit and in Truth” and physical location will no longer matter so much when it comes to this. Rather than be defensive, the woman confidently replies, “I know that Messiah is coming...when he comes, he will show us all things” (Jn 4:25). Jesus reveals and confirms that He is indeed the Christ, the one speaking to her. Immediately, she leaves her water jar—symbolic of her unsatisfying “drinks” of relationships—and goes back to the village where she once was an outcast, sharing her encounter to all the people. Jesus comes to stay with the Samaritans, and they tell the woman they have come to believe in Him because of her testimony.

⁷¹ Carmichael, “Marriage and the Samaritan Woman,” 338.

Essentially, the encounter is a divine love story that produces new, spiritual life. Jesus comes to the well, the traditional meeting place of future spouses, to ask the woman to give Him a drink. She finds this request incredulous, but He reveals that He can offer her a drink infinitely more satisfying than hers, for which she eagerly asks. This opens a path in their encounter, as both have now asked the other for a drink—signifying a mutual openness and receptivity and implying mutual exchange to the other. Then Jesus, the Bridegroom and initiator of the relationship, must first address why she has come to the well at noon: her shame of having five failed marriages, and current significant other. This would certainly be an impediment to any marriage. However, she slowly comes to realize His identity, and He reveals the truth of worship and salvation.

One must recognize that the woman has drunk, and given drink, to six men in her life, the number of imperfection, according to Jewish numerical symbolism; hence, why these relationships have failed time and again (and the consequences of Israel's idolatry on a larger scale). However, considering now her encounter with Jesus, with all its implications, He would be the *seventh* man to ask for, and give her a drink...the number of perfection and wholeness. Essentially, Jesus has come to propose spiritual marriage, a new covenant—in this case, faith in Him as the Messiah, and ultimately the divine source of eternal life—and the woman has accepted it personally. This relationship is ultimately the one that can satisfy completely since it unites the person to the Divine. Revitalized by this spiritual union, she boldly returns to the village which scorns her, sharing to all this new relationship, which “births” more believers in Him.

In the grander scheme of things, Jesus in this story demonstrates that He has come to wed humanity, unfaithful to God by sin. In His Incarnation, He has taken the initiative and humility to

“drink” of man’s limitations and offers the drink of everlasting life to this race of creatures. It is no coincidence that the next—and only time—that Jesus asks for a drink is when He is hanging on the cross, moments away from death. He declares, “It is finished”, but some have translated to “It is consummated,” right before He dies. Then, when His side is pierced with a lance, blood and water flow out. This event is reminiscent of two things: on a Biblical level, it hearkens the side of Adam being opened as God creates his bride, Eve, from his rib; on a basic, natural level, it points to the two most prominent bodily fluids that come from birthing a child. On the cross, Christ has fully consumed the cup of humankind’s dregs, taking all of sin and its consequences to the grave. And every drop of the drink of everlasting life—ultimately, His blood shed in His Passion and Death—has been poured out in this moment; the water and blood together, the Early Church fathers believed, signified the two sacraments that form His Bride, the Church: Baptism and Eucharist. In this instance, He both weds and births His Bride from His own Body. He initiates an exchange: as a man, He can take on and receive the consequences of man’s sin on Himself and be an offering to the Father; and He gives His entire body and blood, the food and drink of Divine life.

According to Chris Stevens, the first two chapters of John set Jesus up to be both Divine Creator and the Second Adam—⁷² as Divine Creator because He is the Logos, but also as Second Adam by virtue of His perfect humanity. As the True Bridegroom, and Source of the redeemed race, He tangibly images God’s initiating and fruitful love. His fight against the defilement of His Father’s sanctuary ultimately point to the two, intertwined roles of authority: king and priest.

2c.) Jesus Christ: King

Considering all the different roles of man and, particularly Christ, discussed so far, the

⁷² Stevens, Chris S. *Johannine Christology. John’s Portrayal of Jesus as the Divine-Adamic Priest and what it means for the Temple Cleansing in John 2:13-25.* 169.

role of King is fairly explicit. The one of Priest is not as clear, but there are certainly clues in the Gospel which point to this. First, it is no secret that Jesus is a descendant of the great King David; and though His family is poor, nevertheless He is considered to have royal blood. However, these two identities become most prominent at the height of John's Gospel: Jesus' Passion and death.

Jesus' kingship is a significant topic of discussion during His trial before Pontius Pilate. The latter, having heard many things about the former, attempts to confirm whether He is the king of the Jews. Jesus replies with a question, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me" (Jn 18: 34)? When Pilate presses further, Jesus explains, "My kingship is not of this world", and that if it were, His followers would have fought to defend Him (Jn 18:36). Once more, Jesus and the person with whom He is conversing are speaking on different levels; Pilate seems to be fixated on the earthly sense of a king, whereas Jesus is clearly stating that His kingship transcends the worldly realm.

Norman H. Young analyzes the interplay between Jesus and Pilate during the Passion, noticing the emphasis on Jesus' kingship more than God's kingdom, contrasting with the Synoptic Gospels.⁷³ He points out as well that Jesus is not referring to an earthly type of kingship, which would have involved followers rising to defend Him, and that Pilate ultimately does not understand Christ's personal meaning of the title.⁷⁴ Pilate may insist on referring to Christ as king, but in a mocking, satirical manner. This, of course, is used against Him as they make Him wear a crown of thorns, and a purple cloak to mock Him. Pilate even keeps referring to Jesus as "king" to the crowds—fueling their rage and bloodlust—and writes this title on the

⁷³ Norman H. Young, "The King of the Jews: Jesus Before Pilate (John 18:28-19:22)," *Australian Biblical Review* 66 (2018): 37.

⁷⁴ Young, "The King of the Jews," 37.

placard on His cross. Jesus does not deny his insistence, but shows that although Pilate's understanding may be false, it nevertheless points to a deeper, unseen reality that the Roman governor cannot fathom.

Young sees this theme of kingship further emphasized as Christ's passion continues: he recognizes that unlike the Synoptics, John's Gospel places the scourging and mocking of Jesus in between the initial conversation of Him and Pilate, and Pilate's presentation of the tortured man to the mob. The humiliated Christ, Young states,

“is for the Evangelist and the reader ironically appropriate. Therefore, no one can read the second part of the interrogation without having his/her mind's eye the spectacle of a humiliated and beaten Christ standing before the all powerful representative of Caesar.”⁷⁵

Young also points out that when Pilate proclaims to the crowd, “Behold the man”, Jewish readers would be reminded of 1 Samuel 9:17—when God points out to the prophet Samuel the new King of Israel, Saul.⁷⁶ Therefore, Pilate is unaware that he is basically presenting Jesus to the people as a divinely appointed king; Young explains that this is perhaps the fuel to the Jewish leaders' rage, as they immediately demand to crucify Him; after all, they were the ones to accuse Jesus of blasphemy for claiming to be divine, and Pilate is further stoking the flames by playing on this.

As for the Roman governor, upon hearing from the Pharisees that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, “he was the more afraid” then questions Jesus privately about His origin (Jn:19:8-9); when Jesus gives no answer, Pilate tries to use his authority to threaten Him into speaking, but Jesus responds: “You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above” (Jn 19:11). At this, Pilate desires to release Jesus, perhaps afraid to anger a deity if he had chosen

⁷⁵ Young, “The King of the Jews,” 38.

⁷⁶ Young, “The King of the Jews,” 39.

to execute Him. However, the mob continues to coerce Pilate to put Jesus to death. The Roman might not necessarily have true faith in Jesus as the Son of the True God—the God of the Jews—but it seems that he is motivated by a superstitious fear that he might be struck down by a divine being for punishing this man.

When the Jews tell Pilate “We have no king but Caesar”, Young interprets this as compromise of “their strict monotheism.”⁷⁷ In other words, in a desperate attempt to defend the name of God against the claim that Jesus is a Divine King, the Jews ironically commit blasphemy by claiming Caesar as their only king. This of course, was the problem that God was warning the Israelites early in the Old Covenant: He was their one and only king, and their having an earthly one would lead them astray. Coupled with the fact that, in ancient times, these Mediterranean cultures regarded their kings as divine, the last nail has surely been driven into the coffin. The ones who cry out for Jesus’ execution have ironically condemned themselves of the same judgment they place upon Him.

