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Elias Issa

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HEAVENLY CLOTHING LITURGICALLY WORN:
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AS EXEGETICALLY PERFORMED IN THE BYZANTINE LITURGICAL RITE

A Dissertation Submitted to the
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Elias Issa

December 2021

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ABSTRACT

HEAVENLY CLOTHING LITURGICALLY WORN:
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By

Elias Issa

December 2021

Dissertation Supervised by Dr. William Wright IV

Problem

The subject of these hermeneutical and performative approaches to the biblical texts and the liturgical dimensions and metaphors in the Book of Revelation are of particular interest to this dissertation, whose ultimate goal is to ask how the Byzantine rites, as practiced in the Orthodox Church, actualize the liturgical dimensions of the Book of the

Revelation. The question will focus on a case study of the clothing metaphor as used in Revelation and related apocalyptic texts.

Method

The question of this dissertation is framed within this context of the liturgical performative exegesis. The question will be approached in its broader state before applying the case study to three Orthodox rites which are the Proskomide, the vesting of the clergy, and the rite of Baptism.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation states the problem and samples the state of the question. This chapter also notes the exegetical and the hermeneutical approach to be employed in later chapters. Chapter 2 introduce the area of performative exegesis identifying its relation to the early Christian reception of the Christophanic visions. This chapter will also be aided with three examples of the early Christian Christological and trinitarian exegeses. Chapter 3 focuses on the liturgical dimensions of the book of Revelation through analyzing the root and the usage of the image of the throne and its components. Tracking down the image of the throne-room in the apocalyptic, biblical, and apocryphal literature reveals the importance of Revelation as a liturgical book. Chapter 4 presents the clothing metaphor in the biblical realm with special focus on how the book of Revelation has employed this metaphor within the liturgical context of the book. In this chapter selected texts that relates to the later chapter will be studied to posit the functionality of the metaphor and its role in revealing the function of the figure clothed. Based on the research in previous chapters, chapter 5 examines three rites of the Orthodox Church: The Proskomide, the Baptism, and the rite of the vesting of the clergy.

In the Proskomide rite, the study focuses on the prayer that accompanies the extracting of the piece of the bread that resembles the Theotokos, showing the biblical exegesis implemented in this liturgical praxis. In the Baptism rite, the clothing and the garment of incorruption will be shown as performative exegesis of biblical and apocalyptic traditions. Lastly, the prayer accompanies the wearing of the Sticharion vestment will be shown as performative exegesis of the white robes of the Book of Revelation and Isaiah 61:10. Chapter 6 presents the results of this study, its implications, and possible direction for future research.

Results and Conclusions

This dissertation consequently concludes that the liturgical praxis and the liturgical hymnography, iconography and writings collaborate and presented as performative exegesis of the apocalyptic and biblical themes. The results of this study suggest three major implications in regard to the performative exegesis of the liturgical praxis in general, and to the clothing imagery of the book of Revelation in particular. First, the book of Revelation is a liturgical book, and applying liturgical performative exegesis to its chapters provides the scholarship with an authentic exegesis and interpretation. This new level of exegesis moves the majority of interpretations from the time and event predicting type to a more authentic Christological and soteriological level. Situating the Revelation imageries within their adequate and suitable liturgical frames is the way to see the book as performative exegesis of the apocalyptic heritage on one hand, and on the other as a text to be performed in the liturgical setting of today's Christian communities that retain a sacramental theology and praxis).

Second, the clothing imageries and metaphors are prevalent in the book of Revelation and in the other apocalyptic literatures. It indicates significant meanings and functions such as the identity, the role, and liturgical place in some instances. This study demonstrates the clothing imagery with twofold functions. First, it surpasses being a mere symbol and indicates hermeneutical and exegetical heritage that have been used in the sacred texts in Judaism and Christianity. Second, applying this metaphor into liturgical performance transform the rites from being merely performed to becoming more rooted in the early Christian reception of the Christological and soteriological understanding. As I discussed in Chapter 5, the clothing metaphor in the vesting of the clergy, gives the priesthood prominent meanings such as human kenosis, relocating to the heavenly throne room and renewing the pledge to martyrdom we have taken through our Baptism.

