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A Divine Community of Priests and Prophets: The Priesthood and Prophethood of All Believers Motifs Considered through Incorporated Trinitarianism

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A Holy Community of Priests and Prophets
The Priesthood and Prophethood of All Believers Motifs Considered through Incorporated Trinitarianism

by

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Abstract

The “priesthood and prophethood of all believers” motifs are two theological perspectives which consider the function of all persons who make up the body of Christ to be as priests and prophets alongside their other callings. Historically though, proponents of the two motifs have neglected to interact them with one another; the priesthood motif simply casts Christians as priests and the prophethood motif depicts them solely as prophets. The perspectives have been siloed from one another, preventing a fuller understanding of both Christian identity and roles within the body of Christ. This thesis attempts to show how the two motifs can be harmonized with one another for mutual enrichment through “incorporated Trinitarianism,” a theme advanced by Sarah Coakley; it also hopes to show how modern-day Christians may readily understand themselves as participating in the divine life through their daily service to humanity as priests and prophets.
Introduction

At the time of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther was embroiled in a variety of heated battles which drew Luther into fighting for what he felt was just for Christians within the faith. One such matter Luther pursued was the disparity between laity and priests. Early in his lifetime, there was a two-tiered conception of laity and priests in the Catholic Church: priests were considered as part of the “sacred” tier while the non-priestly laity were considered part of the “secular” tier. To Luther, the two-tiered class (or “estate”) system of dividing people into groups of sacred and secular based on their professions had to be abolished. Luther proposed instead that all Christian persons, laity and priests, ought to be brought under a single banner, a single estate which he called the “Christian estate.” By arguing for the single Christian estate, Luther was saying all Christians are of the same worth and so are priests as members of the body of Christ. By this Luther in essence developed the “priesthood of all believers” motif which empowered Christians to serve one another and the world as priests alongside their everyday vocations.

In 2003, a biblical scholar named Roger Stronstad published a work called The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke’s Charismatic Theology, in which he proposed that the primary role of Christians is not necessarily as priests but rather as prophets. Stronstad argues through his exegesis of Luke and Acts that the primary vocation of Jesus is as prophet, and
the same Holy Spirit which empowered Jesus to be the prophet *par excellence* is the Spirit given to the disciples at Pentecost to empower them to be prophets to the Church and the world. Thus, Stronstad concludes Christians are to be prophets who are Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, and Spirit-empowered in their ministry and service to the Church and world.

Both the priesthood and prophethood motifs provide excellent perspectives on Christian identity and discipleship through the development of the shape of God’s involvement in the world, particularly in the manifestation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit among God’s people. Yet, both perspectives lack a robust description of Christian identity and discipleship as they both neglect to reference the other. The identity of a Christian is both as priest *and* prophet just as much as the goal of discipleship is directed to the divine as to the human. Although difficult and tension-laden, the task of harmonizing these two perspectives is possible.

The motifs may be harmonized if they together are viewed through another lens besides historical excavation or scriptural exegesis. Sarah Coakley has written extensively on the nature of the Trinity and has come to a perspective which she calls “incorporative Trinitarianism.” When the themes of the priesthood and prophethood of all believers are considered through incorporative Trinitarianism, not only can the motifs be harmonized, but the differences become mutually enriching distinctives for Christian identity.
formation and discipleship. From this interplay of themes, implications and applications may be drawn for modern-day Christians.

Thus, in order to gain a fuller picture of the roles of priests and prophets, this thesis will attempt (1) to explore the roles and functions of priests and prophets in the Israelite religion, so that (2) the priesthood and prophethood motifs can be fleshed-out and readily understood, in order (3) to show how they may be mutually enriching when viewed through incorporative Trinitarianism, to the end (4) applying the unified perspective of the motifs in the lives of modern-day Christian prophets and priests.

Chapter One will explore the priesthood in the Israelite religion, looking at its function in the Israelite culture and its formation throughout history. Exploration of the Israelite priesthood will give context to the development of the priesthood of all believers motif through Martin Luther.

Chapter Two will look at the role of prophets in the Israelite religion, focusing on the ways in which prophets were just as vital to the faith as priests by exploring their unique functions within the religion. This review will assist with a deeper understanding of prophets and thus the development of the prophethood of all believers motif. By the end of Chapter Two, it will be demonstrated that the two motifs have neglected each other in their development over the years.

Chapter Three will begin by examining the motifs side-by-side so as to identify their similarities and differences. Having the motifs more fully
represented by this point will allow the chapter to employ the incorporated Trinitaranism perspective in an attempt to harmonize and ultimately understand the motifs together so they may be mutually enriching for the present. Multiple applications will be identified for the modern-day believer, including how Christians may see themselves acting as both priests and prophets to the Church and the world.
Chapter 1
Israelite Priests and the Priesthood of All Believers

The language of prophets and priests in the Israelite and Christian traditions is difficult to pin-down; the roles of both are even harder to define. But does that mean an effort should not be made to talk about and describe them in detail prior to launching into a modern-day application of either? For instance, Roger Stronstad’s work, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke’s Charismatic Theology,*¹ can be critiqued in that it insufficiently explores the role of the Israelite prophet prior to applying prophetic functions to modern-day Christian believers. Further, there is no mention of the “priesthood of all believers” motif (which Stronstad clearly plays off of when titling his work) which would then necessitate an examination into the role and function of the priest in Israelite religion as well. Thus, for one to appreciate fully such work as Stronstad’s regarding a proposed “prophethood of all believers” motif, a review of the aforementioned is necessary. Further, in order to see how a prophethood may come alongside a priesthood, the prophethood motif must be made more available to believers so its complementary contribution next to the priesthood motif may be properly considered. A general history of the roles of priests and prophets in Israelite religion can act as pivot points when it comes time to look into a Trinitarian

theology that can fuse the models together in symbiotic harmony for the modern-day Christian.

In this chapter, an overview of the roles and functions of priests in the cultic Israelite priesthood will first be undertaken. A basic working idea of the Israelite priesthood is necessary to understand the priesthood of all believers motif, which will also be considered in this chapter. The conclusions derived about priests at the end of this chapter will help flesh-out a natural connection between prophets and priests; it will also help define a line of exploration which will show the unique roles and functions of prophets in the Israelite and Christian faiths.

I. Israelite Priests

Functions

It would be prudent to begin this section with a more in-depth description of how a review of Israelite priests will assist with a deeper understanding of the prophethood of all believers. The key is drawing connections between Israelite prophets and priests so one can better understand Christian prophets and priests and therefore integrate these perspectives. Within the Old Testament, priests and prophets are depicted as interrelated in their roles. For instance, priests and prophets both performed oracular functions, using divination and/or direct revelation to communicate...
God’s will. They also performed instructional functions, teaching *torah* and passing judgment according to God’s laws and ordinances. Further, if we compare the role of priest proposed by Aelred Cody (“a [person] set apart for functions which entailed more immediate access to God’s presence”) and the role of prophet as outlined by David Noel Freedman and Mark Allan Powell (“A person who serves as a channel of communication and carries messages back and forth between human beings and God”), then one can see that both priests and prophets were called to serve as intermediaries between Israelites and God in unique yet overlapping ways. Thus, an elaboration of the roles and functions of priests will help draw out both the unique and overlapping ways priests and prophets have functioned in historic Israelite religion and the possibilities for their contemporary expression within Christianity.

Although some priestly duties are specific to developmental periods which will be discussed later, the function of the priest within the overall Israelite priesthood can be reviewed in the following five functions: (1) cultic, (2) oracular, (3) therapeutic, (4) instructional and juridical, and (5) administrative and political. A brief review of these functions will facilitate an elaboration of the role of priests in the Israelite priesthood.

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3 Ibid., 1083.
The cultic functions of Israelite priests primarily surrounded the officiating of the public sacrifice for worship, which included preparation of the sacrificial materials and animals as well as inspecting their fittingness for specific rites. This function was chief among the various tasks the priests performed, making the need for preciseness imperative regarding materials/animals, vestments, and ritualistic actions. Most priests were allowed to perform these sacrificial functions, but in the post-exilic period, only the high priest was entrusted to perform the sin offering. In Ezekiel 44:15-16, the tribe of Levi is encouraged to “come near to [YHWH] to minister to [YHWH]: and they shall attend [YHWH] to offer [YHWH] the fat and the blood, says the Lord God. It is they who shall enter [YHWH’s] sanctuary, it is they who shall approach [YHWH’s] table, to minister to [YHWH], and they shall keep [YHWH’s] charge.”

The oracular functions of Israelite priests primarily entailed the “consultation of the sacred lots Urim and Thummim (Num. 27:21), used in cases of difficult decisions.” The Urim and Thummim gave “yes/no” binary decisions (e.g., innocence or guilt of an adulteress, whether Saul should be king, and so on) as well as more complex answers (e.g., the allocation of the

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7 Powell, Harper, 829.
8 Ibid.
9 All Scripture herein taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.
10 Freedman, Eerdmans, 1082.
11 Num 5:11-31 and 1 Sam 10:20-21, respectively.
12 “Some think the [Urim and Thummim can] give only yes or no answers, but there may have been various configurations of their falling (we do not know their shape or their number) or there could have been multiple castings, and so they might have given a more complex answer. The fact that both words are in the plural would indicate that,” (Freedman, Eerdmans, 1082).
Promised Land among the Israelites). The casting of lots was usually mentioned in connection with the ephod, a finely embroidered vestment (worn by the priests) with a pouch in which the Urim and Thummim were kept. Although the casting of lots was thought to only be common in ancient Israel, the practice appears to have continued into the post-exilic period, as noted in Nehemiah 10:34-35.

The therapeutic functions, as noted in Leviticus 13-15, called Israelite priests to play a quasi-medical role regarding the identification and healing of particular diseases (predominately diseases of the skin). As disease caused impurity for sick persons as well as anything they came into contact with, purification rites were required to be performed by the priests. Purification rites included “waiting a specific amount of time, bathing, washing one’s clothes, being sprinkled with water by the priest, and bringing a sacrifice from which the priest could sprinkle the blood on one’s behalf.”

The instructional and juridical functions of Israelite priests regarded the expectation to teach torah, the laws and ordinances of God, to the Israelite people. The teaching office was “a role shared with the prophet (Isa. 28:9, Mic. 3:11)” and required priests to serve as judges in Jerusalem.

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13 Josh 14:1-2.
15 Freedman, Eerdmans, 1083.
16 Disease of a person is not the only way impurity was spread among Israelites. One may also become impure by coming in “contact with the dead (Num 19:11-19), emissions (Lev 15), the carcass of an unclean animal (Lev 11:24-40, even contact with the red heifer, the means by which impurity of the dead was removed (Num 19:1-10).” Powell, Harper, 829.
17 Powell, Harper, 829.
18 Freedman, Eerdmans, 1083.
Finally, the administrative and political functions of Israelite priests must be identified separately. The administrative functions refer to the “management of the Temple, which involved accounting, assessing the value of donations in various forms, maintaining the Temple plant, and carrying out periodic inspections and purifications.”\textsuperscript{19} The political functions refer to the anointing of a king, sacerdotal tasks/ceremonies with the king, and advisory roles.\textsuperscript{20}

Although many more tasks could be identified, listed, and categorized, this basic understanding of the Israelite priesthood is helpful for further examination of the priesthood’s growth and development throughout history. It should also be noted that although there is a “cultic” category, all the functions performed in the priestly role are from \textit{within} the official cultic Israelite religion. Apart from their official position within the cult, a priest could not rightly be understood as one who ritually mediates between humans and God. Thus, priestly functions should, as a rule, be understood as taking place within the religious cult.

