

The Priesthood

By

Peter Martin

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“Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron and Aaron’s sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. “And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. “So you shall speak to all who are gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron’s garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest. “And these are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and a sash. So they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister to Me as priest.”

-Exodus 28:1-4

In this study we will finish our discussion on the fourth commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy. As we have been discussing, this commandment has far more implications than the Sabbath day itself, but instead teaches us about how our God, who is holy and distinct from His creation, communicates His nature to His people by *hallowing* certain things and expressing His nature through them. So far we have talked about visions and dreams of God, Holy days, and the structure of the tabernacle. We will now finish this topic by talking about the priesthood.

Before we talk about the actual vocation of priests in ancient Israel, I wanted to point out that, like the tabernacle itself, God communicates the purpose and importance of the priesthood not through a detailed description of the thing in question, but a description of the outer adornments. It is for this reason that most modern readers will skip over these sections. What the modern reader is looking for is a detailed explanation of what a priest was to do, or what the tabernacle was used for. However, for the ancient person, the picture of the vestments was more useful than a description of the office.

The High Priest's Golden Garments

Shemot/Exodus 28



Like the tabernacle structure, the above image was more than simply an aesthetically pleasing pattern of clothing, instead it was a visual depiction of the purpose of God for the individual and even a depiction of His nature.

This is a bit of an aside, but I feel compelled to mention it here, for the ancient person what I have just said would be obvious, but for the modern person, we struggle to associate the spiritual and the physical. This applies to clothing itself. For the ancient person, the idea that clothing was meant to communicate spiritual things was an obvious point, but the modern person struggles with this concept. When a modern person thinks about their apparel, they tend to only consider two things, is my clothing appropriate and does it look good (some don't think about the first point). As such, when we read passages like this:

“...in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.”

-1 Timothy 2:9-10

We tend to only see an exhortation of modesty. While modesty is in view here, it isn't the main focus. Instead Paul makes the direct connection between how someone presents themselves outwardly, and who they are inwardly. Paul is then using that common understanding to exhort the women of the church, some of whom were new converts, to consider how to dress in a “modest” way. Which in this context is not about being sexually modest, though this is indirectly in view, but instead modest in the sense of not extravagant or gaudy. In other words, not dressing to call obscene amounts of attention to yourself, but instead to focus on “clothing” yourself with good works.

This is a piece of ancient wisdom which would be well received in our modern world. Whether we like it or not, the way we adorn ourselves *does* communicate something to the outside world, and this communication is more than aesthetic. Early on in my pastorate, I was confronted with this in my own clothing. I have always wanted to dress comfortably, and that meant dressing too casually. I never put much thought into how I dressed, until this concept came home to me, that the way I dressed, particularly when I preached or counseled someone, did communicate something to them. And oftentimes what I was communicating was a lack of care or attention.

While the main emphasis of the Bible is on the spiritual, we must keep in mind that the physical is designed to express the spiritual. But I think that is enough of a tangent, let's get back to the point at hand.

Christ Our High Priest

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

-Hebrews 4:14-16

Like with our discussion of the tabernacle, most Christians studying this passage merely want to relate the ministry of the High Priest to Christ and move on. While the central purpose of the priesthood, and all other things in creation, is to give glory to Christ Himself, this does not remove the deeper implications of the priesthood itself. So let's

go in a different direction than usual and begin with a discussion of Christ fulfilling the ministry of the priesthood and then talk about the other implications.

“You shall put the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban. “And you shall take the anointing oil, pour it on his head, and anoint him.”

-Exodus 29:6-7

The first and most obvious thing to point out is that the priests were consecrated through this anointing ceremony. Oil in the ancient world was a picture of purity, since oil doesn't dissolve materials really well, making its purity obvious. It was also a picture of luxury since it was costly, and often was used to make various fragrances. But it was also a picture of mediation since it could be used as a lubricant. A lubricant is something that can “mediate” between two conflicting forces, creating harmony and a lack of friction.

Because of these factors, and a few others, this ceremony was used to consecrate priests, kings, and prophets for their ministry before God. The word “anoint” in Hebrew is “Massa”, from which comes the term “Messiah”, or the “anointed one”. In the Greek language this word was “Christ”. In fact in some more traditional forms of Christianity there is a ceremony called “Chrismation” where someone is anointed with oil. So right off the bat, since Jesus does reveal Himself to be the “Christ” or “Messiah” or “Anointed One”, we are invited to apply the descriptions of the priest to the ministry of Jesus. And since the writer of Hebrews does a far better job of explaining this connection than I ever could we will simply look at a passage from Hebrews to understand this point:

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me.”

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.

Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me—

To do Your will, O God.’” Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never

take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”

-Hebrews 10:1-14

The priest was the mediator between God and man. He was there to offer up the sacrifices of the people to God and light the incense on the golden altar as a sign that he was offering the prayers and sacrifices of the people to God. But he was also there to light the candles of the tabernacle and stock the showbread on the table in the tabernacle. This was a picture of how the priest was there to manifest the essence of God to the people. The priest was a “holy middleman” moving between man and God and allowing for fellowship to exist between both.

What the writer of Hebrews points out though is that their role was always flawed. They could never offer up the “best” of man to God, and therefore man was never “good enough” to enter into the presence of God, but he was also inadequate to reveal the nature of God to man, since they were fallible and mortal. Christ, being a perfect man, was able to offer up to God the life of a perfect man which allows for true integration between God and man, but He was also able to express God’s essence to man in the fullest possible way since He is God.

