

## THE WORK OF THE LORD:

### THE SALVATION

#### CHAPTER EIGHT

#### THE THREEFOLD OFFICE OF THE LORD

The Work which God the Father gave to His Incarnated Son “*to do,*” is undivided in its nature and frees us “... from the authority of darkness and transfers us to His Kingdom...” and “...from death to Life...” granting us “...Salvation and the forgiveness of our sins through His Blood.” In this united Work of Salvation, the Lord “fulfilled” for us “... Wisdom from God, Justice and Sanctification and Deliverance.”<sup>1</sup> He Enlightened the human mind, which was darkened by the sinful passions. He achieved through His Sacrifice, the expiation of man’s justification by yielding all sinful power to man’s will through the Grace of God, which supports, strengthens and Sanctifies man’s will. The threefold Office of the Lord as Prophet, Archpriest and King are manifested in Holy Scripture. In the New Testament especially, the Lord appears to consolidate these Offices within Himself, whereas in the Old Testament they appear under shadowy Prototypes, being allocated to different Holy People.

This threefold Office of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, consists of three inseparable elements united into one. It manifests the Unique and Indivisible Work of our one Saviour. It would be erroneous to think that our Lord received them separately, one after another and not simultaneously. We can say that the Lord exercised the Offices of Prophet and High Priest during His humble Appearance and the Royal Office in His Glory as the Risen and Ascended Christ but He is forever the Eternal Archpriest Who intercedes for us.<sup>2</sup>

We must also never forget that the separate examination of each Office is for practical purposes only because the Work of Salvation is always undivided. In reality and Truth, these three Offices of our Lord Jesus Christ are unbreakably integrated and perfect. It is impossible to exclude or to separate them without damaging the Holy Gospel and the entire Work of Salvation. Therefore, we can understand the impossibility of considering which of the three Offices is more important, since all are united in the one Person of the Saviour and His Work of Salvation. Under the presupposition of their undivided unity and their ultimate purpose of restoration of the relationship between mankind and God, as a necessity for the expiatory Sacrifice of the Lord, the Office of the High Priest appears as being central to the unification of the two other Offices.

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<sup>1</sup> John 1:4. Col. 1:13. 1 John 3:14. Ephes. 1:7. 1 Corinth. 1:30

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 142-144. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 156-157.

## 1. The Holy Fathers Who Discerned the Three Offices of Christ

The discernment of the three Offices of Christ was **literally made** by Eusebios of Caesarea who observed that in the past none of the anointed **Priests, Kings or Prophets** received “...*such power of virtue as the Saviour and Lord.*” The Lord did not receive “...*symbols and types of the Archpriesthood...*” **from another person.** **Neither was** He from the line of “Archpriests,” **promoted** “...*to King...*” **nor** made “...*Prophet as the ones in the past.*” “He was **Anointed not by men but by the Father...**” “...*not with man-made myrrh but with the Father’s Divine Intellect and Divinity...*” **Thus** He surpassed all **other** anointed ones who **had been** anointed with material and symbolic myrrh. “... *He was called Christ above all those...*” “...*Being the only True Christ...*” **He is** “...*the only Archpriest of all and the only King of all Creation...*” **as well as being** “...*the only Arch-prophet of the Father amongst all Prophets.*”<sup>3</sup>

St Cyril of Jerusalem exalted the Archpriesthood of Christ, characterising it **as being** inviolable, without beginning and Eternal. He **proclaimed** the Lord as the “*Pre-appointed*” and as the Anointed, not “...*with man-made oil but before all time by the Father and so much different from the others, being Priest by an Oath.*” St Cyril also **commented on** the Office of the Lord’s Royalty **by pointing out that** “...*men remain without communion of the king’s name, but Jesus Christ the Son of God honoured us to be called Christians.*” He also **spoke of** Christ Who came “...*in order that the Father be known...*” because He “...*sees Him as He is...*” and reveals the Father **to humanity.** Comparing Him to “...*the many who are called anointed ones (christs)...*” he observed that “...*they were typical anointed (christs)...*” whereas the Lord was “...*the True Anointed Christ Who was raised to the Priesthood not by men but had the Office of Priesthood from His Father from all Eternity.*”<sup>4</sup>