\textit{Developmental History}

The examination of the growth and development of the priesthood within the official religious cult in history is necessary to understand the landscape in which priests performed their functions. Through this review, the

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Freedman, \textit{Eerdmans}, 1083.
functions of priests can be contextualized and so be better understood. But, this review will also show how the state of the lay-person has also shifted throughout history. This endeavor may help clarify some of the reasons for how the priesthood of all believers took shape in the Christian faith.

The Israelite priesthood went through many stages of historical development which can be divided into four distinct periods for review: (1) a primitive period or “period of the ancestors” (ca. 2000-1700 BCE) during which there was no official priesthood and any Hebrew person (likely, the head of a household) could perform sacrifices at various holy places,\(^21\) (2) a deuteronomistic period (early 12\textsuperscript{th} century) when ordinary Israelites could still sacrifice at altars or high places but only members of the tribe of Levi could serve as the priests in the temples or “houses of God,”\(^22\) (3) a transitory period in which Zadokites\(^23\) were favored to restore the priesthood to all its glory in the Second Temple during the Babylonian exile (587 BCE),\(^24\) and (4) a post-exilic or Hellenistic period (ca. 333 BCE-70 CE) in which the priesthood dominated the nation, becoming an exclusive office for Zadokites and other supposed descendants of Aaron, thereby excluding ordinary Israelites from the priestly function.

\(^{23}\) The Zadokites were priestly descendants of the priest Zadok, King Solomon’s priest (1 Kgs 2:35, 4:4).
\(^{24}\) Powell, Harper, 828.
The primitive period is unique in that any Hebrew (pre-Israelite) person could perform a sacrifice at any holy place as a way of worshipping and mediating their relationship with God.25 There does not appear to have been any widespread regulations for the Hebrew people mandating the way to perform the sacrifice. The only groups that had established priests and ritualistic regulations were “nations which were not nomadic and had fixed sanctuaries.”26 As the Hebrew people were being rescued and led to the Promised Land, major changes were taking place in their religious structures, indicating a shift in the Hebraic religion. As the Hebrews became a more established nation, they began to set apart other Hebrews to be priests and play the role that during this primitive period any Israelite could play on his own behalf. This development is the beginning of two distinct groups that we would call today the clergy and the laity.

The prime example of this setting apart – and also the event that seems to have originated the Hebraic priesthood27 – is the consecration (“making holy”) of Aaron and his sons at Mount Sinai as depicted in Exodus 28-29. In this passage, God instructs Moses to bring Aaron and his sons to Mount Sinai as they have been chosen to serve God as priests (28:1). The act by which Aaron and his sons are literally made holy for the priesthood is by having sacred vestments prepared for them and placed on them (28:2-5). The establishment

of Aaron and his sons as the first Hebraic/Israelite priests did not immediately change the ability of non-priestly Hebrews to sacrifice, but this event inaugurated a special class who “came to preside over the increasingly complex rituals that [the Israelite] religion entailed.”

The deuteronomic period came after the primitive period and is the time after the settlement in the land of Canaan. During this time, ordinary Israelites could still sacrifice at altars (Judg. 13:19-20) and high places (1 Kings 3:3-4) but only priests of Levitical lineage were allowed to perform “rites” in the established temples. The three-fold “rites” reserved for the Levitical priests during this period tie back to Moses’ blessing of Levi in Deuteronomy 33:8-10. According to G.W. Anderson, Moses’ blessing and its interpretation are: 1) “Give to Levi your Thummim, and your Urim to your loyal one,” which means “the priest ascertains the divine will by the manipulation of the sacred dice, the Urim and Thummim,” 2) “teach Jacob your ordinances, and Israel your law,” which refers to “the teaching of the office of the priesthood,” and 3) “place incense before you, and whole burnt-offerings on your altar,” which describes “the priestly service of God at the altar.” Thus, during the deuteronomic period and with the establishment of temples, the distinction between priests and non-priests (lay-persons) became more defined as only (Levitical) priests could (in the temple) could discern God’s will via the

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29 Those of “Levitical lineage” are descendants from the Levi tribe.
30 Powell, Harper, 828.
sacred oracular dice/lots, teach ordinances and law (or, the *torah*), and burn incense or offer sacrifices on the altar. With the establishment of temples and exclusive priestly rites, the privilege of the laity to mediate between themselves and God was starting to be consolidated to priests. The three rites described above empowered learned men (priests) to mediate and preach God’s word and required Israelites to defer to them in their worship of God.

The transitory period came when King Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem and forced the Israelite people to be exiled to his homeland, Babylonia. During this time, the Israelites longed for their own home but were encouraged by the prophet Jeremiah to go on living their lives in Babylonia and contribute to the city for “in its welfare, you will find your welfare.” Thus, the building of a Second Temple was of primary importance for Israelites to be integrated into Babylonia as they would return to living lives of worship before God as they did in their homeland and would also enable priests to return to their duty.

A significant text which assists in describing priestly relations during the Babylonian exile is Ezekiel 40-48. Within these chapters, we are faced with a new division developed between priests, what scholar Hartmut Gese calls the “Zadokite Stratum.” The Zadokite Stratum perpetuates continued

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32 King Nebuchadnezzar (KN) took King Jehoiachin (KJ) of Judah into exile, then, put KJ’s uncle, Zedekiah, into power as the governor of Jerusalem. “When Zedekiah rebelled, [KN] laid siege to the city, destroyed the temple, and carried the remnant of the population off to exile in Babylonia (2 Kings 24:10-25:21)” (Powell, *Harper*, 76).

33 Jer 29:7.

34 “It has been increasingly recognized in recent study that the material in chapters 40-48 of the Book of Ezekiel was not all written at the same time; Hartmut Gese’s thorough investigation of...
differentiations from the deuteronomistic period but primarily focuses on the
differences and rankings between Levites, Levitical priests, and Zadokite
priests. Like Levites and Levitical priests, Zadokite priests were (or claimed to
be) direct descendants of Aaron, validating them in the role of priest as any
other Levite. But, the Zadokites descended specifically from Zadok, a
descendant of Aaron, who assisted King Solomon in squelching an attempt to
seize the throne by Adonijah, the son of the then deceased King David, and
another priest of Solomon’s courts, Abiathar, a descendant of Eli. 35 When
Adonijah was put down, Solomon cast out Abiathar and appointed Zadok to be
his priest. 36 Since Zadok was favored and was a descendant of Aaron, all
further Zadokite priests supplanted any Levitical priests whose line went
through Eli and Abiathar. 37 Thus, in their superior ranking, Zadokite priests
would “reserve the service of the altar, from which the largest part of priestly
revenues normally came,” 38 leaving the Levitical priests to perform the rest of
the rites 39 for little compensation. So, not only was a two-class system

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35 E.g., 1 Kings 1: Eli and his two sons are identified as priests in 1 Samuel 1.
36 According to Ringgren, the prophecy in I Sam. 2:35 is fulfilled when Abiathar, a descendant of
the house of Eli, was removed as the priest of Jerusalem and a “faithful priest,” Zadok, replaces
him (Ringgren, Israelite Religion, 211).
38 Cody, Priesthood, 167.
emerging between priests and lay-persons, but there was also a system of value (and devalue) being setup among priests themselves.

The Zadokite Stratum involves further differentiation between non-priestly Levites and Levitical/Zadokite priests. In the Zadokite Stratum, Levites are not automatically referenced as priests as they were in deuteronomical writings. In fact, the deuteronomical writings “always avoid directly calling Levites ‘priests,’” thereby making the point clear that even though the inheritance imparted to the tribe of Levi was the stewardship of the Israelite priesthood, Ezekiel, through the Zadokite Stratum, takes the liberty of further refining that inheritance so only specific Levites may be priests (namely, Zadokites) while other Levites are simply priestly helpers and still others are merely Levites by nationality. Again, not only was the priesthood moving to a caste system with Zadokites on top, followed by priestly Levites, and then non-priestly Levites, but the divide between clergy and laity grew, leaving very few religious rites for a lay-person to perform without a priest.

Finally, the post-exilic or Hellenistic period was the period in which Jesus of Nazareth was born. This is the time after which all Israel returned from exile in Babylonia and reestablished themselves in and around Jerusalem. As Zadokite priests were of the most significance in the community,

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40 Cody, Priesthood, 167.
41 Deut 33:8-10: Anderson, Religion of Israel, 76.
they returned first, followed much later by Levithal priests.\textsuperscript{42} The Zadokites’
strength and power increased during the post-exilic period. They established
the role of “high priest”\textsuperscript{43} who was both the de facto head of government
throughout Judea (i.e., he dealt with foreign powers, collected taxes, etc.) and
responsible for the spiritual welfare of the people.\textsuperscript{44} This level of authority and
visibility for the high priest in turn increased the importance of the priesthood
in general, with many priests enjoying considerable prestige in the
community.\textsuperscript{45} The increase in power of the Zadokites further stratified
relations between them and Levitical priests as well as the relations between
the priesthood and non-priestly Israelites in general.

In summary, the Israelite priesthood went through many changes from
its establishment on Mt. Sinai to the end of the Hellenistic period in 70 AD.
With the growing prominence of Israelite culture, increased responsibilities for
priests, and even the establishment of a caste system within the priesthood so
that some were able to perform rites that other priests could not, one can see
how apt Cody’s description of the priestly role really is. Aaron, his sons, and
subsequent Israelite priests were truly \textit{set apart} in the community so that they
were holy and untainted conduits by which sacrifice, praise, and worship to
God were facilitated. As no Messiah of the people had yet come, holy and
consecrated priests enabled the worship of God by God’s people.

\textsuperscript{42} Ringgren, \textit{Israelite Religion}, 328.
\textsuperscript{43} “Zechariah 3:1-9 depicts the investiture of Joshua, the first post-exilic high priest: the ritual is
obviously modeled after the ancient royal consecration;” Ringgren, \textit{Israelite Religion}, 328.
\textsuperscript{44} Powell, \textit{Harper}, 828.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
Over time a slow degradation of the importance of the common Israelite person in worship took place. The people went from full participants in worship rituals to bystanders watching a performance of rites offered on the temple stage. As the Israelite priests became consumed with squabbles over lineage and enamored by the privileges that came with the status of “holy priest,” common Israelites were having more of their involvement and importance revoked. A two-tiered system of holy (priests) and secular (non-priests) people was galvanized in the Israelite religion and had far-reaching echoes within the Christian church as it became more established in history.