This ministry is so perfect that the patterns of the tabernacle and the priesthood are complete in Christ Himself. And since they can’t be added to, our need for these physical structures has passed. This then applies to the church itself. I like how this one Anglican author put this point, even though the Anglican church does still use the title of “priest” within their structure:

“The first of these foundational doctrines is that there is but one true priest and mediator for humanity: Jesus Christ, “the one mediator between God and men” (1 Tim. 2:5, ESV), our “great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God” (Heb 4:14). The writer of Hebrews is the most emphatic that Christ is our one mediating priest. As Robert Terwilliger notes, “Jesus is the end of all other priesthoods.”[3] Five times our Prayer Book invokes Jesus as “our only Mediator and Advocate.”[4] Integral to this is that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was complete and efficacious at that Good Friday moment—in Anglican Prayer Book terms that Christ “made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.” The mediating action of the priest to repeat or continue or apply the sacrifice of the Mass was thereby unnecessary. That work on our account at Golgotha was finished, full-stop, by Christ, our one mediator, our one priest.

The second truth is that the Church is a priesthood of all believers. Indeed, Christ made his church “a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (Rev 1:6) and “a holy priesthood.” (1 Pet 2:5). The writer of Hebrews plainly stresses the role of the church as priestly (Heb 13:10-16). While some Protestants often give an individualistic gloss to this doctrine—at times wrongly distorting it into the notion of “private judgment,” Terwilliger rightly observes, “it cannot mean the priesthood of each believer separately, but the priesthood of the whole body which is the body of Christ the priest, in whom all Christians are members together.”[5] It is worth noting that the writer of Hebrews did not see the notion of a single mediating priest and a Church that was also a priesthood as in any way incongruous or contradictory. As Thomas Hopko notes, these two priesthoods are in fact one and the same—and the “sacramental priesthood is the objective sacramental realization and expression within the church of this one priesthood.”[6]

-Alexander Whitaker - “The Protestant Problem with Priesthood”

He articulates this perfectly. Since Christ has fulfilled the role of the priest before God, the old testament version of the priest is no longer efficacious for us. However, like the tabernacle, this doesn't destroy this office on the earth, but allows for the church to fulfill the office in Christ. The Old Covenant pointed to the eventual coming of Christ, the church points back to the person of Christ. To put this point another way, the Old Testament priest pointed forward to the ultimate priest, Christ, while the church in our priestly role points back to the priestly ministry of Christ, who alone has reconciled mankind to God.

We will discuss this point in more depth as we go along, but for now it is merely important to know that Christ has fulfilled the office of priest. But since the church is called a “kingdom of priests”, the office of priest still communicates to us how to live in this present age, and how to honor God.

Holy Turban

“You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet:

HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

“And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the turban; it shall be on the front of the turban. “So it shall be on Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD. “You shall skillfully weave the tunic of fine linen thread, you shall make the turban of fine linen, and you shall make the sash of woven work. “For Aaron’s sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make

sashes for them. And you shall make hats for them, for glory and beauty. "So you shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him. You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests. "And you shall make for them linen trousers to cover their nakedness; they shall reach from the waist to the thighs. "They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they come into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place, that they do not incur iniquity and die. It shall be a statute forever to him and his descendants after him."

-Exodus 28:36-43

The first thing we notice about the priest's vestments is his head. He was to have a white turban with a golden plaque that read "Holy to the Lord". Off the bat this means that the priest does two primary things, he was a "figurehead" of purity before God, or to put that another way, he was an ideal of purity that others could look up to. But he was also someone who could instruct people how to become "Holy to the Lord", or to teach people how they could offer up their lives to God. Let's take these points in turn.

Priests as the Ideal

"The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."

-1 Peter 5:1-4

Like the priest class of the Old Covenant, the modern pastor is supposed to lead the people of God towards God through our example. This is an idea that is also expressed directly through the clothing of the priest. The fact that the office of the priesthood was expressed through the vestments tells us that the priest was someone to be watched and emulated. This is another reason why the Bible emphasizes the beauty of the vestments:

"For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make sashes for them. And you shall make hats for them, for glory and beauty."

-Exodus 28:40

Like the tabernacle, the vestments were specifically supposed to be beautiful. They were meant to be looked upon and studied. The difference between this and the tabernacle is that these clothes were worn by a person. These beautiful garments

adorned the body of a man who was himself supposed to be the ideal for the community.

When we think about the holy men and women of God, this makes sense. In one sense we are all priests and saints, we have all been set apart by the work of God's Son to serve in His heavenly temple. But even so, there are individuals who we look up to as being examples of the faith. Like the women that Paul exhorted in 1 Timothy 2, the one who serves God must adorn themselves with more than clothing, they must be adorned with virtue and good works. They are supposed to be examples to others of how to follow God. This is expressed in other areas of the New Testament like Paul's list of qualifications for an elder within the church:

"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);"

-1 Timothy 3:1-5

In one sense the conduct described above should be striven for by all who follow God. But the pastor should be one who particularly embodies this conduct as an example to those who are following him. Meaning that the ministry of the priest, like the ministry of the pastor, is not merely to speak about God, or do mighty works in the name of God, but one who lives their life as an example of honoring God. I like how the early church father Gregory the Great put this point:

"No one presumes to teach an art till he has first, with intent meditation, learnt it. What rashness is it, then, for the unskilful to assume pastoral authority, since the government of souls is the art of arts!"