According to Young, the two parties between whom Jesus stands—the Jews and Rome—both lose in John’s Gospel; it is Jesus who has authority in its fullest sense.⁷⁸ The circumstances are certainly ironic, Young points out, given that it is ultimately the tortured, condemned prisoner who holds infinite authority over the ones who enable His punishment and execution.⁷⁹ Though Jesus experiences betrayal, abuse, and ultimately execution, His responses to the anger of the Pharisees and Pilate demonstrate a confidence from within—confidence of His innocence, and ultimately of His divine authority and identity, which in turn confounds and produces more

⁷⁷ Young, “The King of the Jews,” 41.

⁷⁸ Young, “The King of the Jews,” 42.

⁷⁹ Young, “The King of the Jews,” 42.

turmoil within His accusers and judges. He is the only one who maintains complete interior integrity as the powers that surround Him implode from their deceit and hatred.

Jesus' authority and kingship certainly do not conform to the world's standards. His crucifixion—the method of execution which would have been considered the most humiliating and shameful in the ancient world—rather, is His exaltation and triumph. By His divine authority as the Son of God, Lord of all, He freely chooses to be the sacrificial victim to atone for man's sin. Though unrecognized in the eyes of the world, this is the warfare to the highest degree, as it is the conquering of evil. Christ as Divine King wills that His body be atonement for sin, with His blood shed as a visible sign of the purification of man. The Son demonstrates His divine kingship by His choosing to become man, and act as both High Priest and victim, simultaneously making Him the Bridegroom/life-giver to the redeemed Israel, and spiritual warrior against evil. Again, this returns to the main point that these roles are all visible and made tangibly real in the offering of His life on the cross, expressing the core of His being which finds itself from the Father who is love.

2d.) Jesus Christ: Soldier

One might not necessarily ascribe the identity of soldier to Jesus right away; as one who preaches God's love and mercy, a war-waging Son of God may not be the first image that appeals to a general audience. However, the prophecies in the Old Testament, and the Gospels depict a fierce Messiah who seeks to restore God's kingdom...even by literally disrupting the apparent peace and contentment the people may have.

In the Gospel of John, one incident gives a window into one of Christ's purposes: the cleansing of the Temple. He overturns the tables of the moneychangers and disrupts the merchants selling their goods and driving them out; He declares that His Father's house should

be a house of prayer, but these people have turned it into a den of thieves. When confronted by the angry religious leaders, He responds that if they tear down the Temple, He will rebuild it within three days. What is the reason for Christ's apparently violent episode?

If one recalls the Garden of Eden as the primordial sanctuary or Temple, and Adam's duty to tend and keep it, this may just be what Jesus is doing. Business—and by His words, dishonest business—has polluted God's holy place. This may not have been taking place in the Holy of Holies, but nevertheless in the courts of God's house. What Jesus is doing is fulfilling Adam's original priestly duty to fight back against anything that is unfit to be in God's presence. Like the Maccabees, what He is doing is restoring the place of worship; and often this act of restoration is anything but peaceful and calm. Evil cannot be dealt with gently; it must be driven out with force. This is perhaps the reason why the episode is called the “cleansing of the Temple”; what Jesus is doing is not merely an act of violence, but a purification of God's sanctuary. His physical actions point to the invisible reality of spiritual warfare, which is tied closely to His identity of Priest, Prophet, King, and once more connects to His identity as Bridegroom and image of the Father. These are not mere actions but are a natural manifestation of His very being and purpose, which comes from the Father in Heaven.

2e.) Jesus Christ: High Priest

The Gospel of John begins with signposts to Jesus' priesthood from the beginning: Jesus' cleansing of the Temple is one such example, since He is keeping God's holy place pure from all that is unlike Him (one of the main responsibilities of the Jewish priesthood). However, when questioned by the religious leaders, Jesus responds with, “destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (Jn 2:19). The author explains that Jesus is referring to His Body. This parallel

insinuates the theme of worship and sacrifice; essentially, Christ's Body is that in which true worship—which ultimately involves sacrifice—is offered to the Father.

The Last Supper is another insight into this priesthood. John's Gospel differs from the Synoptics in that it does not include recount the institution of the Eucharist. What instead is present is Jesus washing the disciples' feet and His extensive discourse commonly known as the High Priestly Prayer. First, the foot washing is significant as it hearkens back to the ordination rites prescribed in Exodus. This is not merely an example of love and service that Jesus demonstrates to the twelve, but a sign that He is preparing them for a very specific task. In Exodus, God instructs,

“Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests... You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water” (Ex. 29: 1-4).

This essentially begins the elaborate multiple-day priestly ordinations, with the purpose of purifying and setting these men apart for service to the temple and sacrifice.

After Jesus gives the disciples the “new commandment”—to love one another as He has loved them—He makes intercession for them to the Father. In this prayer, Jesus exercises the mediatory function of Priest, as He declares His intention to pray for the twelve—and all future believers who receive the Faith from them—that they may be united in God and protected from evil as He leaves this world (Jn 17: 9-20). He prays that their union will be as His own with His Father. In addition to this priestly act of mediation, Jesus petitions the Father,

“Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth” (Jn 17: 17-19).

Considering the foot washing, the connection to the priesthood intensifies. In Exodus, God tells Moses that the washing with water is one of the steps to consecrate Aaron and his sons for the

priestly office. The Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Old Testament—contains the verb ἁγιάσαι; in this part of the priestly prayer, the verb is ἁγιάζω.⁸⁰ This word means to make holy, “to separate from profane things and dedicate to God,” which includes people.⁸¹ Therefore, what Jesus is doing is in a similar vein to what Moses is doing to Aaron and his sons.

In this petition, Jesus also gives further insight into His identity, and even what it could mean for His disciples to be consecrated in this way. The Father sends Him into the world, and likewise He sends out His disciples. This is sensible considering the discussion on His identity as the Logos, the perfect image or representative of the Father to the rest of creation. What He is essentially saying is that the disciples will be sent forth as His representatives. Thus, when He declares that the Father’s “word is truth”, and that He consecrates Himself that they may be consecrated, demonstrates that: He makes Himself in such a way that His disciples also follow in His example; and considering the theme of priesthood already present, it would mean that this consecration would be one made unto Christ Himself, as He claims to be the Truth.

The crucifixion and death of Jesus also contain clues to His priesthood; after all, this is supposed to be the mark of His sacerdotal identity. One such clue is the garments He wore that were taken by the soldiers. John notes that “the tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom” (Jn 19:23). A seamless, one-piece garment would have been a unique type of clothing to begin with, which may be why the soldiers choose not to tear it apart (19:24). Upon further study, Fr. Thomas J. Lane calls to mind Exodus 28:32, which describes the ephod of the High Priest:

“It shall have in it an opening for the head, with a woven binding around the opening, like the opening in a garment, that it may not be torn” (Ex. 28:32).

⁸⁰ John 17:17, at The Online Bible, at greekbible.com.

⁸¹ John 17:17, The Online Greek Bible.

In other words, the priestly garment is not meant to be torn apart. Lane also points out that the “top-to-bottom” descriptor of the tunic—*anōthen*—is used in other places in the Gospel in which Jesus is speaking of His Divinity (for example, when Jesus refers to Himself as the one who comes from above (Jn 3:31), when He tells Pilate that the man has no authority except that which is given from above). The most relevant connection to Christ’s garments would be in the other Gospels in which the Temple veil is torn from top to bottom.⁸² This is perhaps to show who the true Temple, Priest, and Sacrifice truly is.

The Person of Jesus is unique in that all these masculine roles all converge in His Passion and Death on the cross, in the destruction of His body. He is the icon of the Father’s self-giving love; His blood restores the marriage between God and mankind, as He unites Himself entirely to the new Israel, the Church; His death proclaims the fulfillment of all the prophecies; His humiliation overturns the preconceived notions of kingship; and his priesthood is exercised in His choice to make a sacrifice of Himself, simultaneously vanquishing evil and becoming a Bridegroom and giver of life to the Church. These are no longer mere titles or vague identities but made tangible in the very body of the Word made man.