St John Chrysostom continuously distinguished the three Offices of the Lord. Concerning the Royal Office he said that the Lord “...*was always a King...*” referring to His Divine Person as the Word through Whom God made everything. Concerning the Office of Archpriest he observed that “...*He became Priest when He took up flesh, when He offered the Sacrifice.*” Exalting the Majesty of the Raised Lord, he **remarked:** “*If He is a Great God, He is a Great Lord, Great and as King. Great King upon all the earth ... Great Prophet, Great Priest, Great Light, in everything Great ... Great King, Great Prophet; for when Jesus was performing the Miracles, the crowds were saying that a Great Prophet is amongst us ... thus again a Great Priest ... Wherefrom this? St Paul says: We have an Archpriest Who surpassed the Heavens.*” According **to Jewish** belief, these three Offices belonged not to one but to different Tribes and consequently it was impossible **for all three Offices** to be found in one and the same Person. “*Because, he says, the Apostles were preaching the Saviour and King and Priest and Prophet, the Jews disputed according to the Law. For they were saying, the Kingship is for another Tribe and the Priesthood for another. The Tribe of Levite was for the Priesthood and that of Judah for the Kingship. If the Christ is King, He is not Priest; if Priest, He is no more King.*” The Christ was not raised

<sup>3</sup> Eusebios, *Church History*, I, 3 and 11, in Migne, P.G., 20, 72 and 73. Ibid, in Migne, P.G., 22, 296.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 3:20. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, X, § 14; 6, § 4 and 11, § 1, in Migne, P.G., 33, 680, 556 and 692.

according to the Leviticus Priesthood **nor** according to the Order of Aaron but according to the Order of Melchisedek.<sup>5</sup>

St Augustine referred to the Priesthood of Christ **as being** according to the Order of Melchisedek **as well as ascribing** the name of “*Angel (Messenger) of the Almighty Lord*” to Jesus Christ Who **assumed** the form of a servant and announced the Gospel to men.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Holy Scripture References to the Lord’s threefold Office

**One can observe from** Holy Scripture’s **reference to** the threefold Office of Christ that our Lord and **Saviour spoke** directly **of** Himself as a Prophet. He referred to the unfavourable welcome by His own countrymen in the village of Nazareth **when** He said **that** “...*no Prophet is welcomed in his own country and home...*”<sup>7</sup> **and in** Jerusalem He **remarked that** “...*no Prophet was killed outside of Jerusalem.*”<sup>8</sup> **Likewise** when Christ accepted the title of “*Teacher.*” The Lord accepted **being** called “*Christ*” or “*Messiah*” as King, Whom the Prophets proclaimed to the people of Israel and to Whom the Lord God **would** give “...*the throne of David His father...*”<sup>9</sup> to rule “...*upon the house of Jacob.*”<sup>10</sup> The Archangel Gabriel announced **this** good news **as well** to the Ever-Virgin Mary, the Theotokos.<sup>11</sup> The Office of Archpriest is exalted especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which Christ is called “*great archpriest*” “...*Who has surpassed the heavens...*” and as the “...*eternal priest...*” **He has His Priesthood** “...*according to the order of Melchisedek.*”<sup>12</sup> In addition to the above, the Holy Apostles called Christ “*Prophet,*” referring to the prophetic words of Moses according to which “...*the Lord will raise a Prophet like me.*”<sup>13</sup>

In the Old Testament the three Offices are found under a shadowy meaning and as a type which prefigures the future reality in the Christ. Although the three Offices, as types of the future event, **were used** in the old *Economia* (Old Testament), it was prohibited to gather them in one person, as in the case found in 2 Chronicles 26:18. Although King David is anointed as King and was at the same time a Prophet, he was not anointed as a Prophet. He was prohibited **from building** a temple to the Most High and thus he remained alienated to all priestly services. King Ozias was punished with leprosy because he dared to claim the priestly service.

These three Offices are united inseparably and eternally in the one Person **and** were the ideal of the old *Economia*, according to which the people of Israel were awaiting the perfect Prophet (the Messiah) Who would bring back the glorious and

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<sup>5</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *To Hebrew*, 13, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 63, 103. Ibid, *To the Lord’s Ascension*, § 16, in Migne, *P.G.*, 52, 790. Ibid, *That one is the lawgiver of the Old and New Testament*, § 5, in Migne, 56, 405. Cf. Trempelas, *The laymen in the Church. “The Royal priesthood”*, Athens, 1976.

<sup>6</sup> St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XVIII, c. 35, in Migne, *P.L.*, 41, 594.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 13:57. Act 3:22; 7:37.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 13:33.

<sup>9</sup> Luke 1:32.

<sup>10</sup> Heb. 7:17-25.

<sup>11</sup> Luke

<sup>12</sup> Heb. 5:6.