-Gregory the Great - "The Book of Pastoral Rule"

If we haven't learned to govern ourselves, we shouldn't attempt to govern others. Does this mean that the priest or the pastor is called to be perfect? No, but in all things they were to be an example to the flock in righteousness, and repentance when they fell short:

"You shall also have the bull brought before the tabernacle of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the bull. "Then you shall kill the bull before the LORD, by the door of the tabernacle of meeting. "You shall take some of the blood

of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and pour all the blood beside the base of the altar. "And you shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe attached to the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, and burn them on the altar. "But the flesh of the bull, with its skin and its offal, you shall burn with fire outside the camp. It is a sin offering."

-Exodus 29:10-14

At their "inauguration" as priests, Aaron and his sons were called to offer up a sin offering. This means that the first offering they were to make was for themselves, before they offered up sacrifices for others. The writer of Hebrews points out that this becomes a normal structure for the temple moving forward and uses it as a way to show our need for Christ as our High Priest:

"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself."

-Hebrews 7:26-27

While this is a flaw within the law, it is also an important facet of the law and explains to us why God still uses sinful men to lead His church. Christ shows us what it means to live a life that is perfect before God. This shows us what we aren't and exposes to us our need for a Savior. But one thing that Christ can't show us is how to repent, since He never made a mistake. The priest became a symbol for the people to understand their innate fallenness before God, but then they showed the path of atonement and reconciliation with God to the people.

Unfortunately by the time that Christ had arrived, the religious elites of the day had interpreted the Law in such a way that they felt that they didn't sin. This is how the apostle Paul expresses his belief about his own righteousness before knowing Christ:

"...concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."

-Philippians 3:6

The religious elite of Jesus' day considered themselves blameless before the Law, and therefore not in need of any sacrifice to be forgiven before God. This is expressed clearly by Christ in Luke 18 when He describes a religious leader who merely extolls his own virtue before God, whereas the tax collector merely beats his breast and confesses himself to be a sinner. When the religious elite start portraying themselves as perfect, they have lost their given estate and made a mockery of their own faith. They have filled

the people that they desire to lead with nothing but despair and hypocrisy. Religion stops being about dealing with sin and pursuing righteousness, and it becomes merely an outward show of hypocritical righteousness. This helps us understand the ephod in their vestments:

“They shall take the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and the fine linen, “and they shall make the ephod of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, artistically worked. “It shall have two shoulder straps joined at its two edges, and so it shall be joined together. “And the intricately woven band of the ephod, which is on it, shall be of the same workmanship, made of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen.”

-Exodus 28:5-8

The ephod was an ornate *covering*, almost like an apron, that went over the priest's clothes. This was meant to symbolize God's glory covering the frailty of man and enabling them to minister before Him. But, this symbol was corrupted by the people of God and they created ornate ephods of their own, devoid of a priest to wear it, and worshiped the ephod. This happens most notably in Judges 8. This is a symbol of idolizing the external glory of a priest as opposed to seeking the God who covered the priest with His holiness. This corrupts society and gives a false view of holiness and righteousness.

I like how the pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer put this point when talking about a “pious” community:

“The final break-through to fellowship does not occur, because, though they have fellowship with one another as believers and as devout people, they do not have fellowship as the undevout, as sinners. The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So everybody must conceal his sin from himself and from the fellowship. We dare not be sinners. Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy. The fact is that we are sinners!”

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer - “Life Together”

This is why Jesus went to the tax collectors and sinners. These were the people who were cast out of the religious system that only permitted the perfect to enter. These were people wanting to repent, but were given a view of religion that taught them that they were unworthy of repentance, Christ came to show them something different. This is why He speaks mockingly to the religious leaders of His day when they confronted Him about this:

“And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” When Jesus heard that, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. “But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

-Matthew 9:11-13

The Old Testament priest didn't represent the perfect person, but the ideal person who is flawed. He wasn't supposed to show a perfect life, but instead was supposed to reveal the redemption of a flawed life. This is supposed to occur in our modern world as well.

Pomegranates Bells

“There shall be an opening for his head in the middle of it; it shall have a woven binding all around its opening, like the opening in a coat of mail, so that it does not tear. “And upon its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, all around its hem, and bells of gold between them all around: “a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe all around. “And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy place before the LORD and when he comes out, that he may not die.”

-Exodus 28:32-35

This image is also seen in the fringe of their robes that bear golden bells in the shape of pomegranates. A pomegranate is interesting because it is clearly a symbol of fruit, as in the natural good conduct that emerges from the life of true virtue. But also, the pomegranate is a fruit whose sweetness is made up of seed. Meaning that the priest's life should be filled with good conduct that brings about more and more seeds of goodness and virtue to all those around them. I like how Gregory of Nyssa saw this symbol:

“Therefore, may faith resound with pure and great sound in the preaching of the Holy Trinity; may life imitate the nature of the fruit of the pomegranate. Its appearance is of something incomprehensible because it is covered with a hard and rough skin, but its interior is pleasant to see by the varied and beautiful way of locating the fruit. And it is even more pleasant to taste, for its sweet taste. The wise and austere way of life is neither pleasant nor soft to the senses, but it is full of good hopes and ripening timely. When our gardener opens the pomegranate of life at the right time and shows the beauty of what is kept in it, then participation in its own fruits will be sweet for those who enjoy them. For the divine Apostle says that every discipline in the present does not

seem to bring joy but sadness, that is the first impression of one who touches the pomegranate, but then it bears the fruit of peace. This is the sweetness of the edible interior.”