2g.) Jesus Christ: True High Priest in the Letter to the Hebrews

The Letter to the Hebrews is best known for revealing the identity of Jesus as High Priest. The author provides great insight into the priesthood of Christ, recalling the types in the Old Testament that paved the way for the fullness of the mediation between God and man. The letter, in addition to Christ as priest, emphasizes His kingship, masculinity, all of which are tied to His priesthood. His priesthood is defined in His mediation between God and man, making Himself a sacrifice to atone for man’s sins.

⁸² Thomas J. Lane, “Jesus as High Priest: The Significance of the Seamless Robe,” at St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology (19 July 2019), at stpaulcenter.com.

In the first two chapters of Hebrews, the writer emphasizes the identity of Christ as the Divine Son of God, subtly echoing the Prologue of John: “He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power” (Heb. 1:3). The author quotes passages from the Old Testament, of God addressing His “son.” In this way, he establishes Christ’s divine origin, before explaining the reason for His incarnation:

“Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make expiation for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17).

Here, we begin to see the true meaning of Christ’s high priesthood: to be a representative on behalf of humankind for the forgiveness of their sins.

Being a representative of the creatures He intends to redeem, this High Priest is not at all removed from their experiences. A high priest of the Old Law, being merely human, would not have been able to truly take on all of humanity’s experiences and know them; it would have been an impersonal priesthood. However, the author makes it known that Christ is intimate to all the sufferings and temptations of man—though He Himself is sinless— which He undergoes in His Passion and Death. The writer states,

“For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning” (Heb. 4:15).

The perfect High Priest truly experiences the sufferings and weaknesses of His people as an integral part of His sacrifice, and that He is sinless. His divinity enables Him to cover every single person who lived and will ever live. He can personally experience all that the human person could because of His humanity and bring it with Him to the grave, then transform it to glory in His resurrection.

The writer also reveals more of the mediating nature of the high priesthood: “For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins” (Heb 5: 1). The writer goes on to say, “one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was” (Heb. 5:5). This is to say that the office is not taken on by the candidate, but it is bestowed by a preceding power. To support his claim, the author cites the Psalms in which God declares the subject as His son (Ps. 2:7), and that he is a “priest for ever, after the order of Melchiz’edek” (Ps 110:4). Therefore, this priesthood is a gift from God, and His statement of Divine sonship on the candidate; it can be implied, then, that the priesthood reflects something of the Father, and because of the priest’s membership with humanity, mankind can be called children of the Father. It is both a partaking of the Divine life, and of the finite creation, in order that the two may be reconciled. The priesthood is essentially the Father bestowing His grace onto one man, that the rest of humanity may receive that life as well. As the writer states,

“Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purposed, he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:16-17).

Thus, the High Priesthood is an intimate share and bond with the Father.

Because of this share in the life of the eternal Father, the High Priesthood is eternal. The author hearkens back to the mysterious priest-king Melchizedek and contrasts this priesthood to the Levitical priesthood. Of the ancient figure, the writer states,

“He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever” (7:2-3).

The author is likely citing a tradition that this man was not begotten naturally; thus, Melchizedek is a type of Christ. Again, because of the office and essentially, sonship, bestowed on him by God, his priesthood is for eternity. The Levitical priesthood differs in that it was passed down through bloodline, and not considered eternal, as the priests died: “The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office” (7:23). The author also notes that the Levitical priests “took their office without an oath” (7:21), contrasted with the priesthood of Melchizedek, in which God swears to the man of his eternal office.

The Melchizedek priesthood, as discussed previously, has a nature that seems to be more effective and transcendent than the Levitical order. Of course, the latter priesthood had its purpose; the author writes, “for under it, the people received the law” (7:11). However, he asks,

“what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchiz’edek rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well” (7:11-12).

He answers his question that this High Priest “has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life” (7:16).

Because this High Priest is of an eternal nature, He has no need to offer sacrifices repeatedly as the priests of the Levitical order did. It follows that this new High Priest would offer a once-and-for-all oblation that would reconcile God and man forever and form an everlasting covenant.

Thus, the author states,

“He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered himself. Indeed, the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever” (7:27-28).

Again, this explanation further solidifies the divine origin of the Melchizedek priesthood; the order of Aaron-Levi would best be considered a sign that points to the true fulfillment of their legal functions.

As discussed before, every priest must have a holy place to which he tends and offers sacrifice. Christ is the true fulfillment of this; as the earthly Temple was God's sanctuary in the temporal realm, He enters the sanctuary "not made with hands" (9:11). While the Levitical High Priest would enter the sanctuary once a year to offer the blood of animals in atonement for sin, Christ uses His own blood. The author asks,

"For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (9:13-14).

The sacrifice of Christ is Himself, and the sanctuary which He enters to offer this is the unmediated presence of God, the heavenly sanctuary. This is all that the earthly Temple in Jerusalem foreshadows. He also does not have to do it continuously, as His divinity enables Him to offer Himself once and for all and affect an everlasting covenant.

The main takeaways of Christ's high priesthood—and therefore the perfection of the priesthood—are sonship in divinity and humanity, a gift, and an invitation from God the Father, and not an achievement. It is not based on human bloodline, but rather the gift of divine sonship and an intimate share in the life of God, to be a bridge between Him and His people. The bridge that is not merely created by external action—as the Levitical priests did, in offering sacrifices of animals—but the oblation has to do with Himself. Having received the outpouring love and image of the Father, He becomes a physical example of such love by being the sacrifice that bridges the gap caused by sin. The orders of Aaron-Levi and Melchizedek foreshadowed this

High Priesthood, which is ultimately a tangible expression of Christ's deepest identity as Son and image of the Father to creation.

2f.) Analysis

Jesus Christ, as evidenced in these examples in Scripture, is the exemplar of man; the New Adam. Prior to His incarnation, He is already the perfect image of the Father, as the One through whom all things come into being. However, the Father's love becomes tangibly real in Christ condescending to humanity and dying on the cross; His Incarnation enables Him to be the mediator between God and mankind, and all the other roles of man are automatically assumed in this. He images the Father as the primal source of life in His masculinity, and His union with the human race to give new life makes Him Bridegroom; He is both prophet, and the Word of God; He is the true spiritual warrior, sent to expel evil from, and sanctify creation; He possesses dominion over all things; and of course, He is the true High Priest whose sacrifice is eternally effective because He offers His entire self—and not a substitute.

All these roles flow out from the very being of Christ. They are not mere functions but are “natural” expressions of the source of His identity: God the Father, who is Love itself. Masculinity is an earthly, tangible image of the Father who is the primal source of all life. When Christ takes this upon Himself, He perfects and transcends all these identities which would have been marred by sinful men. Ultimately, Christ demonstrates in His very body that these roles come from His being. His body speaks of the Father and His life-giving love. And all that He does with His body—especially making of it a pleasing sacrifice in atonement for sin—also speaks of the Father.

This is to show that Christ's initiative to become one with humanity enables mankind to respond to this initiative and become one with Him as well. To be united to Him is to be like

Him; after all, it is the High Priest's duty to sanctify, or restore His people's likeness to God. As the Son of the Father who takes on human nature, man's image and likeness to his Creator could become perfected once more. To do this, man must accept the gift of faith and salvific grace won by Christ.

To take part in this New Covenant, circumcision is no longer necessary, although the materiality of the human person and creation remain significant. If it was not, Christ would not have become incarnate. The rites of the Old Covenant have always anticipated the complete, and perfect reunion with God they attempted to achieve. It would follow, then, that there would be new rites in the New Covenant through which the grace from Christ's sacrifice would be received. Here, the seven sacraments of the Church find their source.