II. Priesthood of All Believers

Although many have heard the phrase “priesthood of all believers,” not many know where it originated or exactly what is meant by it. If folks have heard the term, they often assume Martin Luther coined the phrase\(^{46}\) and further guess that the doctrine strives to pull priests (pastors) down so as to move the priesthood away from church structures and towards a more individualistic spiritual accountability. None is the case. “Priesthood of all believers” is a category coined by Philipp Jakob Spener and further championed by seventeenth-century pietists and Luther scholars. But, in point of fact, the direction they took the category had nothing to do with Luther’s

own thought. The reason the term is used here in conjunction with Luther is an attempt to tie the highly identifiable phrase back to Luther’s original thoughts on the office of public ministry as a way to give context for Stronstad’s phrase “the prophethood of all believers.” Thus, the quicker presumed notions are jettisoned and Luther’s own statements and ideas are examined, the sooner a radical new approach to Christian ministry can be discovered, one which eliminates the two-tiered distinction of sacred/secular and reimagines authority and purpose in a fresh way for the publically held office of the ministry by all believers. 47

The primary work of Luther’s which needs to be reviewed is To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Improvement of the Christian Estate. In this work, Luther considers the two-class (or “estate”) system the Catholic Church promoted, which included the sacred estate (priests, bishops, monastics) and the secular estate. Yet, in Luther’s title, he does not reference either “sacred” or “secular” but rather, singularly, the Christian estate. The title alone shows Luther’s desire to reduce the two-tiered sacred/secular estate down to a single Christian one. 48 Luther argues in this work that the two-tiered estate is an “artful lie” that no one should be afraid of for this reason: “All Christians are truly of the spiritual [Christian] estate, and there is no difference among them, save of office alone. As St. Paul says (1 Cor.

47 Wengert, Priesthood, 5. The “office of public ministry” will be the term which is synonymous with “priesthood of all believers.”
48 Wengert, Priesthood, 7.

xii.), we are all one body, though each member does its own work, to serve the others. This is because we have one baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike; for baptism, Gospel, and faith, these alone make spiritual and Christian people.”

Luther uses 1 Corinthians 12 as a support text to draw out the egregiousness of the two-tiered sacred/secular system. Verse 12 of this passage says, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” The verse does not say, “On earth, Christ has one body and in heaven, Christ has another body,” or “Christ has one visible body and another invisible body”; rather, the verse points to the reality that Christ has *one body* with many members. Each member was put in Christ’s body by God with a purpose for the function of the body (v. 18). Thus, a member of the body should not believe it needs to be removed from the rest of the body due to being different from the other members (v. 15-16). Where would it go if it was removed? Christ has no other body for which these differing members may be a part. But, also, every member is intended to be different so there may be a complete body (vv. 17-18). Verse 19 says, “If all were a single member, where would the body be?” This is the very question Luther was asking the Catholic Church, which was insisting priests, bishops, and monastics were a sacred class all their own. Collectively,
they were a single member of an artificial body which could not properly be called a body at all as they were seeing themselves made up only of their sacred members. According to Luther, this perspective did not and cannot work; therefore, the belief in a two-tiered sacred/secular estate must be eradicated. Luther argued that the only way forward was the belief that all people are members of Christ’s singular body.

After refuting the two-tiered argument, Luther addressed another major issue concerning the office of public ministry. In the quote above, Luther says there is no difference among members in the Christian estate, except their office and the way the members work through their office to serve the other members of the body. A person’s “office” is a way of saying a person’s station(s) or position(s) in life. One’s office in life is akin to the placement of the hand or the eye on the body. Whatever office people find themselves in, Luther encourages them to see the ways they are able to serve Christ’s body through it. “The fact that [Luther] used this word, ‘serve,’ means that Luther placed at the center of his understanding of offices not Herrschaft (lordship) but Dienerschaft (servanthood).”50 Thus, serving the body through one’s office is not about posturing or power-grabbing;51 rather, it involves members laying down their lives and pride to serve the body with their whole selves.52 Service is then more than just performing a function through an office; it is about

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50 Wengert, Priesthood, 10.
51 Ibid., 11. Wengert associates the power-grabbing mentality of holding an office to other Protestant and pietistic scholars.
52 Ibid., 11.
serving any and all as Christ. The revelation of God will be revealed through Christ’s body when its members serve the other with their lives.\footnote{Ibid., 10. This is a reference to Luther’s theology of the cross.} If, through their offices, the members of Christ’s body serve one another in such a way that they “present [themselves] as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,”\footnote{Rom 12:1. This verse references the most important rite performed by Israelite priests, the sin offering. In the post-exilic era, only the high priest was worthy enough to perform this special rite. Yet, when Christ came, he as the Great High Priest, became humanity’s spotless propitiatory sin sacrifice so that this rite transferred forevermore under Christ’s care. As saved sinners through Christ’s blood, Romans 12:1 and 1 Peter 2:5 express that Christ-followers offer themselves to Christ as living and spiritual sacrifices so that they may know God and abundant life. The way Christ-followers offer that sacrifice is by serving the other members of the body, their neighbors, with their lives. “We are living sacrifices whose lives are poured out in sacrifice to [Christ] where he put himself to receive the sacrifice of our lives, that is our neighbor in [their] need” [Norman Nagel, “Luther and the Priesthood of All Believers,” \textit{Concordia Theological Quarterly} 61 (1997): 280].} then they will truly worship God properly in the Christian estate.

It should be further noted regarding office and service that “neither the community nor the officeholder possesses the authority of the office indelibly. Instead, the authority of the office rests in the office itself and in the Word of God that created the office and for which Christ established the office.”\footnote{Wengert, \textit{Priesthood}, 17.} That is to say, Christians either “hold office, entrust it to someone, or allow others to do that entrusting on behalf of the whole church, but [they] do not possess the office or its authority, nor do [they] or can [they] create it.”\footnote{Ibid.} This reasoning reinforces the perspective that although Christians are permanent members of the body of Christ, Christ may have each in different offices at different

\footnotesize{53 Ibid., 10. This is a reference to Luther’s theology of the cross.\hfill 54 Rom 12:1. This verse references the most important rite performed by Israelite priests, the sin offering. In the post-exilic era, only the high priest was worthy enough to perform this special rite. Yet, when Christ came, he as the Great High Priest, became humanity’s spotless propitiatory sin sacrifice so that this rite transferred forevermore under Christ’s care. As saved sinners through Christ’s blood, Romans 12:1 and 1 Peter 2:5 express that Christ-followers offer themselves to Christ as living and spiritual sacrifices so that they may know God and abundant life. The way Christ-followers offer that sacrifice is by serving the other members of the body, their neighbors, with their lives. “We are living sacrifices whose lives are poured out in sacrifice to [Christ] where he put himself to receive the sacrifice of our lives, that is our neighbor in [their] need” [Norman Nagel, “Luther and the Priesthood of All Believers,” \textit{Concordia Theological Quarterly} 61 (1997): 280].\hfill 55 Wengert, \textit{Priesthood}, 17.\hfill 56 Ibid.}
times. Thus, having the mind of a servant rather than an entitled lord when in any office is the proper posture of a member of Christ’s body.

Luther strove to bolster the public office of ministry for all believers by these two points: the breaking-down of the two-tiered estate system to the single Christian estate and restating the office and service of Christians. From here, Luther boldly charges forward to express his perspective that all believers are through baptism a part of the royal and holy priesthood of believers. He says, “For whatever comes out of the water of baptism may boast that he is already consecrated a priest, bishop and pope.”\(^{57}\) Luther is unswervingly direct that it is through baptism, not through the office one holds, that people are consecrated or made holy to be priests, bishops, and popes. Or, a better way to say it would be that through baptism, people are consecrated to be Christian, as being priestly\(^ {58}\) is part of the essence for all members of Christ’s body. Again, it is not one’s office (as priest, bishop, or monk) that makes one spiritual or holy but through baptism. Thus, “If ‘spiritual’ comes from the Holy Spirit and Holy Baptism, then all the baptized are ‘Spiritual,’ and in the same way they are priests.”\(^ {59}\) As Christ is the Great High Priest, so also is his body priestly and all members of Christ’s body are consecrated as spiritual, priestly members who act as such in their given office.

\(^{57}\) Luther, *Works, vol. 44*, 129.
\(^{58}\) Wengert defines “priest” as “a Christian or spiritual human being.” See Wengert, *Priesthood*, 12.
\(^{59}\) Nagel, *Luther*, 291.
Luther finishes the quote above by saying, “It is not seemly for each to exercise [the pastoral] office.”\textsuperscript{60} Although “our baptism may consecrate us as priests, [it] does not authorize us to exercise the pastoral office.”\textsuperscript{61} The definition of pastoral office here is the ability to preach or offer sacraments.\textsuperscript{62} “If everybody is a priest, no one is a priest. ‘Universal Priesthood,’ then, is self-contradictory,”\textsuperscript{63} says Norman Nagel. Thus, it is significant to maintain the distinction between members and office. All through baptism are members of Christ’s body and are spiritual and priestly because of it. Yet, not all can fill the pastoral office, just like not all can fill the office of computer programmer, gardener, chaplain, or airplane pilot. As a person’s office does not make him any more or less valuable in God’s economy, all are free to be priestly people in their office knowing they serve Christ when they serve the body and their neighbors.

Luther would go on to make more specialized arguments over the years in his fight to expand the Christian Church, but these major points were the foundation of his perspective for the office of public ministry. Although Luther did not coin “priesthood of all believers” and did not endorse where others took the doctrine, he is undeniably the father of a movement that \textit{embodied} the

\textsuperscript{60} Luther, \textit{Works}, 129.
\textsuperscript{61} Wengert, \textit{Priesthood}, 16.
\textsuperscript{62} Except in cases of emergencies. Wengert quotes Luther who is expounding on 1 Cor 14:40, “It is one thing to exercise authority publically, and another to exercise it is an emergency. In public it is not proper to exercise it without the consent of the whole community or the church. In an emergency, anyone who wants may act” (Wengert, \textit{Priesthood}, 26).
\textsuperscript{63} Nagel, \textit{Luther}, 278.
spirit of a priesthood of all believers. Therefore, it is proper to reconnect the phrase to him and allow his original arguments to define the term.

III. Conclusion

Although some staunch differences exist between the Israelite priesthood and Luther’s understanding of the priesthood of all believers, below are listed some aspects which work well together for the purpose of bolstering and creating a better understanding of Stronstad’s motif of prophethood of all believers.

First, the priesthood was a vital part of the Israelite community, being called for and consecrated by God in Exodus 19. But as priests came to be valued as more spiritually important than other people in the community, Luther argued that the priesthood is an office like any other office in the body of Christ, making all people as valuable as the next no matter their office. The priesthood (pastoral office) is necessary, but it is one office among many in the body of Christ.

Second, the establishment of the Israelite priesthood provided particular definition around ritualistic worship for Jews assisting them with the understanding of what it meant to be a part of a spiritual body. In a similar way, Luther attempted to expand and define what it is for Christians to be spiritual by saying through baptism, all become spiritual, priestly members of
Christ’s body. This means Christians’ first and only allegiance and service is to Christ (not to their roles) as priestly members of his body. Thus, Luther viewed the priesthood (pastoral office) as all members of Christ’s body who in turn can serve the body and neighbor through their office in a priestly manner.