<sup>13</sup> Deut. 18:15.

eternal kingship of David and **Who would** have the spotless, eternal and without successor Priesthood according to the order of Melchisedek.<sup>14</sup>

This ideal described in the Old Testament is realised only in the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, because He is the only God-Man Who, as the Word of God, took up human nature and was anointed by God the Father, not with material **or** manmade oil, but with the Holy Spirit,<sup>15</sup> to be the High Prophet and Teacher, the only great and without successor Archpriest and the eternal King within His Church. These three Offices in the Christ exist simultaneously. It would be **erroneous** to believe that Christ received them separately, first as Prophet, then as Archpriest and finally as King.

### 3. The Inseparability and Unbreakability of the threefold Office

As mentioned above, the threefold Offices of Christ are examined separately for practical reasons only, but in reality they are inseparably united. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, teaching as Prophet and giving His Laws, **simultaneously** manifested His Kingship by performing the miracles **as** He taught. While hanging on the Cross He offered as Archpriest the unique Sacrifice for the Salvation of the world. He **even taught** as He **stood** before Pontius Pilate that He “...bears witness to the truth...” as Prophet and accepted the title of King **Whose** “...Kingdom is not from this world.”<sup>16</sup>

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was anointed to the threefold Office from the time of His Incarnation. These three Offices are related to one another. In the Orthodox Christology it is mentioned that they are two conditions, that of “*humility*” or “*emptiness*” (“*inanitio*”) and that of “*exaltation*” or “*glorification*” (“*exaltatio*” or “*glorificatio*”). The Offices of Christ, being Prophet and Archpriest, were **mainly evident** during the period of the Lord’s humility, whereas the Office of King was manifested at the time of His Glory (Crucifixion-Resurrection-Ascension-**Enthronement** on the Right Hand of the Father). This differentiation is not exact, because of the unity of the three Offices. For even after the Resurrection and the Enthronement on the Right Hand of the Father, which includes the condition of the Lord’s Glory, He still intercedes for us. During the period of His **humility**, (the period from Bethlehem to Golgotha), the Lord exercised His Royal Authority by giving the New Law, choosing His Disciples and preparing them to continue His work. It is obvious that in the beginning He appeared as a Prophet teaching in the Synagogues and whenever He had the opportunity, whereas the performance of miracles were performed by His Authority and Power as King.

These three Offices are inseparably united in the God-man and fully express the range of the work of the Salvation. It is impossible that one of them **could** be **omitted** or extracted from the other two. **Those** who accept only one or two of the three Offices **in Christ** and exclude the other two, or even the third, **are dividing** the Gospel of Salvation. In other words, **by stressing** only the Office of Christ as a Prophet, putting aside the other two, one is led to Rationalism. Jesus, then, is nothing

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<sup>14</sup> 2 Chron. 26:21. Psalm 109 (110).

<sup>15</sup> John 3:34.

<sup>16</sup> Androutsos, *Dogmatique*, p. 196. John 18:36, 37.

more than a great teacher and founder of a religion. If one emphasises the Office of High Priest, disregarding the other two, then one falls into an ill mysticism. If one puts aside the other two and stresses the Office of King, then one is led to heresy. Only in the unity of these three Offices can we confess Jesus Christ Who was born to us as “*Wisdom from God*” that He is the High Prophet, as the only “*Just*” He is the High Archpriest and as our “*Sanctification*” He is our High King Who crushes all adverse powers within us and assures us our “*deliverance*” through these three Offices. Only then we glorify Him as the “*faithful Witness*” and as the “*Ruler of the kings of the earth*” and as the One Who “*...has set us free from our sins through His own Blood.*”<sup>17</sup>

Through the inseparable unity of the three Offices, the work of Salvation is fulfilled. They completely enter into the depths of human nature by freeing the human mind from all darkness through the Truth that is spoken by the Lord being the High Prophet. Through the expiation (“*catharsis*”) of the human heart in the bath of the precious Blood of the High Priest, the human will is encouraged to reach the royal heights by participating in the triumph of the Eternal King.

It is now natural to raise the question: “*Which of these three Offices of the Lord is the most important and essential in the work of deliverance and Salvation?*” It is obvious that these three are united to one another in such a way that if we emphasise one of them, disregarding the others, then we are misled. Jesus Christ is the One Lord and Saviour, the Son of God. He is the one true Sun of Righteousness, Who sends forth His boundless, and infinite Grace and Gifts to the world upon which the work of deliverance is based. We will not be wrong if we say that the centre that unites the other two Offices is that of the Archpriest, through which the friendship and restoration of man with God was accomplished. Through the Sacrifice on the Cross that was offered by the Archpriest Christ came forth the Grace that Enlightens and Sanctifies all faithful.

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<sup>17</sup> 1 Corinth. 1:30. Rev. 1:5.