The first of these is Baptism, at Christ's command. This is the first which restores the likeness God intended for man and adopts one into His family by virtue of Christ's blood. The second is Confirmation, further completing one's membership into the Church, Christ's Body and Bride. These first two sacraments bestow an eternal identity of belonging to the new and everlasting Covenant, again, His body. The other four sacraments, though dispensing salvific grace, ultimately do not confer a character. However, the sacrament of Holy Orders—that is, of service to the altar—would belong in the same category as Baptism and Confirmation, granting an intimate share in the sonship of Christ, and His act of perfect worship to the Father. This ultimately returns to the concept that the sacramental character, particularly that of Holy Orders, is an intimate share in Christ's own priesthood—enacted by His self-sacrifice—and the accompanying authority to govern, preach, and sanctify.⁸³ Once more, all these abilities flow from His identity, the core of His being, which is to be the Son of His Father.

⁸³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2nd ed, 1592, sccborromeo.org.

Chapter 3.) Sacraments with Character: Eternal Identification in the Body of Christ to Worship

3a.) Sacrament and Sacramental Character

What makes a sacrament? The Medieval Doctor of the Church (the “Angelic Doctor”), Thomas Aquinas, uses logic and philosophical reasoning in Tertia Pars of the Summa about the constitution of a sacrament. In the articles of Question 60, Aquinas recognizes that a sacrament possesses a “sacred secret”—in other words, an invisible, “hidden” sanctity—is a visible sign, and instituted by the Divine.⁸⁴ In this chapter, the sacraments in consideration are Baptism and Confirmation. As with the other five, these two respectively make use of natural things—water, oil, imposition of hands—which become signs and conduits of the grace made available through Christ’s atoning sacrifice. These initiating sacraments, while dispensing the sanctifying power of the Cross, also radically changes the very being of the recipient, since Baptism and Confirmation enable one to participate fully in the Church, the Body of Christ, and be incorporated as a member.

German theologian Matthias Scheeben emphasizes the sacramental character as a reality of being which finds its source in Christ and flows out in acts of worship and sanctification. He makes the case, stating,

“it is the signature which makes known that the members of the God-man’s mystical body belong to their divine-human head by assimilating them to Him, and testifies to their organic union with Him. The character of the members must be a reflection and replica of the theandric character of this head...But the signature whereby Christ’s humanity receives its divine dignity and consecration is nothing else than its hypostatic union with the Logos. Consequently the character of the members of Christ’s mystical body must consist in a seal which establishes and exhibits their relationship to the Logos; their character must be analogous to the hypostatic union and grounded upon it.”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.60, a.1-5, newadvent.org.

⁸⁵ Matthias Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity* (St. Louis: B Herder, 1946), 583.

The Sacraments of Initiation are just that: being initiated into the Body of Christ, the Church. Therefore, to become a member of the Body of Christ is not simply to be granted allowance to participate in worship, but to be granted the identity which enables one to participate in Christ's perfect act of worship to the Father. To be a Christian must be about becoming a "little Christ." It is not merely about performing certain actions but possessing an internal reality which radically transforms one's sinful being into a new creation.

Unlike Thomas Aquinas who believes that Christ does not possess a character—since He contains within Himself the fullness of which the faithful participate⁸⁶—Scheeben does consider Christ's hypostatic union as a character.⁸⁷ The union of the divine and human natures in Jesus "makes Christ what He is."⁸⁸ He also states, "Christ's character floods His soul with the fullness of grace, confers a simply infinite value upon this grace, and fixes it in His soul with an absolutely unshakable firmness."⁸⁹ Essentially, with the Second Person of the Holy Trinity taking on human nature, His divinity "imparted infinite dignity to the humanity, and guaranteed the enduring existence of this dignity."⁹⁰ Therefore, because the Son took on human nature, and the Sacraments of Initiation are intended to graft one onto the perfect sacrifice of His body and blood (tied intrinsically to His priesthood), the faithful are granted an identification with Christ, and access to the grace which permeates His humanity. The hypostatic union communicates Father's uniting love for His creatures and makes possible Christ's priesthood; an identity that is hidden to the world, but manifests in the most perfect offering to the Father on the cross. By becoming

⁸⁶ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.69, a.4, newadvent.org.

⁸⁷ Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity*, 587.

⁸⁸ Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity*, 587.

⁸⁹ Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity*, 585.

⁹⁰ Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity*, 584.

man and infinitely imbued with grace from His divine personhood and sonship, He can completely satisfy and pay the debt owed by man to God.

Aquinas' emphasis on sacramental character is a deputation "to the worship of God according to the rite of the Christian religion."⁹¹ This character enables one to fully participate in the worship of God, through prayer and the other sacraments, that the person may receive the graces that will aid him or her on the journey to Heaven. He compares this to soldiers who were marked with certain signs on their body, "through being deputed to a bodily service."⁹² He argues that "the worship of God consists either in receiving Divine gifts, or in bestowing them on others", and these require both active and passive power.⁹³ Furthermore, Aquinas cites Dionysius who states that God "by a kind of sign grants a share of Himself to those that approach Him" (Eccl. Hier. II). Though Aquinas' focus is mainly on the abilities that are granted to the person who receives Baptism and Confirmation, it is also important to recognize that these powers can only happen if the recipient possesses God's life in his soul, which adopts one into His family and therefore changes one's identity.

As discussed before, by His humanity, Christ truly becomes the bridge between the Father and mankind, and Aquinas argues that the sacramental character received in these two sacraments is that of Christ's. The grace received in Baptism and matured in Confirmation is what He accomplished on the cross: incorporation into His Body and therefore, sonship with the Father. Recalling again the twofold purposes of the human person—"enjoyment of glory" with God, and the reception and transmitting of the things of worship—Aquinas states that the whole of the Christian life is a share in Christ's priesthood.⁹⁴ This is in His sacrifice on the cross, which

⁹¹ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.63, a.2, newadvent.org.

⁹² Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.63, a.1, newadvent.org.

⁹³ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II, q.63, a2, newadvent.org.

⁹⁴ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II, q.63, a3, newadvent.org.

atones for the sin of all. In essence, by being brought into the eternal New Covenant established by Christ's blood, one can access the redemption and salvation won by the God-Man. The faithful are now able to join in the perfect offering of the Son to the Father, by becoming a part of His Bride and His Body. Therefore, the Father looks upon the faithful, washed in the blood of His Son, and call them His own. They have been clothed with Christ, because of the laying down of His life on the cross on their behalf. The faithful are not prophets, kings, and priests on their own but they have been integrated into Christ who possesses the perfection of these in His being and actualizes them with His self-sacrifice.

Thirdly, the sacramental character is permanent. This means that, when validly performed, Baptism and Confirmation cannot be repeated. The identity given to its recipients is sonship of the Father, which is made possible by the blood of the Son who lives forever. This adoption accompanies with it, as Aquinas has stated, the abilities to participate in worship to the Father with this perfect offering and attain eternal life. The Angelic Doctor writes,

“in the sense that as Christ has the full power of a spiritual priesthood, so His faithful are likened to Him by sharing a certain spiritual power with regard to the sacraments and to things pertaining to the Divine worship.”⁹⁵

Aquinas does clarify that Christ's priesthood is not a character, because it is the perfection and completion; rather, it is the faithful who possess this character, as they are the participants.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, because Christ is eternal, so too is the character that is bestowed and sealed in Baptism and Confirmation. Aquinas adds too, that,

“Since, therefore, the subject of a character is the soul as to its intellectual part, where faith resides...it is clear that, the intellect being perpetual and incorruptible, a character cannot be blotted out from the soul.”⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.69, a.4, newadvent.org.

⁹⁶ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.69, a.4, newadvent.org.

⁹⁷ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.69, a.4, newadvent.org.

In other words, the indelibility of the character not only has to do with Christ, but with that which makes the soul immortal: its intellect. As faith, which is necessary for the sacrament, belongs to the intellect, the identity and the subsequent powers are received in it.