-Gregory of Nyssa - “The Life of Moses

From the top of their head to the bottom of their robe, the priests show them to be the ideal for the nation.

Sacrifice and Holiness

This leads to the golden plaque on the priest’s forehead. The priest was supposed to mediate between God and man, teaching men how to become holy to their God, predominately through the offering of sacrifice to God:

“Then you shall kill the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tip of the right ear of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar.”

-Exodus 29:20

We talked about this a little in our last paper, while animal sacrifice is scandalous to us modern people, it was perfectly rational and good to our ancestors. The reason is because they saw blood as the physical expression of spirit, which is why they imagined the spirit, or the center of consciousness, to be in the heart and not the brain. This is why it made sense to them to take the symbol of life and spirit, and use it to consecrate the items devoted to God, who was the Lord of all spirit and flesh. As such, what more fitting way to consecrate the priests of God but with an anointing with this same material?

It was for this reason why the Jews were forbidden to drink the blood of their sacrifices. This wasn’t a mere hygienic reason, it was because to God alone belonged the source of all life, namely the blood. The blood was to be “consumed” in the fires of sacrifice and “carried” to the throne of God in the form of the ascending smoke. Herein lies the most important facet of the priest, they show us how to transform our material blessings into spiritual praise.

This is the primary function of the priest in every given society. They help people orient themselves towards the highest good of the society, to take the physical elements of their life and then translate them into spiritual language. This is why the priest didn’t just make offerings for sin, but also for peace and for praise. But as mediators they do the opposite as well, they take the spiritual blessings of God and manifest them in physical form. Like taking the “light” of God, and using it to light the golden lampstand in the

tabernacle, or to take “communion” with God and manifest it in the show bread. Mattieu Pageau articulates this point fairly well:

“This basic structure simply corresponds to the two transactions between heaven and earth with a priest mediating between them. On one side, the purpose of the altar was to refine matter or “raise flesh into heaven.” On the other side, the purpose of the tent was to materialize meaning or “lower breath into the earth.” Together, the altar and the tent were technologies that transformed matter into meaning and vice versa... Finally, the most sacred part of the temple, the Ark of the Covenant.. was meant to reflect, reproduce, and even re-present God within creation... Simply stated, one must “feed the spiritual” to make it visible, explicit, detailed, and tangible. This pattern is self-evident in biblical cosmology, and it is only because of materialism that these rituals seem cryptic to modern interpreters.”

-Matthieu Pageau - “The Language of Creation

The priests were “meaning makers”. They took the normal physical occurrences of everyday life and they ascribed cosmic significance to them. This is explicit in the sacrifices for praise, but it is also implicit in sacrifices for sin. This concept is also expressed in the way that a priest would attend to things like disease amongst the people of God. It might sound strange to us that the Israelites conjoined the identities of the priest, who cares for the spirit, and the physician who cares for the body, but nothing could be more natural which is why Christ also heals the physical while attending to the spiritual. Here is another quote from Matthieu Pageau on this topic:

“...biblical cosmology is much wider than the scientific definition because it is based on meaning rather than mechanism... the concept of disease is synonymous with the concept of ‘time’ in biblical cosmology. It is a manifestation of change (transformation) when experienced at the human scale. It is the inability to maintain the body’s structural integrity as the identity gradually loses its grasp on the flesh of the body. This is often the result of “sin” through contamination from the outside, either by toxic food or exposure to foreign substances...”

-Matthieu Pageau - “The Language of Creation

Think about a doctor’s visit and this might make more sense. We go to a doctor usually because we are noticing physical symptoms, but don’t know their more significant meaning. We go to the doctor so that they can interpret the signs and then correctly orient our bodies towards healing. In essence, this is what a priest does. They examine the “sin” in your life.

The word “sin” in Scripture simply means to “miss the mark”. In other words a confession of “sin” was a confession of how a person was “missing the mark” in their life. It was an acknowledgement of falling short either through an explicit transgression, or merely an implicit failure to live as they ought. The priest sees the “sin” as a symptom of a deeper spiritual problem. They then gave a ritual to a person to express the mystery of how they could become right with God, but also how they could be made right with their fellow man. Let’s look at a sin offering to understand this better:

“And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing; and he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin.”

-Leviticus 5:5-6

The first thing that the priest represented to the individual was the altar. The priest was communicating to the person who arrived that in order to be “holy to God”, they would require great sacrifice. This not only foreshadows the sacrifice of Christ, but it also shows the person that in order for them to change, truly and fully, they must be willing to make sacrifices. Take the simple example that Christ gives His own followers:

“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

-Matthew 5:23-24

Christ is showing that the offering of sacrifice to God was not only to make atonement with God, but to reveal the process of repentance in general. As an example Christ talks about making things right with “your brother”. If someone was going to confess to a priest that they had a relationship with someone that wasn’t working out, the ministry of the priest was not supposed to stop at the altar, but was supposed to then communicate to the person how to make things right with their brother, and this requires great sacrifice.