Third, the Israelite priesthood, at least early in its conception, was a prime example of what servants of the Lord looked like. By definition, the priests put themselves between the people and God, sin and judgment of sin. The priests were literally placing their lives on the line for the people. This sort of servanthood is what Luther was referring to when he said that the members of Christ’s body would serve one another. They would sacrifice for one another, lay down their lives for each other, all in the name of serving Jesus Christ. This sort of service, as exemplified by the Israelite priesthood, is the proper spiritual posture for all Christians.

But, when the priests and the pastoral office are misled (as seen with the Israelite priesthood in the Hellenistic period and with the Catholic Church in Luther’s time), who speaks the Lord’s truth to the people and directs them back to “the way”? Prophets play a major role in course-correcting the Israelite religion as well as the Christian faith. In the next chapter, the Israelite prophets and the prophethood of all believers will be reviewed so as to show how the conclusions drawn about the priesthood/pastoral office are germane to understanding prophethood.
Chapter 2
Israelite Prophets and the Prophethood of All Believers

The conclusion of chapter one showed the priesthood to be (1) vital to the faith, (2) available to all believers, and (3) a prime example of servanthood. The conclusions drawn about the priesthood can be transferred to the office and role of prophethood, but the reasons for doing so vary. To understand why the prophethood is vital to the Israelite and Christian faiths, Old Testament prophets and their roles will first be reviewed. Then, a reading and interpretation of Joel 2/Acts 2 will be considered to show how prophethood has become available to all believers. Finally, to exemplify how prophethood is also servanthood, perspectives from Justo González and Phoebe Palmer will be considered. By the end of this chapter, the scope of prophethood will be widened, thereby enabling the reader to better understand the significance of Stronstad’s proposition of the prophethood of all believers and prepare the soil for understanding how to see these two motifs together in light of a Trinitarian theology.

I. Israelite Prophets

Why is the role of the prophets vital? What is significant about their contribution to the faith? How did they function alongside priests? When one views the history of Israelite religion and the writings of the Old Testament, one can appreciate the role of prophets and the importance of prophethood.
A review of Israelite prophets from Old Testament scholars such as Gerhard von Rad, Abraham J. Heschel, and Walther Eichrodt quickly shows that there are very few common threads that run through the prophets’ accounts. They each had different emphases and modes in communicating their message; different contexts and people groups to work with; different personalities and problems that they brought to the table. Hosea was vehemently opposed to anything associated with the concept of “king,” while Isaiah was a keen observer and interpreter of all things political and looked for a king who would bring peace and righteousness. Amos did not share Hosea’s concern that the worship of Yahweh would be tainted by the Canaanite worship of Baal. Micah cared little for the welfare and possible demise of Zion while Isaiah deeply cherished Zion and hoped for its elevation. The differences represented here have implications for the significance of the Israelite prophet, but the commonalities must first be examined to appreciate fully what the differences imply. The major commonalities which will be reviewed in this section is that all prophets were called to be prophets, they spoke convicting words into the religious cult, held fast to their calling under tremendous resistance, and functioned as independent messengers outside the cult using any means necessary to make their message known.

A prophetic call in the Old Testament typically consisted of an experience of being called by God to be a prophet, followed by a vision of God’s purpose and will for the prophet and/or God’s people, finalized by the prophet being addressed or commissioned directly by God.\textsuperscript{68} Even though these elements were common among those called, it should not be understood that a call to be a prophet was by any means a regular or even welcomed occurrence.

To quote von Rad,

\begin{quote}
This was more than simply a new profession: it was a totally new way of life, even at the sociological level, to the extent that a call meant relinquishing normal social life and all the social and economic securities which this offered, and changing over instead to a condition where a man had nothing to depend upon, or, as we may put it, to a condition of dependence upon Jahweh and upon that security alone.\textsuperscript{69}
\end{quote}

The harsh reality that the prophet had nothing and no one but God to depend on is exacerbated by the fact that the prophet was not officially a part of the cultic Israeliite religion.\textsuperscript{70} Although the prophet would regularly visit sanctuaries and shrines to be with the people of God, there is little evidence to support the claim that the prophet was a part of the cultic personnel like the priest.\textsuperscript{71} So, in the moments when a prophet had to speak a word of judgment against the priesthood, it was as a lay-person speaking to the official priesthood, those who were commissioned to mediate between God and people. But, it turned out to be advantageous for prophets to not hold an official

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 53-59.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 58.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 55.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 51.
\end{itemize}
position in the cult. Von Rad asks, “If a prophet had held a definite position in the cult, would he have laid so much stress upon his call? The importance which the prophets attached to their call makes it quite clear that they felt very much cut off from the religious capital in which the majority of the people lived, and dependent instead on their own resources.” A common experience among all prophets is the realization of isolation and that the only things they could rely on to fulfill their call were God and the resources readily available to them.

The fact that prophets held unmistakable conviction of their calling by God to be prophetic towards the religious authorities while at the same time being isolated from them helps us understand one aspect of the prophets’ importance in the Israelite religion. An unrelenting and unhindered force outside the cultic religion was needed to speak into the cult and to the follies of the personnel (priests) as well as the lay worshippers. Prophets needed to be unrelenting particularly with the priests as the latter often made the worship of God more about empty ritual than adoration of and surrender to God. Prophets needed to be unhindered from the restraints of the cult as their message was so radical in nature that they had to have nothing to lose as they delivered it. The cult needed a force like prophets to push against it so as to check it in the areas where it was drifting.

72 See ch.1, pgs. 6-10, for a fuller description of this trend of the Israelite priesthood.
How were prophets able to maintain the conviction of their call when they themselves faced such fierce resistance from the cult? What force was working in and through them that prevented them from folding under the immense pressure of resistance they received? To answer this question, an analogy from Abraham Heschel will be of great assistance. Heschel says, “Having an idea of friendship is not the same as having a friend or living with a friend, and the story of a friendship cannot be fully told by what one friend thinks of the being and attributes of the other friend.”73 That is to say, the idea of friendship is far less substantial than having an actual friend, and the story of that friendship cannot be fully understood from just one friend’s perspective. Friendship is not found in idea or theory but only in the actual lived-out intimacy between persons. Further, the power of friendship is only understood when the being and attributes of both persons are present and available for each other in real-time. The same is true about the prophets’ relationship with God.

The prophets had more than just an idea or theory about God; they had an understanding of God derived from God’s overwhelmingly real presence with them. Whatever ignorance the prophet had about who God was or what God desired was overshadowed by intimate and personal knowledge of God. Prophets shared such an intimate relationship with God that through visions, God actually drew prophets unto himself so the prophet would truly come to

73 Heschel, Prophets, 221.
understand God’s will and desires for his people. The prophet would actually come to know and understand the mind of God and would be able to act in his or her prophetic task with that very same mind. In particular, the Spirit of God who called the prophet, provided visions to the prophet, and empowers the prophetic word through the prophet, is the same Spirit who enables the prophet to be intimately close with God and experience the mind of God.

Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:11-16 also speaks about understanding or having the mind of God through intimacy with the Spirit of God. He first makes the observation that it is only the human spirit within a person that can truly understand what it means to be human. In the same way, only the Spirit of God can understand God and the gifts of God. To the level that those in Corinth perceived God’s Spirit within them, they were able to “discern all things” and come to the realization that “they [were] themselves subject to no one else’s scrutiny.” Paul urges the faithful in Corinth to have the mind of Christ and so the mind of God.

Regarding the prophets and God, Heschel would come to a similar conclusion as Saint Paul did. That is, “To the prophet, knowledge of God was fellowship with Him, not attained by syllogism, analysis or induction, but by living together.” Thus, to the level the prophets were able to perceive the intimacy they were experiencing through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, they would be able to “discern all things” with the mind of God as well as steel

74 von Rad, Old Testament, 63.
75 Heschel, Prophets, 223.
themselves against the cult with the understanding that “they [were] themselves subject to no one else’s scrutiny” but God’s. The only reason the prophets were able to follow through with their isolation and burdensome call was because they intimately understood what God desired to do in the world and were convinced that it was God alone to whom they were accountable. Thus, another reason the prophets were vital to the Israelite religion was because their ability to perceive and understand the mind of God allowed them to exemplify reliance alone on God in unique ways. If the prophets would not have been able to persevere in their calls, the priests and lay-people would have gone unchecked in their cultic practices.

This treatment brings up another major question about prophets in the Israelite religion. How exactly did the prophets perform their prophetic functions? It has already been said that prophets spoke into the religious cult and held fast to their calling under tremendous resistance upon doing so. But, what sort of functions defined prophets as prophets? Further, what modes were employed in the performance of prophetic functions?

To better identify what prophetic functions looked like in the Israelite religion, it will be helpful to have an understanding of the driving message behind those functions. Von Rad says, “Prophets are to be regarded neither as preachers of new religious ideas nor as reformers of the old. The key to their whole message lies in the fact that, as far as saving history is concerned, they see an entirely new day dawning for Israel; they see a new action of God.
approaching her, which will bring with it heavy punishments but also mysterious acts of preservation.” The heart of prophecy in the Israelite religion, as described here by von Rad, was to convey the truth of God’s saving grace by admonishing Israel to release its hope in the old modes and ideas of how YHWH would save so as to open their eyes afresh to the new things God was doing in history. The ultimate goal of prophecy was always to convey hope in God’s saving grace. Although there was talk about God’s wrath, judgment, destruction, separation, and desolation, these were necessary warnings or realities that aimed to have the Israelite people turn to and receive saving grace. In light of this description, particular prophetic functions can be identified.

First, Israelite prophets were neither detractors of established religious ideals nor interested in being reformers towards new ones. The desire of the prophet was simply to fulfill the heart of prophecy as stated above. But, fulfilling the heart of prophecy inherently required the prophet to help Israel realize a new reality while staying true to the same religious ideals Israelites already knew. How was this to be done? This question points to the first major mark and function of the prophet. Israelite prophets acted within the constant tension of holding close to orthodoxy while using any and all resources available to them to convey the new reality that they had come to understand through experiencing God’s mind. For the prophet, there was a separation

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between orthodoxy (right belief) and the modes they used to convey their message. Modes were “selected *ad hoc* and subsequently abandoned”\(^{77}\) because the primary purpose of the mode was to act as a vehicle to convey the prophet’s message. The prophet’s hope was that the recipients would not become overly obsessed by the mode of delivery and thereby miss the message. But, in the end, that was not their ultimate concern. They were tasked with delivering God’s message by any means possible. Thus, the first major mark and function of prophets is that they held close to orthodoxy while using any means necessary to convey their message of hope to Israel.