3b.) Sacraments of Initiation

As Christ numerous states in the Gospels, Baptism is the way to becoming one of God's own. From His discussion with Nicodemus, to the great commission He gives to the disciples before ascending into Heaven, this ritual washing with water is the first means of sanctification and therefore, union with God. This sanctification, as said before, purifies the soul from Original Sin, the inherited state of the first parents' fall from grace. Essentially, it restores man's innocence and likeness to God. It incorporates one into the Bride of Christ, His body, as evidenced by the blood and water that came out of His pierced side on the cross. Therefore, all have access to the Divine life, as Aquinas states: "the fulness of grace and virtues flows from Christ the Head to all His members, according to John 1:16."⁹⁸ And unlike the Old Covenant, no longer does every man have to stand in for every woman. All have agency within the Body of Christ. Because of the all-encompassing effectiveness of Christ's sacrifice, in Baptism, every person—male or female alike—is given a share in the roles of Christ as priest, prophet, and king.

Confirmation is thought to be the "seal" of this new identity of being a part of Christ's body. As the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles at Pentecost, so too the recipients of the sacrament receive a fresh outpouring of Him and full integration into the body of Christ. This is evidenced in certain instances in the Acts of the Apostles, such as when the apostles laid hands

⁹⁸ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.63, a.5, newadvent.org.

on baptized believers and they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17). Aquinas reflects on this sacrament:

“thence it is that besides the movement of generation whereby man receives life of the body, there is movement of growth, where man is brought to perfect age. So therefore does man receive spiritual life in Baptism, which is spiritual regeneration: while in Confirmation man arrives at the perfect age, as it were, of the spiritual life.”⁹⁹

Therefore, what has been received in Baptism—life in Christ’s Body—is matured. The new identity, with all that it entails—membership in the Church, the share of Christ’s roles of priest, prophet, and king—is brought to its full potential and exercise of its powers. In addition to these general roles in which the faithful share in Christ’s kingdom, their functions become fully actualized by the Holy Spirit along with His seven gifts: wisdom, knowledge, fortitude, and so on. Aquinas states,

“in Baptism he receives power to do those things which pertain to his salvation...whereas in Confirmation he receives power to do those things which pertain to the spiritual combat with the enemies of the Faith.”¹⁰⁰

In other words, the role of spiritual warrior that can be found in the prophet, king, and especially priest, becomes activated in the sacrament of Confirmation. Aquinas supports this argument by citing the apostles’ boldness in spreading the Gospel after Pentecost, even in the face of adversity.¹⁰¹

As Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism and Confirmation are the means which Christ grafts people to Himself. To partake of God’s divine life, one must become like Him; this is the purpose of the sacramental character which these sacraments confer. The faithful are given

⁹⁹ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.72, a.1, newadvent.org.

¹⁰⁰ *Summa theologiae*, III, q.72, a.5, newadvent.org.

¹⁰¹ *Summa theologiae*, III, q.72, a.5, newadvent.org.

identification with the Second Person of the Trinity who took on their nature; and in this solidarity of God with humankind is the priesthood of Christ, in which people come to participate in the most perfect act of worship offered to the Father on their behalf. Again, this relates back to the original point: a sacramental character being an indelible identification in Christ, the High Priest who lives forever, a role which contains the offices of prophet, king, and spiritual soldier, and is simultaneous with the identity of bridegroom and father. It is an interior reality bestowed by God, which authorizes one to act and participate in worship.

All the faithful can participate in these offices in a general way, simply by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation. They may join their sufferings to the sacrifice of Christ, share His word with others, and exercise His authority in their spiritual lives... all for their own sanctification and others. When it comes to the role of bridegroom and father—which is bound together in His priesthood—it can be argued that the general faithful are called to lay their lives down for one another in a way that bears spiritual or physical fruit, whether male or female. This is part of the dignity of becoming a part of the Body of Christ—acts of charity and personal offerings to God can be opportunities of sanctification.

However, as demonstrated in the Mosaic covenant, not every person—or every male for that matter—could perform the most literal and strict form of worship: offering ritual sacrifice and tending to the sanctuary. Only those who had a specific lineage and legal designation were considered fit to be priests. Now in the New Covenant, Christ fulfills the attempts of the Old Covenant priesthood, with the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Himself. But because of His ascension into Heaven, and being no longer physically present on Earth, there must be a way in which His sacrifice is made present down through the ages so that the faithful may partake of it.

It follows then that there must be designated Christians to make His Body and Blood present, to fulfill His command to consume them, that the faithful may have eternal life.

To make this sacrifice present—and initiate all other things geared to the sanctification of the faithful—there must be designated people who stand for Christ and tangibly represent Him to the Church. This is the purpose of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the third sacrament of indelible character; men who have been fully initiated into the Body of Christ “put Him on” in a unique way, compared to the Sacraments of Initiation. As Baptism and Confirmation enable one to receive the sacraments, Holy Orders goes a step further in granting men the additional power and authority to dispense them. This is because they have been intimately incorporated into Christ’s priesthood, and all His roles as prophet, king, warrior, bridegroom, and icon of the father.

Chapter 4.) Holy Orders: Eternal Identification with Christ the High Priest, Prophet, King, Warrior, Bridegroom, and Icon of the Father

One might notice that the sacraments of indelible character become more and more specific as to who is able to receive them: first, anyone can receive Baptism since salvation is available to all. Then, only those who have been baptized can receive Confirmation as it is the maturation of what was received in Baptism, membership in the Body of Christ. Then, only baptized and confirmed males are eligible for Holy Orders (provided they have no impediments enumerated by Church law).

All three sacraments impart a share of Christ’s priesthood (which is a result of the hypostatic union, as discussed by Scheeben). However, not all have been granted the ability to do things pertaining to worship and sanctification. This harkens back to the original “set up” in the Mosaic covenant, in which the different tribes were assigned places radiating outwards from the Tabernacle, with the Levites being placed closest to it. All were invited into be a part of the

life of worship but only a select few were chosen by God to approach Him on behalf of the people. It is clear, too, that even within the men of the tribe of Levi there were distinctions and ranks: the Levites, the priests, and the High Priest.

This returns to the concept of likeness to God, and the purpose of the priest to maintain such likeness to Him—for himself and for the people. In the sacraments of initiation, one is certainly made like God by the cleansing of sin and incorporation into Christ’s body, and therefore made spiritual priests by being united to Him. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. The ordained ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching (*munus docendi*), divine worship (*munus liturgicum*), and pastoral governance (*munus regendi*).”¹⁰² This is precisely the purpose of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, to make men like Christ in a deeper way—as official prophets, priests, kings, and spiritual warriors—to effectively transmit salvific grace to the faithful.

4a.) The Priest as Bridegroom and Father: Fittingness of a Male-Only and Perpetually Celibate Priesthood

When addressing the essence of the sacrament of Orders, one of the first aspects Aquinas touches upon is the purpose of having “orders” in the Church in the first place. The use of this word in this context strongly implies hierarchy of office within the Church, but also superiority of one over the other.¹⁰³ His argument for the fittingness of such a sacrament in the Church follows:

“God wished to produce His works in likeness to Himself, as far as possible, in order that they might be perfect, and that He might be known through them. Hence, that He might be portrayed in His works, not only according to what He is in Himself, but also according as He acts on others, He laid this natural law on all

¹⁰² *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2nd ed, 1592, sborromeo.org.

¹⁰³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.34, a.1, newadvent.org.

things, that last things should be reduced and perfected by middle things, and middle things by the first...Wherefore this beauty might not be lacking to the Church, He established Order in her so that some should deliver the sacraments to others, being thus made like to God in their own way, as co-operating with God; even as in the natural body, some members act on others.”¹⁰⁴

This returns to the concept of the priest being a mediator between God and man, and even the concept of a sacrament. Creation comes from God and therefore, contains at least some semblance of Him, and man through his intellect can know something of God through this likeness. This is mediation at a very basic level; any created object, simply by virtue of its existence, can demonstrate some aspect of God. Now out of all creation, the human person is explicitly stated in Genesis to be made in His image and likeness. Everything about man and woman communicate significant things of the divine: from possessing intellect and will by which to know and love—which is missing from inanimate objects and animals—down to their manner of procreation. All this to say that there are indeed “orders” even in the natural world, which contain gradations of semblance to its Creator. This is not to say that there is a hierarchy moral superiority or inherent dignity amongst God’s people; rather, it is one of authority that comes from Christ as head of the new creation. As Aquinas states, the rest of the faithful can know God in mediated ways, and thus it is His will that the members of His Body come to know Him as their head through other members.