It might be a sacrifice of pride, to admit wrong to the person that we have sinned against. It might be a sacrifice of wrath, to be willing to forgive a great wrong done to us. It might go deeper and require actual acts of fidelity to the other person to show the sorrow and repentance that had taken place in their heart. This is just one example, but it helps us understand how this process works in general.

This is also why confession of sin had to be made over the sacrifice. The priest was not simply there to address general sin, but to address particular sin. This is what makes confession so hard. It is easy to confess that in general we sin, but it is very difficult to admit to the more particular areas of struggle and failure. But in the particular confession of sin, they were able to receive particular forgiveness and counsel to help move forward.

The Church and the Priesthood

Christ's sacrifice doesn't do away with this process, but it does give it new meaning. The Old Testament sacrificial system pointed to the eventual sacrifice of Christ and so it needed to be embodied with a literal sacrifice. The New Testament system is designed to point back to the sacrifice that was already given. To put this another way, the priests were there to present the offerings of Israel that foreshadowed the Lamb of God, while the pastors of the New Covenant re-present the offering of Christ to help the individual believer "apply" that offering to their individual circumstances. This is why we are encouraged to ask for forgiveness from God:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

-1 John 1:8-10

"And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors."

-Matthew 6:12

This doesn't mean that Christ's sacrifice only applies to confessed sins, but that a guilty conscience is only assured in particular confession. Sin brings division naturally, and in order for that division to be repaired there needs to be confession and an attempt to make amends, this is what the confession and the sacrifice were in the Old Covenant. In the New Covenant, the various rituals that we perform re-present what Christ has already done:

"What happened to us in baptism is bestowed upon us anew in confession. We are delivered out of darkness into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. That is joyful news. Confession is the renewal of the joy of baptism. 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning' (Ps. 30.5). The day of the Lord's Supper is an occasion of joy for the Christian community. Reconciled in their hearts with God and the brethren, the congregation receives the gift of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and, receiving that, it receives forgiveness, new life, and salvation. It is given new fellowship with God

and men. The fellowship of the Lord's Supper is the superlative fulfilment of Christian fellowship. As the members of the congregation are united in body and blood at the table of the Lord so will they be together in eternity. Here the community has reached its goal. Here joy in Christ and his community is complete. The life of Christians together under the Word has reached its perfection in the sacrament."

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer - "Life Together"

Notice how Bonhoeffer relates confession to the two main sacraments of the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which themselves are re-presentations of Christ's applied work for the believer. Quick side-note, the main difference between protestants and Catholics is our view of the priesthood on this point. The Catholic believes that only particular priests can receive confession, whereas the Protestant church believes that since we are a kingdom of priests, that we can have this need met in confession to any believer.

"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

-James 5:16

The issues of Israel plague the church as well. The church can easily be a place of false righteousness, a place where we pretend to be perfect as opposed to a place where we learn to become more righteous. This requires us to confess our sins to each other. To drop the pretense of perfection and to learn to confess our sin before a fellow believer who will counsel us in accordance with God's word and pray for us.

The Modern Priesthood

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."

-2 Timothy 4:3-4

I have been hinting at this point throughout this paper, but it is important to note that every culture will have their own priest class. We need to have a class of people who we try to emulate in our conduct and who will explain to us the meaning behind the physical occurrences of our life and give us correct orientation. This is the class of people that we confess to, and seek counsel from.

Our culture, secular as we are, is no different. As stated before, most cultures associate the role of the priest with the role of the physician in their society, and we have done the exact same thing. The modern priest of our culture is the modern psychologist. This

might sound strange until we stop and think about it. When a modern person is dealing with sin, some area where they are falling short or making mistakes, they consult a psychiatrist to help them understand what is wrong with their “psyche”, which is the Greek word for “spirit”.

They believe there is something “diseased” with their psyche, or “mental health” and they seek remedy and counsel from this class of people. After all, what is a counseling session but a time of confession? One of the early luminaries in the field of psychoanalysis, Carl Jung, made this point explicit in his essay, *“Psychotherapists or the Clergy”* which is contained in a collection of his essays entitled “Modern Man in Search For a Soul”:

“The first beginnings of all analytical treatment are to be found in its prototype, the confessional. Since, however, the two practices have no direct causal connection, but rather grow from a common psychic root, it is difficult for an outsider to see at once the relation between the groundwork of psychoanalysis and the religious institution of the confessional. As soon as man was capable of conceiving the idea of sin, he had recourse to psychic concealment—or, to put it in analytical language, repressions arose. Anything that is concealed is a secret. The maintenance of secrets acts like a psychic poison which alienates their possessor from the community. In small doses, this poison may actually be a priceless remedy, even an essential preliminary to the differentiation of the individual.”

-Carl Jung - “Modern Man in Search For a Soul”

This language is almost identical to how pastors like Bonhoeffer describe the need for confession in the church. What Jung and Freud called “psychic repression” is indistinguishable from the concept of “unconfessed sin” in Christian thought. Take this quote from Bonhoeffer and compare it with Jung’s above statement to drive this point home:

“Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation. Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light. In the darkness of the unexpressed it poisons the whole being of a person.”