A second major mark and function of Israelite prophets was to tie the “new day dawning for Israel” to events in world-history. Prophets were incredible exegetes of the contemporary times in which they lived; they were convinced that it was a part of their call to correlate the events of the day to the ways God was going to deal with his people. Von Rad says, “[The prophets’] whole preaching is characterized by an unrivalled ability to adjust itself to new historical phenomena” towards a prophetic message for the times. Von Rad continues, “The relationship between that message and the events of world-history is so close that it has to be accepted as one of cause and effect.” Von Rad concludes, “This correlation between the prophets and world-history is the real key to God which they saw around them...indeed, they gradually came to realize that this new historical action was to surpass and therefore, to a certain

\(^{77}\) Ibid., 53.
extent, to supersede the old. They were in fact called forth by their conviction that Jahweh was bringing about a new era for his people.”\textsuperscript{78}

Just as the particular modes prophets used had significance to communicate their message in one situation but not necessarily the same in another, so also God used different events throughout world-history to communicate his love and saving grace to his people. Prophets, being in-tune with the mind of God, were acutely aware of historical phenomena as it was a way God was using to communicate how God would save his people Israel. Interpreting the times and delivering it in their prophetic message were crucial functions of the prophet exclusively since “their contemporaries [priests included] were, apparently, no longer very greatly aware of these things.”\textsuperscript{79} If not for prophets, the signs of the times and God’s communication through history would have been missed as this form of communication rarely lines-up with the formalized language of the religious cult. This point makes a seamless transition into a third mark and function of the prophet.

It has already been noted that prophets used any resources available to them and employed a variety of different modes to communicate their message. But, it has not been emphasized just how radical prophets were in their use of modes as well as how diverse such usage was, which in turn functioned as a demarcation of authenticity among prophets. This third mark of a prophet is different from the first two because the first two emphasize the ways all

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 112-113.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 112.
prophets are the same as one another. This third mark of prophets emphasizes the ways in which all prophets are unique from each other in their use of modes to communicate the prophetic message.

In saying that prophets used any and all resources available to them to communicate their message, one must consider that some of those resources were not always looked upon as sacred or holy enough vessels to communicate God’s word. Or, sometimes they took hold of time-hallowed sacral forms and put them to use in different ways just to communicate their message. The way prophets went about co-opting sacred and secular modes to deliver their message was rarely in line with the conventional ways and standard language of the religious cult. Von Rad says no mode, “sacred or secular alike, was safe from appropriation as a vessel for the discharge of [the prophet’s] task by one prophet or another.”80 Again, as prophets saw the mode and the message as independent of each other, they had no qualms about using any mode to communicate their message. They were after “shock and awe” with their audience as the point was to get as many people receiving the message as possible.

The way prophets chose to deliver their message could not be housed in any traditional form, for the cult had rarely been challenged by anything like them. At the time of the Old Testament prophets, there was not even a specific “prophetic form” as the prophets’ modes of delivery were so vastly different

80 Ibid., 38.
from one another. For example, even though all prophets would use “prophetic oracle” as a form of delivering their message verbally, every prophet was considered unique because the situations in which they employed prophetic oracle required different modes and platforms. Each prophet interpreted their specific historical situation and would inherently use resources and references of their day to achieve maximum impact and shock. If the modes that a given prophet used resembled that of a previous prophet, it was either because the successive prophet was intentionally trying to reference the past as a mode to make an impact in the present or this person simply was a false prophet. The mark of a prophet is unique as a result of the function of being an ambassador of God’s message in the midst of the unique cultures to which the prophet spoke.

Thus, one can ascertain from these three marks and functions of prophets a third reason prophets were vital to the Israelite religion. Not only were prophets important because they spoke into the religious cult and held fast to their calling under tremendous resistance, but also, they functioned as independent messengers outside the cult in order to make a significant impact

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81 Ibid., 39.
82 Prophets could employ utterances as a priestly direction concerning sacrifice, a cultic hymn, a pronouncement in a court of law, a prayer modelled after a priestly prayer of lamentation, a popular song, or a parody of a low-brow dirge. Whatever mode prophets thought would get their message across, they used.
83 To take one important example, John the Baptist dressed-up as and personified Elijah to signify his role in announcing and validating the Messiah as Elijah was said to return and do in Malachi 4:1-5.
with their message. Priests could not play this role, but only those outside the
cult could speak to it with such force.

II. Prophethood of All Believers

After reviewing the importance of the prophet in Israelite religion, one
can now turn to the Christian faith to show how the role of the prophet has
been extended to all believers. The ministry of Jesus Christ, the uniquely
anointed prophet, will be considered first as prophethood reached its ultimate
expression in him. Then, a brief overview of Joel 2/Acts 2 will be considered,
highlighting particular consequences of the Pentecost event for the
prophethood of all believers.

Jesus of Nazareth is identified in Luke’s gospel as Christ, King, Lord,
and the Son of God (among many other names). But, according to Roger
Stronstad, Luke also uses many literary devices to identify Jesus as the
fulfillment of a variety of prophetic roles. Stronstad identifies Jesus as the
anointed prophet,84 the eschatological prophet,85 the prophet who restored the
prophethood,86 the rejected prophet,87 the royal prophet,88 the Isaianic
prophet,89 the prophet like Elijah and Elisha,90 and the prophet like Moses.91

84 Stronstad, Prophethood of All Believers, 35.
85 Ibid., 36.
86 Ibid., 39.
87 Ibid., 48.
88 Ibid., 50.
89 Ibid., 44.
90 Ibid., 37.
91 Ibid., 50.
From Luke’s perspective, Jesus is not only Christ and Lord but God’s prophet *par excellence*, a claim which is demonstrated through Jesus’ earthly ministry.

There are many significant ways in which Luke pushes to have Jesus and his ministry interpreted primarily as prophetic; these include Jesus’ experiences with the Spirit anointing him (Luke 3:22/4:18), filling him (Luke 4:1a), leading him (4:1b), and empowering him (Luke 4:14). These experiences define Jesus’ entire ministry in a way that is particularly prophetic. Another major event Luke emphasizes related to Jesus’ self-identification as prophet is his inaugural sermon in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30), which is placed by Luke at the beginning of his ministry (just after his baptism and temptation) rather than later in his ministry (as Mark did). Again, this event defines the ministry of Jesus for what would follow in Luke’s presentation.

Although many other passages could be identified to show Jesus and his ministry as prophetic, a significant, retrospective one to be considered is Luke’s account of the “walk to Emmaus” (Luke 24:13-35). In this account, two nameless disciples are walking somberly along when a risen Jesus joins them. The disciples do not recognize who he is, so when Jesus asks them what they have been talking about, they tell him of Jesus and what befell him. In their description of Jesus, they say he was a “prophet mighty in deed and word” in the sight of God and all the people (Luke 24:19). This identification of Jesus gives the reader a retrospective interpretive lens of Jesus’ entire ministry. In that sense, as God’s prophet *par excellence*, Jesus sets the tone for all further
prophets in the Christian faith. Jesus was powerful in deed (literally, in “works”) by “casting out demons (Luke 4:31-37), healing the sick (Luke 4:38-39), and, above all, raising the dead (Luke 7:11-17)” as well as powerful in word by “forgiving sins (Luke 5:20) [and] pronouncing blessings (Luke 6:20-23) and dire curses (Luke 6:25-26).”\(^9\) There is a reference to the phrase “prophet mighty in deed and word” in the introduction of the book of Acts when Luke writes to Theophilus saying “In the first book...I wrote all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). This line in Acts 1 may be a general reference to “all that Jesus began to do and teach” throughout his ministry. But, given that Luke ended his gospel with a reference to Jesus as a “prophet mighty in deed and word,” one could interpret Acts 1:1 as referencing all that Jesus began to prophetically do and teach. A review now of Luke’s account of Pentecost in Acts will reveal how Jesus, God’s prophet *par excellence*, passed on his prophetic ministry so that all Christians could be mighty in deed and word through the Holy Spirit.

*Acts 2 – The Spirit of Prophecy*

The feast of Pentecost depicted in Acts came with much anticipation. In the preceding weeks, just prior to Jesus’ ascension, Jesus told the disciples “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5). Further, he said, “you will receive power when

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\(^9\) Ibid., 38.
the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit that falls upon Jesus and anoints him at his baptism is the same Holy Spirit Jesus promises will baptize, empower, and lead the disciples to faithful witness.

Acts 2 begins by saying, “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were altogether in one place.” The “they” referenced here are the twelve disciples plus the women and other disciples who are referenced in Acts 1:15. The large group had been praying in solidarity together since the day of Jesus’ ascension.

Verses 2 and 3 describe the phenomena which suddenly came upon them, of the sound of rushing wind and tongues of fire that danced on the heads of all present. Luke waits until verse 4 to tell the reader what is happening: “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.” Simultaneously, the group of disciples began to speak in the native languages of the peoples present (the event began to draw on-lookers of many nationalities, which are listed in 2:9-11). Some evaluate this event as amazing and inquired with intrigue, “What does this mean?” while others scoffed and accused the disciples of being “filled with new wine.”

For some interpreters, the significance of the Holy Spirit being granted on Pentecost is simply an echo and affirmation of God’s appearance on Mount
Sinai and the subsequent granting of the law to Israel on the same date. But for others like Anthony Robinson and Robert Wall, the Holy Spirit coming on Pentecost holds typological significance for Luke’s theology of the Holy Spirit. “If the giving of the Torah fifty days after Israel’s Passover is an act of covenant renewal (Exod. 19:5-6),” Robinson and Wall say, “then the Spirit is given on this Pentecost to renew God’s promise of a new covenant (cf. Rom. 8:2).” However this time God visited his people in such an epochal way that he mediates a new vocation for them – prophethood rather than a royal priesthood.” The vocation of prophethood is tied to God’s new covenant with his people which was demonstrated in the flesh through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

In Luke’s gospel as in Acts, the Holy Spirit is the source of power for Christ and for the disciples to act mightily in word and deed. By the Spirit falling on the disciples at Pentecost (also known as Spirit baptism), they were authorized and imbued with the power to act on behalf of God in mighty ways as Christ was when the Spirit came upon him at his baptism. The first demonstration of this Spirit baptizing power was when Peter addressed the crowd in Acts 2 by responding to the theophany at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36). Peter, in a prophetic way, quickly dismisses the scoffers of the theophany and rightly employs a “this is that” rhetorical device. He says, “This [theophany] is

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94 Robinson and Wall, *Called to be Church*, 51.
95 Stronstad, *Prophethood of All Believers*, 59.
what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.” Peter identifies the events of Pentecost with the prophecy of Joel which prophesized the impending day of the Lord. Accordingly, since the Spirit was poured out on all flesh, men and women could in turn prophesy in preparation for the great and glorious day of the Lord.

In this situation, Peter exemplified what it means to be a prophet “filled with the Spirit.” Robinson and Wall describe being prophetic in the Spirit this way: “The prophet who is filled with God’s Spirit sets aside the processes of human intellect, such as conjecture and guesswork, and replaces them with true knowledge, the byproduct of a divinely inspired intellect. The practical result...is that the Spirit-filled prophet is given an enriched capacity to exegete Scripture, to interpret the biblical text according to the mind of God.”96 With the mind of God, Peter not only exegetes Scripture but also the Jewish culture and the historical situation as well. He makes Scriptural as well as situational references that he knows will cut the people to the heart so that they may repent and receive the Holy Spirit.