During Christ’s High Priestly Prayer during the Last Supper, one will recall that He makes several parallels of the dynamics of His relationship to His Father, to that of His disciples. If then, He is comparing His Father’s commissioning of the Son to the world, to His own commissioning of the disciples, there must be some similarity between the one passing on to the

¹⁰⁴ *Summa theologiae*, III, q.34, a.1, newadvent.org.

other. Between the Father and the Son, there is the sharing of their divinity. To be a Son is to bear His Father's likeness especially in His Incarnation and death on the cross, which ultimately brings new life. Consequently, Christ consecrates Himself so that His disciples may be consecrated as well; therefore, there must be some similarity between the parties that enables one to be made an "ambassador" for the one who commissions and sends out.

What makes one like God in this matter? It has already been established that Christ is the bridegroom and image of the Father through the Hypostatic Union, and His salvific Passion and death. As the Son, He is the perfect image of His Father who is the prime origin of creation and shares equally in His divinity. By being incarnate as a male, this also points to the initiating, unitive love of a bridegroom, and the new life that comes from the sacrifice of His body and blood. In this way, He is the head of all things. As Benedict Ashley, O.P. states, "thus maleness is essential to Jesus as New Adam, head and father of redeemed humanity, and therefore to the priest who symbolizes him."¹⁰⁵

Ashley speaks of this role of bridegroom considering the concept of headship and "ordering" of relationship when it comes to man and woman. Citing Genesis and the Early Church fathers, he notes that while male and female are equal in dignity, the man can represent both, since his sons and daughters find him as their "primal source".¹⁰⁶ Is this not the function of the priest, to be a representative of all humanity to God, and vice versa? Natural headship, therefore, enables a man to be a spiritual head. Provided they are already full members of Christ's Body, men now have the potential to share in this headship, because their masculinity is already a natural sign of this invisible reality, which Christ specifically assumed. Like Christ

¹⁰⁵ Benedict Ashley, O.P., *Justice in the Church: Gender and Participation*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 101.

¹⁰⁶ Ashley, *Justice in the Church*, 100.

being “one flesh” with His Bride as man, yet still being her supreme head, so too is the priest “one flesh” with her—as one of its members— and stand in the person of Christ who is the true transmitter of eternal life to His Bride.

This spiritual life is transmitted by Christ, through the priest, most tangibly in the sacraments, but also in his intentional presence in the lives of his people, thus making the priest a spiritual father. As stated before, not only does he serve as the “head” of the people and representing them to God but is also a tangible representation of the father of the redeemed human race: Christ. Christ represents the Father, who, Ashley notes, transcends the life He creates.¹⁰⁷ He gives Himself to the Bride, and their union perpetuates life. So too, is the priest a spiritual father by taking on the authority of Christ and having the power to effectively aid the faithful in receiving salvific grace. As the venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen writes,

“The priest is pledged to celibacy not because human generation is wrong, but because it must yield so that he can devote himself wholly to a higher form of generation: the begetting of children in Christ by bringing to Him those who never knew Him, by restoring Him those lost in sin, and by arousing in those who already love Christ the inspiration to serve Him more fully as religious or priests.”¹⁰⁸

The fittingness of permanent celibacy is also relevant to the role of the priest sharing in Christ’s identity as Bridegroom and icon of the Father. Not all priests of the Catholic Church are celibate, as there are those in other rites, particularly in the East, who are married; this demonstrates the Church’s regard for the practice as not necessarily a hard-stop impediment to the sacrament of Orders; after all, the apostles were married before they became priests. However, history and tradition show that marriage is prohibited after ordination, and lifelong celibacy is the most fitting state for the priesthood. Aside from Christ being celibate, Ashley

¹⁰⁷ Ashley, *Justice in the Church*, 100.

¹⁰⁸ Fulton Sheen, *The Priest is Not His Own*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 60.

recalls the purpose of periodic abstinence for priests in the Old Covenant and compares it to that of the New Covenant:

“The reason for temporary abstinence by the Old Law priests and the permanent abstinence of the New Law priests was the perception that the offering of sacrifice requires a priest to transcend earthly concerns so as to give total attention to heavenly ones.”¹⁰⁹

The priests of the Old Covenant were required to abstain from sexual relations for a time before offering sacrifice, as they recognized this reality. However, with Christ’s command to the twelve at the Last Supper to “Do this in memory of me”, and with perpetual offering of the eternally effective sacrifice, lifelong celibacy would be a logical way of living out the priest’s character.

And, as Ashley states,

“In the New Testament this transcendent attention of the offering priest is eschatological and absolute in a way that was only hinted at in the Old Testament. It demands of the priest who represents Christ, now present at the right hand of the Father, a permanent state of consecration.”¹¹⁰

Again, returning to the idea of the priest standing in the person of Christ, whose celibacy was a sign of the transcendence of His identity as Bridegroom, it is only fitting that the priest be like Christ not only in soul, but in body. The priest’s sacrifice of the natural good of marriage points to Christ’s spiritual marriage with the Church, which births spiritual life within her.

All of this demonstrates that the priesthood is not an achievement won by man, but an identity that is bestowed from above that enables him to be an instrument of grace to the world. Again, this connects back to the original point that the sacramental character of Holy Orders is a share in Christ’s priesthood, stemming from His identity as Bridegroom and Father, and the roles of prophet, king, and soldier that automatically accompany it.

¹⁰⁹ Ashley, *Justice in the Church*, 121.

¹¹⁰ Ashley, *Justice in the Church*, 121.

4b.) The Priest Configured to Christ's Priesthood and the Authoritative Offices of Prophet, Soldier, and King

Throughout the history of the Church, there have been distinctions of office among the leaders of ministry and worship. There have also been several "minor" orders such as porter, acolyte, subdeacon, etc. All of them pertain to the tending of, and worship in the sanctuary. Just as in the Old Covenant, there are "gradations" of responsibility for these orders as they relate to the manner of sacred things. In the modern day, the offices of the diaconate, presbyterate, and episcopate are counted as belonging to the sacrament of Orders, although the roles of acolyte and lector are still present.

What makes these orders grow in significance is in the relationship to the sacrifice of the Mass, and the degree of authority that is bestowed upon them. For example, the Deacon may preach and serve at the altar and perform certain rites such as Baptisms, weddings, and funerals. However, he cannot consecrate the Eucharist and administer the other sacraments such as Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick, as the priest is able to. Similarly, the priest in the presbyterate does not have the fullness of authority and exercise of power as the bishop and is only able to perform certain functions at his permission. Nonetheless, the sacrament of Holy Orders is meant to further integrate a man into Christ, so that those in the fold of the Church may continue to receive the life of God till the end of time. As evidenced by the different orders and their degrees of responsibility, there are degrees of integration into Christ the Head.

First, the order of the diaconate is meant to conform the man to Christ the servant, with a special authority to preach in the liturgy. In the early days of the Church, the Apostles appoint seven men to be deacons to minister to the poor as detailed in the Book of Acts. Though their functions do not directly relate to worship, the Apostles lay their hands on them, an act directly

relating to ordination (Acts 6:1-6). The Catechism states, “The sacrament of Holy Orders...configures them to Christ, who made himself the “deacon” or servant of all.”¹¹¹ This gives them the ability to assist at the altar, be ordinary ministers of the Eucharist, but not offer the sacrifice of the Mass. However, they are particularly authorized to proclaim the Gospel and preach at the liturgy. In this way, they are exercising the role of prophet. This office is by no means absent from the higher orders, but it demonstrates a further solidifying of the Baptismal character, which is a share in Christ’s priesthood. To be God’s messenger is an inherent call for the members of His Body, but in the sacrament of Orders, it takes on a more sacramental meaning, as it takes place in the sacred context of the liturgy, which finds its fullness in the Sacrifice of the Eucharist.