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer - “Life Together”

This is clearly what has happened, but the question we need to ask is, is it a bad thing? The obvious answer is yes. Remember that Christ heals the physical to get at the far more important disorder in the spirit. In the same way, the priest is primarily there to

help a person take their physical problems and bring them to God. The psychiatrist can't do this. This is not to say that I don't believe in psychological disorders, I absolutely do, but even in the presence of a psychological disorder, this doesn't negate spiritual sin that acts upon the psychological disorders. Even Jung admits this is true:

“Although the theories of Freud and Adler come much nearer to getting at the bottom of the neuroses than does any earlier approach to the question from the side of medicine, they still fail, because of their exclusive concern with the drives, to satisfy the deeper spiritual needs of the patient. They are still bound by the premises of nineteenth century science, and they are too self-evident—they give too little value to fictional and imaginative processes. In a word, they do not give meaning enough to life. And it is only the meaningful that sets us free.”

-Carl Jung - “Man's Search for Meaning”

The modern priesthood is a reversal of the ancient priesthood. Instead of taking the material issues of everyday life and offering them up to a spiritual solution, they take psychic problems and offer them down to biological causes and solutions. This is why we have lost the language of “sin” in our culture and instead speak incessantly about “hurts, traumas, and disorders”. In our modern view there is no personal autonomy in our failures, and there is no one higher than ourselves who we owe anything to.

This is another failure of the modern priesthood. The ancient priesthood taught people that their lives were about serving God. The offering of blood was a sign that God was *owed* every part of our lives. The only reason why we were to regret sin was because it was *against* God and the only reason why we were to crave righteousness is because it honored God. The modern psychiatrist is oriented at making our lives more comfortable and to help us achieve our own personal goals. This isn't a bad thing in itself, but devoid of any higher purpose, it is turning us into narcissists. This partially explains the modern obsession with empathy and compassion.

In the ancient world, the primary problem that the priest was supposed to solve was how to discern the will of God for individual circumstances. This is why Aaron had to carry the “Urim and Thumim” in his robes.

“And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.”

-Exodus 28:30

We aren't going to discuss what these were, because honestly we don't really know, but what we do know is that they were used to determine God's will in a particular

circumstance. However, the modern psychiatrist is not really concerned with the will of God, but only in the good of the one that they are counseling. Meaning that the highest will that needs to be consulted is the emotional world of the person seeking therapy. This in turn teaches us that the highest “word” that we have to follow, is the voice of our own emotions. This also means that the therapist believes that simply “hearing” and “empathizing” with their client will have a curative effect. I like how the journalist Abigail Shrier puts this point in her book “Bad Therapy”:

“This may explain why therapists sometimes inadvertently encourage a client to divorce by making relationship-undermining statements and portraying the absent spouse unfavorably. It’s not that these therapists are necessarily callous; they may simply be empathic. Therapists readily empathize with the paying clients in front of them over those who have no opportunity to testify in their own defense.”

-Abigail Shrier - “Bad Therapy”

Since the modern therapist is not held to any higher “word” they are only subject to the “word” and emotions of their client. This makes their counsel skewed to whatever would benefit the person they are counseling. This has catastrophic consequences that I believe we are seeing now, but also that Abigail Shrier lays out really well:

“In the contemporary therapeutic school environment, students are not merely tyrannized by their own feelings. They live under the tyranny of each other’s. And unlike the strict schools of bygone eras, the contemporary rule of feelings is endlessly capricious, vague in its dictates, unconcerned with facts or evidence... Make fairness your guide and you lay the groundwork for treating everyone equally. But put empathy in charge—feel the pain of the “victims” in front of you—and you’re not only likely to treat the “out group” much worse. You may even treat everyone worse.”

-Abigail Shrier - “Bad Therapy”

It is ironic, but also not surprising, that in our world that prizes empathy, tolerance, and compassion above all else, we are becoming increasingly intolerant, unjust, callous, selfish, and cruel. Because we value our own emotional world above all else, and because we think that self-examination, self-expression, and medication will cure all our ills, we have forgotten the virtue and genuine self-sacrifice necessary to love others, which is the fulfillment of the law.

The ancient priest, as well as the modern Christian shouldn’t offer people these kinds of answers, we will discuss this point more in a second, but ultimately what sacrifice teaches is that transformation is hard, that the difficulties in our life more than likely have something to do with our own sin, and in order to change we must be willing to

sacrifice and seek the will of God above our own. The sacrifice also teaches us that we won't be made better by avoiding the things that we fear, but by being exposed to death and tragedy, and learning to find God in these things. This process is arduous, which is why confession was a type of regular relationship attached to the process of discipleship and sanctification.

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

-Galatians 6:1-2

By classifying this process as “therapy” the modern priesthood has given people the idea that this process is a form of “treatment” intended to “heal”. While some sort of emotional healing and catharsis can take place, remember the purpose is growth and discipleship through confession and repentance. In other words, the purpose is to address the sin in us, not the sin in others, or, primarily, to make us feel understood. Compassion and empathy help in a discipleship relationship, but it isn't the point.