Another example of Spirit-filled prophecy shows up just six chapters after Peter’s sermon at Pentecost in Acts 8:26-38. Philip, one of the twelve disciples, was directed by an angel to walk a wilderness road out of Jerusalem to a place named Gaza. On his way, Philip saw an Ethiopian eunuch riding in a chariot reading. Verse 29 says, “Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over to this

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96 Robinson and Wall, Called to be Church, 52 (emphasis added).
chariot and join it.” Philip discovered the Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah and Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch said “How can I, unless someone guides me?” so Philip “began to speak, starting with [Isaiah 53:7-8], he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.” Through Philip’s obedience to the Spirit and his Spirit-filled proclamation of the good news about Jesus to the Ethiopian, the eunuch asked to be baptized immediately in water they were passing along the road.

Therefore, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, all the people of God have been imbued with the power of God to fulfill the mission of God as prophets. Further, the work of prophets post-Pentecost echoes the work of Israelite prophets. As it is said in 2 Peter 1:21b, “Men and women led by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” Speaking in the past tense, Peter is referencing the prophets of old and how the Holy Spirit was the one who enabled them to prophesy what they did. The same Holy Spirit who fell upon the church at Pentecost and would enable sons and daughters to prophesy would do similar work through Christians as was done through Israelite prophets. Similarly to Israelite prophets, Christian prophets are encouraged to use any means necessary to communicate their message, particularly modern references that have shock value, whether sacred or secular, as well as to interpret the ways God is acting in history. The call is for Christian prophets to be prophetic in such a way as to draw all closer to the living God. This is a call made to all Christians, even modern-day

97 Joel 2:28.
Christians, by way of the same Holy Spirit who anointed the disciples at Pentecost and anointed Jesus at his baptism. The Holy Spirit empowers the prophethood of all believers – be it male or female; black, brown or white; poor or rich – to serve others by admonishing them in the ways of the Lord.

III. Servanthood

The prophethood, like the priesthood, is marked by servanthood. Both the prophethood and the priesthood have particular functions within the Christian faith to perform on behalf of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, but if prophets and priests do not perform their functions with a servant’s heart then they act for themselves and for pride. Justo González and Phoebe Palmer describe ways in which the modern-day prophet may avoid spiritual pride and engage the heart of love in order to serve others.

González in his interpretation of Acts 2 notes that past interpreters have considered Pentecost as a reversal of Babel due to the unity of understanding (as opposed to confusion) that comes from the multiplicity of tongues. But González leans away from that interpretation and into the perspective of I.G. Malcolm, who considers the multiplicity of tongues at Pentecost to be a trigger that Pentecost is being linked to Babel, thus the reader should understand the event as “a second Babel.” The interpretation of a second Babel pushes the reader to consider Pentecost as something more than a unity of people through

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the Spirit (although it is certainly that). González says, “The Holy Spirit had two options: one was to make all understand the Aramaic the disciples spoke; the other was to make each understand in their own tongue. Significantly, the Spirit chooses the latter route.”\(^{99}\) By the Spirit choosing to do the latter, the Spirit validates the importance of diversity of language and culture in humanity as well as advocates for a “centrifugal understanding of mission, one in which as the gospel moves toward new languages and new cultures, it is ready to take forms that are understandable within those languages and cultures.”\(^{100}\) Just as the Israelite prophets had one particular message of God’s saving grace but many diverse and culturally relevant modes to share that message, so also the prophethood of all believers is called to deliver their message of hope while loosely holding the modes through which the message is shared and being open to the culturally unique ways in which it will be lived out. “That is why it has correctly been stated,” says González, “that whereas Babel was a monument to human pride, the Church is called to be a monument to the humiliation of any who seek to make their language or culture dominant.”\(^{101}\) If one were to be a proper prophet who serves, one must never seek to make his/her own culture or language dominant over another but rather should desire to learn about and even share the message of hope to diverse populations. This should be done not only to see diverse populations

\(^{100}\) Ibid.
\(^{101}\) Ibid.
transformed by the power of the Spirit, but also so that the prophet delivering the message may be transformed in diverse and unanticipated ways.

González draws this point home in a section entitled, “The Disadvantage of the Advantaged.” In this section, he considers “the others” in Acts 1:13 who were present on the Day of Pentecost but sneered and scoffed at those who perceived the theophany. González postulates that the people who sneered were likely those who spoke the language of the country. He says, “Because they expect to understand whatever is said, the very fact that they do understand [the language, the event] is no cause for wonder.”102 Pentecost is no wonder for the mockers because they are in familiar surroundings, on their home turf, and with the expectation that they will understand the language and events taking place. Their expectation is the barrier which prevents them from perceiving the miracle of the multiplicity of tongues and everyone understanding in their own language. In this case, the advantaged who expect to understand do not perceive, and the disadvantaged who did not expect to understand do so and – what is more – perceive the miracle of Pentecost. The words of Christ are therefore fulfilled: the first will be last, and those who think the reign of God belongs to them are at risk of losing it.103 Thus, for the prophethood of all believers to truly serve, they must never think of themselves too highly but must always be in a posture to be surprised by God and by those different from them. In this way, modern-day prophets may win an audience

102 Ibid 37.
103 Matt 19:30.
with diverse groups in order to share the gospel but will also be ministered to in return by the diverse groups.

Not only those outside the community of faith need to be served by the prophet but also those within the community of faith. One such prophet who advocated for the underserved in the church was Phoebe Palmer.\textsuperscript{104} She was a nineteenth century theologian, revivalist, and feminist of the holiness tradition who fought against limiting the exercise of women’s gifts in the church. Palmer wrote a four hundred page work addressing the issue of what to do when the will of the church and the will of Christ were in conflict, in particular regarding a woman’s call to preach. Palmer rightly locates much of her reasoning in the event of Pentecost described in Acts.

After attending to First Corinthians 14:34 and First Timothy 2:12 (the former she reasoned as a local problem of open debate in synagogues which Paul was trying to keep out of the church and the latter was a prohibition against false teachings), Palmer moves to argue that women not only have the right to teach but the \textit{obligation} to speak for Christ. Palmer references 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 to show that Paul endorsed women prophesying with a right spirit. Charles Edward White says that Palmer makes the connection that “prophecy conveys information, and conveying information is teaching.”\textsuperscript{105}

Moving to the account of Pentecost in Acts, Palmer says the distinguishing

\textsuperscript{104} A synopsis of her work can be found in Charles Edward White, \textit{The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist, and Humanitarian} (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1986).

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 191.
mark of Pentecost is the giving of the Holy Spirit to all believers. White summarizes Palmer by stating, “Possessing the Holy Spirit makes every Christian a prophet, and each prophet must exercise the gift by speaking in a way to edify, exhort, and comfort,” which is a direct reference to First Corinthians 14:3, where Paul says, “those who prophesy speak to other people for their building up and encouragement and consolation.” From this, she expresses that to prohibit a female from prophesying is to quench the Spirit and whoever quenches the Spirit will need to give an account to God of why they restricted a God-given endowment of power to a prophet.

Palmer takes the matter one step further by expanding her definition of prophecy (which she has already defined as the prompting of the Holy Spirit which leads to edification, exhortation and comfort) and quotes Revelation 19:10, which says, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” White says Palmer took this passage to mean that “any testimony about Jesus, any recounting of what Jesus has done in his life, is prophecy.”106 Since speaking about Jesus’ life is in itself evangelistic – to speak about Christ’s life, death, and resurrection – and evangelism is the heart of preaching, then one who testifies about Jesus is both a prophet and a preacher. In light of passages like Nehemiah 6:7 (“Thou hast appointed prophets to preach”), Palmer can conclude that “prophets were preachers, and to prophesy is to preach.”107

106 Ibid., 192.
In one bold move, Palmer has determined two significant things towards the understanding of the prophethood of all believers. First, she has determined that all believers are prophets – no matter their race, culture, or gender – and that all believers are endowed with the power to preach prophetically to others. Second, she has shown that preaching is prophecy and prophecy is preaching. For the modern-day prophet, it must be remembered that the same Spirit that empowered Christ to preach and to prophesy lives in them and is empowering them to have the mind of Christ and to be pastoral and prophetic in whatever ecclesial context they may inhabit.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter has shown the various similarities and differences of the role of priest and prophet. Both roles are similar in that they are vital to the faith, available to all believers, and a prime example of servanthood. Also, it was shown through Palmer’s arguments that prophecy is preaching and preaching is prophecy. This is a major bridge towards the mutual glossing of these two motifs, as will be shown in the next chapter.

The prophet is also unique from the priest in many ways. The prophet exemplifies how to be unrelentingly faithful to God and one’s call in the face of adversity, especially directly from those within the faith. Prophets are interpreters of God’s saving actions in history, specializing in interpreting the times and God’s actions in today’s world. Prophets also use unique modes, both
sacred and secular, to deliver their message of hope to those within and beyond the faith community. In the ways that the prophet is like the priest and unique in the prophet’s own right, the role of the prophet is ordained by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to point people to God. Both the priest and the prophet can operate hand-in-hand to represent God in a holistic way to the diverse people of the world.

But, in order to understand more fully ways in which the prophethood and priesthood motifs can work together in the modern-day Christian faith, one must place them upon a single, mutually inflecting, Trinitarian platform that honors the whole Godhead. This will be considered in the third chapter.
Chapter 3
Priesthood and Prophethood of All Believers
and Incorporative Trinitarianism

Chapter Two revealed prophets were as important as priests in the Israelite religion for many overlapping yet highly unique reasons. The two roles collectively represent God’s activity in the world through diverse leaders to direct, admonish, and encourage people in the worship and love of God. With this argument, the end of Chapter Two posited that the prophet and the priest needed to operate hand-in-hand with one another in order to represent God holistically to the diverse people of the world.

Phoebe Palmer practically conflates the roles, or at least conflates their ends, when she concludes that prophesying is preaching and preaching is prophesying. The act of preaching and prophesying are not relegated to priests and prophets, respectively. The priest does not own preaching just like the prophet does not own prophesying. It is a Protestant bias to think the priest preaches and the prophet prophesies. But Palmer rebuffs this sort of thinking when she says “the scriptural idea of the terms preach and prophesy stands inseparably connected as one and the same thing.”\textsuperscript{108} Thus, as they preach, priests and prophets are also prophesying, and when they prophesy they are also preaching. Palmer further clarifies by saying, “A discourse is not preaching because it is delivered by a minister, or spoken from the pulpit,”\textsuperscript{109}

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\textsuperscript{108} Palmer, \textit{Promise}, 34. \\
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 37.
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thereby expressing that preaching and prophesying are not an automatic from priests (and prophets) whenever they speak or act. Rather, the essence of preaching and prophesying lies with acts, not individuals. Palmer says, “Nothing is, I think, properly preaching [and prophesying], except explaining the teachings, or enforcing the commands, of Christ and his apostles”\(^{110}\) to the ends of directing people’s fidelity and worship towards God. Thus, preaching is prophecy and prophecy is preaching, and priest and prophets employed both from within their respective roles, ones that function best when joined and mutually glossing.

If it is the case that the role of prophet and priest cannot be performed one without the other and the functions of both have the same ends, then why do proponents of the prophethood and priesthood of all believers motifs tend to neglect their complementarity? Why allow division when unity is possible?

Part of the reason is historical context. Luther was looking for a way to level out the disparity between laity and priests, so he focused solely on water baptism which he felt produced Christians who were all priests in the end. Thus, a conception of a priesthood of all believers was born while neglecting prophethood because of the immediate exigencies of the moment in which it arose.