Second is the Order of the Presbyterate, in which the man is truly conformed to Christ’s priesthood. When Jesus tells His disciples to “do this in memory of me” at the Last Supper, He is commanding them to perpetuate this action, which ultimately makes present His sacrifice on the cross. Because the meal is a sacrifice, the men offering it must be priests...hence, the ordination language and imagery during Christ’s High Priestly Prayer. As the Father begets His Son, who is the perfect representation of His Father to creation, so too does Christ beget His priests as for His representatives on earth. Like begets like.

In *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, an apostolic exhortation on the formation of seminarians for the priesthood, Pope St. John Paul II writes, “The priest’s fundamental relationship is to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd. Indeed, the priest participates in a specific and authoritative way in the “consecration/anointing” and in the “mission” of Christ” ...”¹¹² He also states, “Just as Jesus has

¹¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2nd ed, 1570, sborromeo.org.

¹¹² John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), II, §16.

a mission which comes to him directly from God and makes present the very authority of God, so too the apostles have a mission which comes to them from Jesus.”¹¹³ Once more, it is clear that the priesthood is an intimate share in Christ and His mission and one can see that there is a procession, a “handing down” of likeness. When it comes to Christ, He perfectly bears the image of His Father to humanity by becoming incarnate and dying on the cross, making Him the true Mediator between God and man. However, He also gave an intimate share of His power and authority to the twelve men—preaching, leading, healing, and sanctifying by means of sacrifice—which by tradition, did not include His female followers. Returning to the idea of the male Christ as a representation of the Father’s primacy and generativity, so too is the priest an icon of Christ and all that He represents. Priesthood does not solely rest on function but is a bestowed identity which pours out into concrete action.

One of these concrete actions is to be a prophet of God’s word. All the baptized have been commissioned to be prophets, of course, but only those who are ordained have been given an identity—that of Christ’s—can preach the sacred Word in an official manner. The priest possesses all the powers of the deacon and more, including the authority to proclaim the Gospel and preach in the sacred liturgy. This is what his consecration enables him to do, proclaim the Word of God in the context of worship, which ultimately finds its perfection in Christ’s offering. As John Paul II states in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, “[the priest] proclaims the word in his capacity as “minister,” as a sharer in the prophetic authority of Christ and the Church.”¹¹⁴ Ultimately, the priest is conformed to the Logos, whose very self preaches the invisible Father. Therefore, the priest is not only given the ability to proclaim God’s word in the context of corporate worship,

¹¹³ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, II, § 14.

¹¹⁴ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, III, § 26.

but his entire being and way of life is consecrated to proclaim the Gospel. This finds its climax in the celebration of the Mass, which is a sacrifice.

The defining marks of the priesthood from the diaconate is the ability to administer the sacraments of Anointing, Reconciliation, and especially confect the Eucharist. Christ is not being re-sacrificed by the priest, but he is offering to God, on behalf of the people, the once-and-for-all, perfect sacrifice that happened on Calvary; he makes it present down through the ages, that the faithful may truly partake of it. *Inter Insigniores*, addressing the question of women's ordination, states, "the sacrament of the Eucharist is not only a fraternal meal, but at the same time a memorial which makes present and actual Christ's sacrifice and his offering by the Church."¹¹⁵ Citing Aquinas' thoughts on the sacraments, it also states,

"The same natural resemblance is required for persons as for things: when Christ's role in the Eucharist is to be expressed sacramentally, there would not be this "natural resemblance" which must exist between Christ and his minister if the role of Christ were not taken by a man: in such a case it would be difficult to see in the minister the image of Christ. For Christ himself was and remains a man."¹¹⁶

It is simple: because the Eucharist is the risen God-Man who offered His life on the cross as the True High Priest for the forgiveness of sins, it would only be fitting that the ones who make present this sacrifice down through the ages would be able to share in His headship, and therefore, priesthood. Christ's priesthood is defined by His immolation. If the Eucharist was not an act of worship and sacrifice, no priests would be needed. As evidenced in the Old Testament, the fullness of the priesthood lay in the ability to offer atoning sacrifice for the people in the heart of the Temple, the Holy of Holies. The priests of the New Covenant can do this, with the perfect, and eternally effective oblation till the end of time. Without those who can be fitting

¹¹⁵ Declaration *Inter Insigniores* on the Question of Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood (15 October 1976), § 4.

¹¹⁶ *Inter Insigniores*, § 5.

representatives of Christ, who is both Priest and Victim, the Eucharist—which is the offering of Christ’s self and the food of eternal life—cannot be made present. Therefore, the Eucharist is that in which the sacramental priesthood finds its meaning. Holy Orders bestows a man the identity—a configuration to Christ the Head, who is Priest—to act in the Person of Christ, so that the faithful may partake of the food and drink of everlasting life.

Along with the power to confect the Eucharist, the authority to forgive sins is another defining mark of the priesthood, an exercise of the role of spiritual warrior. Reconciliation is another sacrament which specifically makes present the forgiveness won by Christ on the cross, the primary purpose of His sacrifice. This is evident after the Resurrection, when Christ appears to His disciples and says,

“As the Father has sent me, even so I send you...Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (Jn 20: 21-23).

Once more, Jesus employs the parallelism of the mission given Him by the Father, with the mission He gives to the twelve; He is reiterating His intention to give them a share of Himself and His mission, stated in His High Priestly prayer at the Last Supper. Then, in the intimate act of breathing upon them and giving them the Holy Spirit, they receive the power to forgive sins. Nowhere in the scriptures does He do this with any other. In this way, the priest is also exercising the role of spiritual warrior, as he can fight sin and evil with the power of Christ through the sacraments, especially Reconciliation.

The final rank of Holy Orders is the episcopate; those who receive this are called bishops. Thomas Aquinas considers the question on whether there are powers above the presbyterate, naming the two powers of the priest: the principal to confect the Eucharist, and the secondary to help the faithful be able to receive this sacrament. He states,

“As regards to the first act, the priest’s power does not depend on a higher power save God’s; but as to the second, it depends on a higher and that a human power. For every power that cannot exercise its act without certain ordinances, depends on the power that makes those ordinances. Now a priest cannot loose and bind, except we presuppose him to have the jurisdiction of authority, whereby those whom he absolves are subject to him.”¹¹⁷

Aquinas also recalls Aaron’s role in worship in the Old Covenant: being the High Priest, he was able to offer sacrifice, which the lower-ranking priests could also do; however, the latter group could not enter the Holy of Holies, distinguishing a completion of powers from one order to another.¹¹⁸ Because of this, one group has a fullness of powers compared to the one proceeding from it. The High Priest fully exercises headship.

Therefore, it is apparent that in the episcopate, the priest becomes most like Christ; he possesses the fullness of the roles of priest, prophet, soldier, and king. Though jurisdictional authority is not a sacramental power, it nevertheless properly belongs to the episcopate because of the fullness of the office of priesthood. St. Ignatius of Antioch recognizes this supreme authority that the bishop possesses and stresses the importance of the people to be united under the leader of their local Church. He exhorts his audience,

“Yield to [the bishop] all reverence, having respect to the power of God the Father, as I have known even holy presbyters do...but as being themselves prudent in God, submitting to him, or rather not to him, but the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of us all. It is therefore fitting that you should, after no hypocritical fashion, obey [your bishop], in honour of Him who has willed us...since he that does not so deceives not [by such conduct] the bishop that is visible, but seeks to mock Him that is invisible.”¹¹⁹

Once more, the supreme authority of the bishop is compared to God the Father’s. In Chapter 6 of the letter to the Magnesians, Ignatius even states,

¹¹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.40, a.4, newadvent.org.

¹¹⁸ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q.40, a.4, newadvent.org.

¹¹⁹ Ignatius of Antioch, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians*, 3, at New Advent, www.newadvent.org.