Also, the connotation of “healing” suggests that there is something external that is broken that is *causing* the sin. While certain factors can exaggerate our sinful inclinations and they are worth examining, the greatest burden in our souls comes from the division between our spirit and our flesh:

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

-Galatians 5:17

This is an *innate* condition of the human being. The reason why I am tempted to lust is not *caused* by some sort of past trauma. Something like this might *exaggerate* my struggles, but it is not causative. My flesh, the fallen part of my nature, *innately* lusts against the higher desires of my spirit. It wants to lust, act in wrath, and remain proud simply because those things satisfy the base urges of my flesh. If I can't admit that, then this process will be *more* about laying blame than about dealing with myself, which is the purpose of the priesthood. I like how Oswald Chambers puts this in his devotional, “My Utmost for His Highest”:

“In the matter of drudgery. Peter said in this passage that we have become “partakers of the divine nature” and that we should now be “giving all diligence,” concentrating on forming godly habits (2 Peter 1:4–5). We are to “add” to our lives all that character means. No one is born either naturally or supernaturally with character; it must be

developed. Nor are we born with habits—we have to form godly habits on the basis of the new life God has placed within us. We are not meant to be seen as God’s perfect, bright-shining examples, but to be seen as the everyday essence of ordinary life exhibiting the miracle of His grace. Drudgery is the test of genuine character. The greatest hindrance in our spiritual life is that we will only look for big things to do. Yet, “Jesus . . . took a towel and . . . began to wash the disciples’ feet” (John 13:3–5). We all have those times when there are no flashes of light and no apparent thrill to life, where we experience nothing but the daily routine with its common everyday tasks. The routine of life is actually God’s way of saving us between our times of great inspiration which come from Him. Don’t always expect God to give you His thrilling moments, but learn to live in those common times of the drudgery of life by the power of God. It is difficult for us to do the “adding” that Peter mentioned here. We say we do not expect God to take us to heaven on flowery beds of ease, and yet we act as if we do! I must realize that my obedience even in the smallest detail of life has all of the omnipotent power of the grace of God behind it. If I will do my duty, not for duty’s sake but because I believe God is engineering my circumstances, then at the very point of my obedience all of the magnificent grace of God is mine through the glorious atonement by the Cross of Christ.”

-Oswald Chambers - “My Utmost For His Highest”

When Christ saw the sorry state of Jewish culture during His life, He primarily laid the blame at the feet of the priest class. He said of them:

“Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”

-Matthew 15:14

The problem with modern therapy is not that it is filled with liars and hypocrites, though every system has their share of them, but that it is filled with people who genuinely believe these things that what they are sharing is helping people. But when the younger generation, who has spent more time with these “modern priests” than any generation prior, has more psychological problems than any other previous generation, I believe the results speak for themselves.

Breastplate of Community

“Then you shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel: “six of their names on one stone and six names on the other stone, in order of their birth. “With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel. You shall set them in

settings of gold. “And you shall put the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. So Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders as a memorial. “You shall also make settings of gold, “and you shall make two chains of pure gold like braided cords, and fasten the braided chains to the settings. You shall make the breastplate of judgment. Artistically woven according to the workmanship of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, you shall make it. “It shall be doubled into a square: a span shall be its length, and a span shall be its width. “And you shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones: The first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; this shall be the first row; “the second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond; “the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; “and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold settings. “And the stones shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes.”

-Exodus 28:9-21

“So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy place, as a memorial before the LORD continually.”

-Exodus 28:29

Let's wrap up this talk with a discussion of the heart of the priest. All that we have said previously merely reflects the *purpose* of the priesthood, what they are supposed to do, this next section tells us something of the heart of the priest, what they are supposed to be like. Upon the shoulders of the priest, as well as upon their heart, the priest is the one who bears the burdens of the people that they minister to.

Either one of these symbols taken separately would be out of balance. If we only had the symbol of the two dark stones with the names written on the shoulders, we get the picture of hard responsibility. The priest in this image is a just and fair ruler who dispenses wise counsel and even judgement when the appropriate time comes. This is the image that the apostle Paul reveals in passages like this:

“And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

-1 Corinthians 5:2-5

But if we only took the image of the breastplate with disparate stones all with individual tribes written upon them hanging before their heart, we would get the picture of a gentle and compassionate individual, there to empathize with those who came to him and intercede for them in persistent prayer. This is the picture that Paul shows in passages like this:

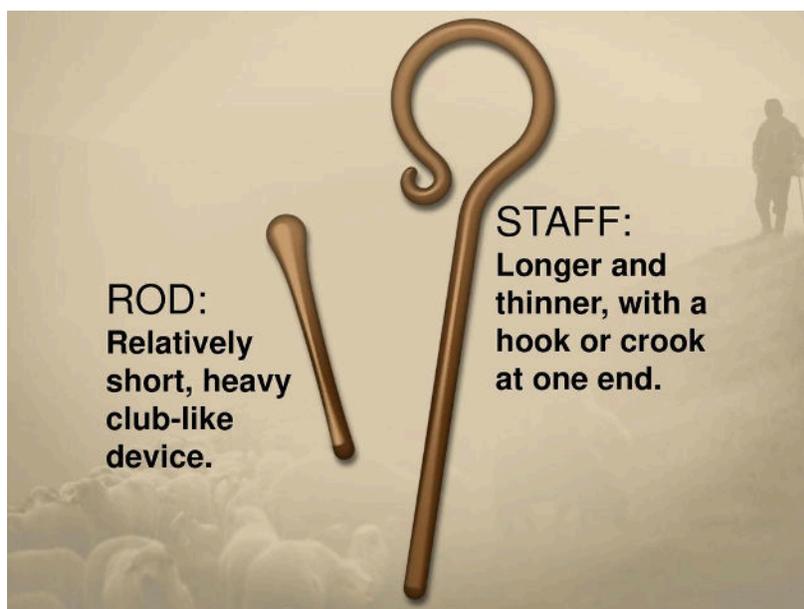
“But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.”