Part of the reason is exegetical. Stronstad, through his biblical work on Luke–Acts, interpreted Jesus’ main vocation as one of prophet.\(^{111}\) From there

\(^{110}\) Ibid.
\(^{111}\) Strongstad, *Prophethood of All Believers*, 37.
Stronstad made connections that the same Holy Spirit which empowered Christ for a prophetic ministry was the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 which empowered the disciples to prophetic ministries as well. Furthermore, Stronstad uses a logic from the priesthood motif so as to extend it to argue for the prophethood motif. Since both motifs have their results in Christian vocation and Stronstad writes in his book that the Spirit visiting the Church in Acts 2 is God “mediating a new vocation for them – prophethood rather than a royal priesthood,” Stronstad thereby expresses the idea that Christians’ main vocational identity is as a prophet rather than priest.

But, again, why must this be an either/or when it is possible for it to be a both/and? The motifs boast significant similarities that tie them together while the differences can be an inroad to empowerment if seen through the lens of Sarah Coakley’s proposal of incorporative Trinitarianism. Such a strategy will be pursued in what follows: A consideration of the significant similarities and differences between the motifs will first be undertaken. Then, the motifs (particularly their differences) will be reconsidered through incorporative Trinitarianism. Finally, a proposal will be made for how modern-day Christians can act in and through the divine as both prophet and priest.

112 Ibid., 65.
113 Ibid., 59.
I. Similarities and Differences between the Motifs

A major similarity between the motifs discussed over the last two chapters is that the functions of Christian priests and prophets rely heavily upon their correspondence to Israelite religion. In Luther’s priesthood motif, the person who is raised up from the community to fulfill the office of priest in the Christian Church is called to function as a caretaker of the religious cult and be a leader among the Christian community. This reflects the function of priest in the Israelite religion. The focus of the priest as being primarily internal to the religious cult was established in the Israelite religion and continues in the Christian Church and even into the priesthood of all believers motif.

The prophethood motif similarly reflects the Israelite prophethood. Stronstad, who does not delve into an in-depth review of the Old Testament prophets, recognizes that Jesus was validated and authorized as God’s prophet par excellence in the Gospel of Luke because his actions reflect the functions of the Israelite prophets. Jesus was “recognized to be a prophet (Luke 7:16) like one of the prophets of old (Luke 9:19)”\(^\text{114}\) because (1) his actions identified him with “two charismatic prophets, Elijah and Elisha (Luke 4:25-27),”\(^\text{115}\) (2) his call and ministry reflected the call, ministry, and prophecies of Isaiah,\(^\text{116}\) and (3) Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15\(^\text{117}\) in which

\(^{114}\) Stronstad, Prophethood, 37.

\(^{115}\) Ibid.

\(^{116}\) Ibid 44-48.

\(^{117}\) “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.”
“Moses’ command ‘you shall listen to him’ is echoed in the transfiguration account, where, not coincidentally, Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus.”

Because Jesus’ actions reflect the functions of the Israelite prophets, Luke depicts Jesus as a prophet; for this reason, Stronstad says, Jesus’ main function as Messiah is as prophet within the prophethood of all believers motif.

As their names denote, there is a major addition to the priesthood and prophethood of all believers motifs which differentiates them from the Israelite religion and from each other, and it is that all believers of the Christian faith are considered. Within the Israelite religion, no conception existed of lay-worshippers being priests or prophets for the Israelites. Priests were brought into their roles through lineage, and prophets were called by God in vivid and elaborate ways. Lay-persons were subject to both priests and prophets in the Israelite religion and had little official involvement themselves. In the “all believers” motifs, the lay-worshippers (alongside the cultic leaders) are the principal part of the body but perform different vital functions per the perspective of each motif. The priesthood motif would say the vital function of the body is as priests, and the prophethood motif would say the vital function is as prophets. The former has in its purview many of the priestly functions within the faith such as admonishment, absolution, and the mediation of God to others. The latter favors Christian witness and being Christ to the world through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The motifs are really two sides

118 Ibid 50.
of the same coin, but their emphases have historically been treated by their espousers as separate from one another.

A second similarity of the motifs is that both set the nexus of the believer’s entrance into faith, and consequently into their role as priest/prophet, by the metaphor of baptism. As it has been known throughout Christianity, “Christian baptism is...an affirmation of being incorporated into [the divine]...and being granted new life as a gift.”\(^{119}\) The new life, as seen by both motifs, is not just a reference to the rebirth and recreation of the person but also a call into a role as priest/prophet. But the motifs differed in their focus on which role was key.

Luther argued that through \textit{water} baptism a person becomes not just a part of the Christian faith but a priest as all other believers are. “For whoever comes out of the water of baptism,” Luther says, “can boast that [s/he] is already a consecrated priest.”\(^{120}\) For Luther, the baptismal water was the great equalizer between the “spiritual” estate and the “ secular” estate. The place to which the overlords of the Christian faith were reduced to and the place to which the lowly lay-persons were elevated to was the role of priest collectively in the Christian estate. By saying all were priests and their primary function in life as Christians was as priest despite their office in the body of Christ\(^{121}\) was Luther’s way of bringing harmony to the Christian mission where

\(^{119}\) Freedman, \textit{Eerdmans}, 147.
\(^{120}\) Luther, \textit{Works}, 129.
\(^{121}\) See Chapter 1, section 2, for distinctions between body, member, and office.
something like classism was becoming more important. Luther declaring all Christians as priests was a way to rightly identify all Christians as part of Christ’s body and to empower them, together, to manage and minister to the Church and beyond.

For the prophethood motif, Stronstad does not emphasize water baptism but, rather, Spirit baptism as the nexus of Christian discipleship and inauguration into the role of prophet in the faith. Stronstad in a matter-of-factly way says about Pentecost that “this Spirit baptism which the disciples experience is their ‘anointing’ for ministry,”122 which is “prophethood rather than a royal priesthood.”123 For Stronstad, this conclusion is a matter of interpretation and exegesis. In the same way Christ was baptized with the Spirit of God prior to his ministry as prophet, so also the disciples were baptized with the Spirit of God at Pentecost prior to their prophetic ministry in and around Jerusalem.

A final similarity between the motifs is that both fixate on one person of the Godhead to validate and analogously push their motif forward. Although both motifs address and reference all three persons of the Godhead, both ultimately favor one over the other two to justify and expand their perspective. When examining the two motifs, it is clear why they key on Christ and Spirit respectively, but it is unclear (and unfortunate) why both briefly (if at all)

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122 Stronstad, Prophethood, 64.
123 Ibid., 59.
interact with Father and Creator God. This may be another insight into why the two motifs have not been able to work hand-in-hand up to this point.

As was shown in Chapter One, Luther relies heavily upon the person of Jesus Christ to validate (through Christ’s ministry in the world) and analogously extend (through 1 Corinthians 12) the priesthood motif. In regard to the former, Christ, who came as the Great High Priest,\(^{124}\) ministered to Israel in his lifetime as a rabbi who redefined much of the Jewish faith through his teachings (“You have heard it said...but now I say...”), but of equal significance was when Christ became the sinless propitiatory sacrifice once and for all for humankind. In like manner, Christ established Christians as priests who would offer living and spiritual sacrifices in the form of service to one another and neighbor.\(^{125}\) In regard to the latter, Luther really keys on Paul’s analogy of Christ’s body being like the church and the members of the body being the people with Christ at the head. Luther uses this analogy to justify his perspective that in the same way Christ is the Great High Priest and it is his body we are all a part of, all are priests even though they may function in the body in different ways. No member is less than the other, but all are priestly.

As was shown in Chapter Two, the prophethood motif relies heavily on the person of the Holy Spirit to validate and empower prophetic ministry. Even though Stronstad considers Jesus as God’s prophet \textit{par excellence}, the Spirit is

\(^{124}\) Heb. 6:20.
\(^{125}\) Rom. 12:1, 1 Pet. 2:5.
the active agent which empowered Jesus’ prophetic ministry and in turn, empowers the disciples to do the same. “Having been anointed by the Spirit,” Stronstad says, “Jesus becomes the unique bearer of the Spirit and...he pours forth the Spirit upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost.”\(^{126}\) More directly, Stronstad says, “Just as Jesus was the Spirit-anointed prophet, so the disciples, as heirs and successors to his prophetic ministry, become a community of Spirit baptized prophets, the prophethood of all believers.”\(^{127}\) The anointing and baptizing of the Spirit on Jesus and the disciples is the agent who empowers them to be prophets and models for all the believers after them.

The “all believers” motifs are clearly similar in that they both draw their function from Israelite priests and prophets, they both consider the metaphor of baptism as the nexus into Christian discipleship, and they both heavily rely upon a particular person of the Godhead to validate their respective motifs. These similarities create an excellent foundation on which to begin investigating how the differences in each motif are actually just distinctives, rather than divisions, if seen through incorporative Trinitarianism. The distinctives which will be explored are that priests and prophets function uniquely, the priesthood motif focuses on water baptism while the prophethood focuses on Spirit baptism, and the priesthood focuses on Christ while the prophethood focuses on Spirit.

\(^{126}\) Stronstad, *Prophethood*, 43.

\(^{127}\) Ibid 66.
II. Incorporative Trinitarianism

“Incorporative Trinitarianism” is a perspective put forth by the Rev. Dr. Sarah Coakley, the Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge. Coakley’s Trinitarian perspective seems to stem from her in-depth look at “ascetical and monastic literature (both east and west) that sees ‘incorporation’ into the life of the Trinity very differently”\(^{128}\) from those strains of Christianity which have leaned into a particularly “linear” model of Trinity. The “linear” model “marches in sequence from the top of the Trinity to the bottom with little emphasis on any relationship between the three persons and, perhaps correlatively, little on prayer and worship,”\(^{129}\) which is significant since contemplative prayer to Coakley is the entrance into God’s “triunity.” Through her look into monastic literature, Coakley began to ascertain a much more interactive and incorporative relationship within the Trinity as well as the Christian’s (referred to repeatedly as the “prayer-er” by Coakley) “experience” of God and his or her part within God’s incorporative movement.

Coakley, through a variety of articles early in her career,\(^{130}\) attended to a close and insightful reading of Romans 8 where Paul is famously fluid in his

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references between “God”, “Christ”, and “Spirit” (especially, vv. 9·11) which “indicates an ‘experience’ of each of these three is not different in kind than of the others.”  

The “experience” referenced here is the movement the prayer enters into when in prayer with the Triune God. Coakley describes the “experience” of this movement as “divine reflexivity, a sort of answering of God to God in and through the one who prays (Rom. 8:26·27).” Coakley expounds on the “experience” of the Triune God in prayer by saying this “profound, though often fleeting or obscure, sense of entering in prayer into a ‘conversation’ already in play, a reciprocal divine conversation between Father and Spirit which can finally be reduced neither to divine monologue nor human self-transcendence, is our best scriptural description of an irreducibly triune experience.”