“I exhort you to study to do all things with a divine harmony, while your bishop presides in the place of God, and your presbyters in place of the assembly of the apostles...and are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ.”¹²⁰

The likeness to God and particularly His headship and kingship is clearly present in the bishop, as Ignatius reiterates. Therefore, the proper response is submission to the visible head, which is ultimately submission to God and leads to unity in the Church. The kingship serves the purpose of maintaining harmony in the Body of Christ.

Ignatius also strongly implies the role of the bishop as spiritual head, from whom the authorization to worship flows. He writes to the Smyrnaeans,

“Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it...It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to Go, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid.”¹²¹

Without the bishop, the sacraments cannot be celebrated without the risk of invalidity.

Without the bishop, there would be no priests, since he is the one through whom the Lord imparts the power to ordain; since the bishop cannot be in all places at once, he is the one whom Christ uses as the visible, prime source of life in the Church, to impart a share of the identity he finds in Christ to worthy and fitting candidates. In this way, the bishop truly possesses the fullness of the roles of bridegroom, father, priest, prophet, king, and soldier, since he spiritually begets those who, to a lesser degree, shares in those identities.

With this in mind, one must know that the sacramental character of the episcopate is unique, even from the diaconate and the presbyterate. The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church makes this clear:

“It is clear that, by means of the imposition of hands and the words of consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is so conferred, and the sacred character so impressed, that bishops in an eminent and visible way sustain the roles of

¹²⁰ Ignatius of Antioch, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians*, 3.

¹²¹ Ignatius of Antioch, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, 8, at New Advent, www.newadvent.org.

Christ Himself as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest, and that they act in His person.”¹²²

This High Priesthood is one that is not conferred to the orders of the Diaconate and Presbyterate, and is made manifest in the unique powers that the bishop is able to exercise: that of teaching and governing, “which, however, of its very nature, can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college.”¹²³ In other words, the bishop possesses powers that are meant to be exercised in union with the community of the apostles’ successors.

4c.) Permanency of Priestly Character

Lastly, one must consider the indelibility of this mark of Holy Orders. Ultimately, these three sacraments conferring indelible character are about grafting one to Christ; it identifies the person with Himself, to participate in the life of grace. Because Christ lives forever, it would make sense that the sacramental character—which as stated, is an identification with Christ—is forever imprinted in the souls of the faithful, regardless of the sin they incur throughout life. As for the priest, whose main function is to forgive sins and offer the once and for all sacrifice on earth, one must wonder how his priesthood plays out in the true, Heavenly banquet. Christ dies no more, yet still bears the wounds of His offering to the Father. Regardless, a man is “a priest forever” because of this intimate likeness to Christ the Head that he has received.

The main theme in the sacrament of Holy Orders is the passing on the likeness of Christ, which starts with the very basic nature of masculinity. While women are equally made in the image and likeness of God, and reflect Him in various ways with their

¹²² Dogmatic Constitution of the Church *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), § 21.

¹²³ *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), § 21.

femininity, man does this in a way that correlates to the identity of God as Father, who is the prime, unbegotten source of all that is. The Son, especially becoming incarnate as a male, perfectly communicates this, and as he imparts His mission to His twelve disciples. This mission is not merely an authorization to do certain tasks but is based on a bestowed identity, beginning with one's nature which begins to be perfected by grace. Therefore, this returns to the original point that ultimately, the sacramental character of Holy Orders is an eternal identification in Christ the priest who lives forever, with the accompanying roles of King, Prophet, Spiritual Warrior, and ultimately Bridegroom and image of the Father.

Conclusion

The sacraments of character—Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders—do more than dispense grace and enable one to participate in the life of the Church. They clothe the person with Christ, grafting one into His Body, identifying them with Him. The things of nature are sanctified in the sacraments and become touchpoints to the divine for humans. In Holy Orders, the male person becomes a living sign of Christ, who is the true image of the Father. As the Father is the true, primal source of all things, and as Christ is the New Adam and Head of the redeemed race, representing the Father to mankind and vice versa, so too does the priest represent Christ and shares in His priesthood.

The natural state of masculinity represents something of God. As discussed, it is an image of the Father's identity as supreme source of all creation. From the dawn of time, it seemed to be second nature for those of the Abrahamic covenant to only have men as priests. As a patriarchal society, this meant that fathers had a significant role in the culture as leaders and heads. Of course, there have been women who held positions of

power in the Old Covenant, but none have been granted the office of priesthood. The fact too, that priesthood was restricted to men of a particular tribe demonstrated the concept of truly being set apart. This conveyed the closeness the priest inherently possesses to God, since he is after all, he is meant to act as His representative to the people and vice versa...again, this is because the priest's masculinity images the ultimate prime source of life, and headship.

In the fullness of the covenant, Christ is the True High Priest, fulfilling all that the Old Covenant priests were hoping to achieve: reconciliation with God. By being incarnate as a human male, His voluntary death on the cross demonstrates His roles as sacrificial victim and priest. In this, also come the fullness of the roles of bridegroom, father, prophet, warrior, and king. All of these are put into action during His entire 33 years on earth, unlike any ordinary priest. For in the act of becoming one with humanity in the Incarnation, He took Adam's primordial identities of Bridegroom and Father and elevated and perfected them. He was and is the true Prophet, not only in proclaiming the message of salvation, but by ultimately being the Word of the Father; He was and is the perfection of the spiritual soldier and priest, waging war against evil in His ministry of healing, but ultimately vanquishing sin and death in His crucifixion; and in the display of His power, especially at His Resurrection, He proves His divine kingship over the entire created order. By His initiative in His Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection, and bringing eternal life to humanity as a result, He truly exercises the headship of a bridegroom and prime life source of a Father: that roles which undergird the identity and function of priest.

This covenant established by the Blood of Christ is eternal, and everything that the priests of the Old Covenant attempted to establish with their rules and regulations. To make the graces of this one-time event accessible down through the ages, Christ at His Last Supper, willed that His Sacrifice may be made present and memorialized down through the ages. Knowing that He would not be locally present at all places and all times, He willed that there would be those who bear His likeness to make His grace and presence available to all. Holy Orders makes a man more like Christ, by the grafting him to His headship, who is Bridegroom and image of the Father to the Church. The “passing on” of this office of priesthood is an identity with Christ the Priest. The natural state of masculinity then becomes a sign of Christ who became man to be the head of the redeemed, which dispenses grace both for the priest and for the Church. Of course, the sacrament is defined by the sacrifice of the Mass and the forgiveness of sin through reconciliation, but firstly because the priest has become one with Christ as Head of His Body.

It is the priest’s identity—the image of Christ, who is the image of the Father—which enables Him to perform acts of worship, particularly the Sacrifice of the Mass. By being conformed to the Son, he can be a channel of His redemptive work and His presence to the world: serving, healing, and offering the once-and-for-all Sacrifice and making such a banquet present for all down through the ages. One cannot give what he does not possess. One cannot be fruitful in grace if one does not take on His likeness. This likeness is bestowed to everyone first in Baptism and sealed in Confirmation. Then, for men who receive the call and are deemed worthy, they receive a particular likeness to Christ who leads and sanctifies His Body the Church.

The sacrament of Holy Orders—as is with all the sacraments—is a gift to be received, not an achievement to be grasped by man. A man might take the necessary leaps and bounds to become a priest, but the Church ultimately determines his fittingness for the sacrament. It is then understandable that the priesthood of the Old Covenant was based solely on tribal affiliation and bloodline, because there needed to be a way to convey the concepts of likeness and being set apart for God, something that is not achieved by action. It is Christ begetting spiritual sons who image Him to bring forth new life in His Bride, just as the Father eternally generates Him and sent Him to the world to bring all to eternal life. To be a son is to receive, and derive his identity from his source, his father; to unite with and pour oneself out for the life of the other, is to be both bridegroom and father, which is reflecting the source of his being.¹²⁴ Because the priest receives this fashioning from God through the bishop, he must first come to hear the Father say to him, “You are my son; today I have begotten you” (Ps 2:7), which extends all the way back to his Baptism. Then, accepting this identity born from love, he can be an effective instrument of transmitting the life he has received.

¹²⁴ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: a Story of Homecoming*, (1st Image books edition. New York: Doubleday 1993), 131.

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