-1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

By putting these two symbols together we see the balance, the priest is to be both. They are supposed to bear the burden of the people, dispensing judgement and wise counsel, even if this counsel is harsh. But, they are also to show compassion to those who speak to them, weeping with those who weep, and rejoicing with those who rejoice. I believe that the perfect balance of these attributes is seen in the role of the shepherd:

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”

-Psalm 23:4



I have included an image of an ancient rod and staff. The rod is there to ward off enemies, it is the part of shepherding that shows infinite compassion and care to the sheep that the shepherd is called to protect. But the shepherd's crook is there to correct the sheep themselves. To yank them away from self-imposed danger and to place them on the correct path. It is this role that David ascribes to God Himself in the above Psalm and it is the main reason why Christ identifies Himself as "the Good Shepherd" in John 10. But, this is also why the name "shepherd" is given to New Testament leaders by the apostle Peter and others. It is from this term that we get the term "pastor".

To walk in the footsteps of Christ is to "bear" His burden, namely, the burden He has for His people. Christ truly is the Good Shepherd who perfectly balances both these roles within His ministry as our great High Priest. But He has called His ministers to share in this burden and to share in this role. To have a heart like His for His people and to look after the church. But even within correction, this role can, and should be balanced, take this passage from an early church father named John Chrysostom:

"...but if a human being wanders away from the right faith, great exertion, perseverance and patience are required; for he cannot be dragged back by force, nor constrained by fear, but must be led back by persuasion to the truth from which he originally swerved. The pastor therefore ought to be of a noble spirit, so as not to despond, or to despair of the salvation of wanderers from the fold, but continually to reason with himself and say, "Peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil."

John Chrysostom - "On the Priesthood"

With a dumb sheep you can correct them purely through the use of force, with a thinking, feeling human being correction can be harsh, but it also has to be convincing and compassionate. We don't correct the harms that merely offend us, but we seek to correct things that are genuinely damaging to the people we are ministering to.

The Peacemaker

"Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God."

-Matthew 5:9

Beyond that, by bearing all the names of the tribes of Israel, the priest is seen to be a peacemaker. The symbolism of the names of Israel united on their shoulders and breastplate is a symbol of what the priests were to be for the people. We have to remember that the Israelites are still an ancient tribal people group. The concept of "national identity" is still a long way off for them. As such, there needed to be a group of

people within the nation who were able to mediate between the different tribes, and the priests were chosen for this role.

“All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD with you and your descendants with you.”
Then the LORD said to Aaron: “You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.”

-Numbers 18:19-20

Unlike the other tribes, the Levites were fed off the offerings of the people, meaning that they were prevented from pursuing great wealth or prosperity, they were dependent on the offerings given to God. They also were forbidden from having their own land within Israel. Each tribe is given a section of land when they enter, and this tribal land functions a little like a state, or at times, even like its own little nation or kingdom. Because they had no land or great wealth, they didn't represent any real interests in the land beyond that of God Himself. As such, they could be neutral mediators between the people.

This means that the heart of the priest must be neutral and given to harmony, they are “peacemakers”. That means when people offered confession to the priest it wasn't just so they could mediate between them and God, or even between the individual and their struggles, but more than this, so they could even act as mediators between the people who were fighting.

In our world, this facet of the priesthood is understood. That is why when people have problems in their marriage or families they seek marital and family counseling. The issues I have with this are pretty similar to the issues that I have with the modern therapeutic model in general. But I want to point out that this role was supposed to be for the pastors within the church:

“I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.”

-Philippians 4:2

While we don't know what the above conflict was about, Paul stops his pastoral letter to the church to address this singular point of relational division within the body. This role is given a more extreme element in 1 Corinthians 6:

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?”

-1 Corinthians 6:1-4

Even in issues that would normally involve a civil court, Paul exhorts the church to find peace and harmony within the church itself. This again encourages the church to act as a peacemaker. This is another reason why the confession was given publicly. When the nation went to the temple to sacrifice, most of the time, they went in a large caravan with other members of their tribe. That meant that when sacrifice was offered, the whole tribe would hear the confession, and the remaining meat would usually be given to the other members who were accompanying them. This symbolized how the body of believers was to be nourished by the acts of confession and repentance. Even within the modern church, this is why confession should be offered to other believers:

“Though it is true that confession is an act in the name of Christ that is complete in itself and is exercised in the fellowship as frequently as there is desire for it, it serves the Christian community especially as a preparation for the common reception of the holy Communion. Reconciled to God and men, Christians desire to receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It is the command of Jesus that none should come to the altar with a heart that is unreconciled to his brother. If this command of Jesus applies to every service of worship, indeed, to every prayer we utter, then it most certainly applies to reception of the Lord’s Supper.”

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer - “Life Together”

This image is then clearly, and perfectly fulfilled by Christ Himself. It is through Him that we have ultimate peace with God, and through that peace, that we can have true peace with others.

“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?”

-James 4:1

James tells us that the true source of conflict is not other people, but it is also within us. It is our sin and depravity acting in accordance with other people’s sin and depravity that cause all conflict. The only way to have real peace is if we learn to find peace in God.

But that is exactly what Christ has achieved, a true peace with God that can teach us to have peace with one another.

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

-Romans 5:1-2

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”

-Ephesians 2:13-16