It is important to identify the prayer’s experience is not three distinct experiences of each person of the Trinity – “Father”, “Son”, and “Spirit”; rather, “what is being described in [Rom. 8:26·27] is one experience of an activity of prayer that is nonetheless ineluctably, though obscurely, triadic. It is one experience of God, but God as simultaneously (i) doing the praying in me, (ii) receiving that prayer, and (iii) in that exchange, consented to in me,

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131 Byassee, “Closer than Kissing,” 141.  
132 Coakley, Why Three?, 37.  
133 Coakley, Charismatic Experience, 36.  
134 Coakley rightly identifies that having three separate experiences of the three persons of the Trinity would go against the homoeousion principle which “disallows that the different ‘persons’ should be experientially separate, or do different things.” Sarah Coakley, “The Trinity, Prayer, and Sexuality,” in The Holy Spirit: Classic and Contemporary Readings, ed. Eugene F. Rogers, Jr. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 46·47.
inviting me into the Christic life of redeemed sonship.”¹³⁵ What Coakley is describing here is what was referred by her above as a “conversation already in play” between Father and Spirit into which pray-ers are Christically brought into through prayer. Coakley elegantly says it this way: “the ‘Father’ (so-called here) is both source and ultimate object of divine longing in [all people]; the ‘Spirit’ is that irreducibly – though obscurely – distinct enabler and incorporator of that longing in creation – that which makes the creation divine; and the ‘Son’ is that divine and perfected creation, into whose life” the pray-er is caught up.¹³⁶

Thus, God the Father, who is the nexus and object of all desire, is in constant interaction/conversation with God the Spirit “who is the enabler and incorporator of that desire in creation” and is the one who draws (incorporates) creation into divinity and the divine conversation through the Son, Jesus Christ, whom is the archetype of perfected creation. By submitting oneself to God in prayer, the pray-er’s life, call, role, personhood are all incorporated into the divine conversation and sanctified as holy extensions of Godself.

It is through this Trinitarian perspective which the prophethood and priesthood motifs may be unified and their distinctives mutually enriching. Firstly, although the priesthood favors water baptism and the prophethood favors Spirit baptism as the entrance point into Christian discipleship, both have a single authoritative connection point they look to: the baptism of Christ

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¹³⁵ Ibid., 47.
¹³⁶ Ibid.
by John the Baptist. In a single event, Christ is baptized both by water and Spirit which shows their mutually beneficial nature to each other and the Christian. The canonical or textual order of the events is inconsequential; what is of much more significance is how the baptized, now both priests and prophets, recognize their incorporation into the divine through baptism. Through water baptism, a person becomes a new creation in and after the manner of Christ who is perfected creation and it is through water baptism that the Christian practically enters into the life and likeness of Christ. At the same time, to be Spirit baptized is for the Spirit to reorient and redefine the longings of a person towards the Father and incorporate their priestly and prophetic role into the divine through Jesus Christ. It is thus the mutual engagement of water and Spirit baptism, the becoming more in-line with the life of Christ and the will of God through the Spirit, which mutually enriches the understanding of Christian discipleship and thus the ties between priestly and prophetic.

Secondly, the priesthood motif turns to the personhood of Christ to validate its motif, while the prophethood turns to the person of the Spirit. The priesthood motif says Christ, as the Great High Priest, died for humankind as its propitiatory sacrifice and sets up Christians as priests themselves who offer spiritual sacrifices in the manner of Christ (that is, through service and

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137 E.g., in Matthew 3:13-16, Jesus is baptized by water then the Spirit came upon him; also, in Acts 10:44-48, the Spirit comes upon the Gentile household of Cornelius and then they are baptized with water.
servanthood). The prophethood motif says the Holy Spirit is the one who empowers Christians to be prophets and enables them to carry on Christ’s work, the one who is the prophet par excellence. In point of fact, both motifs are correct, but they can be seen correlatively and mutually beneficial through incorporative Trinitarianism. Christ is the perfected model of creation and the Holy Spirit does empower and enable creation towards the Father’s desired ends. Thus, it is by Christians fully embracing their role as both priests and prophets that what it is to be Christ-like and Spirit-like can be more fully expressed. This begs the question, though, regarding the distinct functions of priests within the cult and prophets outside the cult. With such differing placements in the faith, surely their distinct functionalities prevent such “mutual enrichment” at the practical level.

From the outset, with the placement of priests as functioning within the cult and the prophets as functioning from outside, it would seem that at a practical level, the roles could not be mutually enriching and brought under the Trinitarian banner. Yet, upon review of the thesis in its entirety, it is precisely at the point of functionality (arguably the most nuanced point between the motifs) where the motifs are inextricably Trinitarian.

In Chapter One, priests and prophets were identified as both performing oracular and instructional functions on behalf of the cult. The former role involved the communication of direct revelation and the latter teaching and the interpretation of God’s ordinances. Further, it was ascertained that priests
and prophets were both called to serve as intermediaries between people and God in unique yet overlapping ways.

In Chapter Two, Phoebe Palmer’s conclusion that “prophets were preachers, and to prophesy is to preach”138 distinctly unites the roles at the point of “prophetic preaching” or “preaching prophetically.” For Palmer, this is not only the connection point of the roles but also their primary function. To speak of Jesus’ life to others is prophecy (Rev. 19:10), prophecy is evangelism, and evangelism is preaching, which has as its ends the sharing of the Good News which has the power to create new life. Thus, “prophetic preaching” or “preaching prophetically” is the primary function of Christians, and any distinction between the roles ought to have their ends in sharing the Good News.

All distinctive functions of prophets and priests have their ends in the primary function of “prophetic preaching” because, as was shown in this chapter, the Father, whose desires are our desires and is the object of our longings, draws all creation back into right relationship with God and does so by communicating with the Spirit who empowers the preached word and transforms it in the hearts of the hearers so that they may emulate and become like the Word, Jesus Christ. It is precisely through being priestly and attending to issues within the cult that God’s word is preached so as to admonish believers into a deeper servitude to God and into likeness of Christ. Likewise,

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138 Palmer, *Promise of the Father*, 42.
it is through the afflicting words of the prophet which call people out of comfort and back into a sacrificial relationship with God that the Spirit can empower towards the ends of revival and renewal. Both are invaluable and indeed must be mutually recognized by believers as necessarily working together so that the overwhelming greatness of God’s power that is working among the faithful may be recognized and entered into.\textsuperscript{139}

III. Application for Modern-Day Christians

The activity of seeing the prophethood and priesthood motifs as mutually enriching through incorporative Trinitarianism has relevance for modern-day Christian believers who collectively have the roles of priests and prophets. The first, and most indispensable, application is that all Christians pray and do so in the knowledge that as they do, the Triune God is praying through them, receiving their prayer, and making them God-like through incorporation into the divine. Prayer is the means by which priests advocate, intercede, and mediate on behalf of others, and prayer is the means by which prophets come to have the mind of God and are able to know what God desires them to communicate to others so that they may be saved. Christians who forsake prayer deny God’s desires to incorporate them into the divine community and by doing so, they lead others on their own strength down the path of destruction. Prayer is the means of entering the divine and thereby the

\textsuperscript{139} Eph. 1:19.
way, the truth, and the life as priests and prophets of God in preparation to lead others towards the same in God.

Second, as God is one and yet is experienced by Christians triadically, so also the Church should be a community of unified believers who engage the world in as diverse of ways as the people are who make up the Church. The Christian Church must not be made up of individuals who happen to meet communally to worship together. The Church must be a community of priests and prophets who reflect their unity through mutual submission, sacrificial provision, constant joy even in suffering, and, above all, love for one another. It is by this unity that the diverse offices held by Christians in the world may be uniquely impacted by the priestly and prophetic roles of the Christian. Through unity with the Church, the Christian is empowered to act priestly and perform prophetically in a unique and impactful way in the world.

Thirdly, prayerfully and within the faith community, Christians are called to be priestly with one another for the sake of Christ’s body. For Protestants, this application may be more readily understood if phrased as being pastoral to one another. Either way, being priestly or pastoral with one another is an indicator that Christians are also presenting their bodies as living sacrifice to God, which is their “appropriate priestly service.”\footnote{Rom 12:1, Common English Bible Translation.} By admonishing one another in love, encouraging and modeling discipleship, speaking and demonstrating God’s word, and by offering forgiveness and being
humble, one is being priestly and pastoral. That is, one is laying down spiritual sacrifices and having one’s mind transformed and one’s personhood incorporated into the Triune God so one may readily act on behalf of God in God’s church. Modern-day Christians ought not to fear that they are acting out of place when they absolve another of sin, guide another into deeper discipleship, or speak the word of God with authority. For God has established Christians “into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” through which, as God’s priests, Christians “become participants in the divine nature.” Thus, when modern-day Christians are priestly towards one another, despite their position in the body of Christ, they are simultaneously building up the house of God on earth through their servanthood and participating in the ongoing divine conversation between Father and Spirit through Christ and their likeness to him in their priestly acts. Modern-day priest are called to be servants in their leadership, which reflects Christ’s likeness and thus the Triune Godhead here on earth.

Christians are also simultaneously called to act and speak prophetically to the Church and to the world from positions outside the safety of the faith community. For some Protestants, the act of prophesying may seem a fantastical act from Old Testament times as it is usually relegated to the act of fore-telling (to predict or reveal the future). Yet, much of what has been spoken

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141 1 Pet 2:5.
142 2 Pet 1:4.
about and referenced in this thesis has had to do with *forthtelling*, the act of presenting truth – in particular the Good News – to a group of people. To this task all are called and all are prophetic when they do so. For some, the Good News is healing, restorative and salvific; for others, the Good News is a stumbling block. This much has certainly been foretold.\footnote{Isa 53:1-5, 10.} With this knowledge, Christians ought to be spurred on to speaking out that which the Holy Spirit has put on their heart and mind from the mind of God and use any cultural means necessary to make that message known to others. Be it a message of correction to the faith community or an admonishment to the unbelieving culture, the prophet is called to be faithful to presenting the message God has given her and leave the final judgment to God. Modern-day Christians can certainly participate in the engagement of prophecy through presenting the Good News from beyond the safety of the faith community in order to faithfully present the word of the Lord to those who need to hear it.

Finally, and most notably, the modern-day Christian must strive in all they do to “prophetically preach” the Good News to all in their words and actions. As the functions of priests and prophets converge in the prophetic preaching of the word, so also modern-day Christians, who are the body of priests and prophets, must also allow the Spirit of God to empower them to be witnesses unto the Living God and incorporate all who are destined into living and loving community of the Trinity. One must be wary of thinking of oneself
as simply a priest within the faith community or a prophet post-church who is constantly offering correction. The Christian, as the Church at large, must live the paradoxical tension of priest and prophet; prophetically preaching as a priest within the community as well as preaching prophetically as a prophet from without into the faith community or to the unbelieving culture. The word of God must go out, constantly reaching the eyes, ears, hearts, and minds of people so that they too can be incorporated into the divine reality.

IV. Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to (1) expand on the roles and functions of priests and prophets as presented in the Israelite religion, so that (2) the priesthood and prophethood motifs could be fleshed-out and readily understood within Christianity, in order to (3) show how they may be mutually enriching when viewed through incorporative Trinitarianism, to the end (4) of applying the unified perspective of the motifs in the lives of modern-day Christian prophets and priests.
Bibliography