The final implication of this study is that the Christological approach of the Scriptural visions (such as the ones we have discussed in Chapter 2, the theophany at Mamre, Isaiah 6, and the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7) is authentic to the early Christian exegesis. This approach is manifested in a liturgical setting and within liturgical elements such as hymnology, sermons, iconography, and I believe above all liturgical praxis. These elements challenge the scholarship to move to a new horizon of approaching the sacred texts.

DEDICATION

To Ramia, Michael and Sophia

Καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν (Revelation 21:1)

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Chapter One: Introduction

1. The Question

In his classic article “The Theology of Clothing” Erik Peterson stated that “the question of the relationship of human person to clothing is basically not a moral concern...but a metaphysical and theological one.”¹ A quick reflection helps to recall the numerous passages in both the Old and the New Testament, where the clothing metaphor is variously employed to describe both God, angels, martyrs, righteous, and priests. We read about God putting on righteousness (Isa 59:17), being “clothed in majesty” (Psalm 104:2), or the spirit of God “clothing” Zechariah (2 Chr 24:20). Many other examples of this clothing imagery in the Old Testament refer to majesty, deity, and honor; or symbolize fragility and perishability (e.g., Isa 51:8, 52:9). In the New Testament, we see clothing imagery in the event of the Transfiguration, Christ telling His disciples that they will be “clothed” in power from on high (Luke 24:49), putting on Christ as a garment (Gal 3:27), and the very rich and complex imagery of clothing in the Book of Revelation that is applied to Deity, Satan, and humans to convey a variety of meanings and interpretations. According to Sebastian Brock, “in the biblical literature, and in the ancient Near East in general, clothing is an expression of identity, and nakedness represents the loss of identity.”² Besides this cultural understanding, early Christianity adapted another reception of the clothing metaphor which can be found in the Greek tradition, where nakedness reflects both philosophical ideal and aesthetic. The reception

¹ Erik Peterson, “Theologie des Kleides,” *Benediktinische Monatsschrift* 16 (1934): 347-356, at 347. (An English translation of Peterson's article can be found in *Communion* 20:3 [1993], pp 558-568; the quotation is at page 559).

² Sebastian P. Brock, “The Robe of Glory: A Biblical Image in the Syriac Tradition,” *The Way*, 39 (1999): 247-259, at 247.

of the clothing texts by the early Christian communities also varies. “Writers influenced by Neoplatonism in particular would emphasize the ‘stripping off’ of the soul’s ‘garment’ (whether this be the body, or the passion), while for those who remained closer to the biblical tradition what was important was the garment should be the proper one.”³

What is at interest here is the early Christian biblical interpretation and its theological and hermeneutical framework. This hermeneutic and its exegetical methods have been critical in framing and shaping the worship and the liturgical rites of the Christian community, both in the early period and throughout the following centuries. In recent decades, a burgeoning reexamination of the early Christian reception of the biblical imageries and texts have brought to light the ancient traditions of interpretation. These traditions of interpretation bring to light the Christocentric approaches to the sacred revelations in the biblical texts and translate them into performative exegesis that comes alive in the liturgical praxis and rites.

The subject of these hermeneutical and performative approaches to the biblical texts and the liturgical dimensions and metaphors in the Book of Revelation are of particular interest to this dissertation, whose ultimate goal is to ask how the Byzantine rites, as practiced in the Orthodox Church, actualize the liturgical dimensions of the Book of the Revelation. The question will focus on a case study of the clothing metaphor as used in Revelation and related apocalyptic texts. Contemporary scholarship is interested in continuing research in the early Christian reception of the biblical text and in what is called its performative exegesis, as well as how the sacred text is espoused by the liturgical experience of the community. The question of this dissertation is framed within

³ Brock, “The Robe of Glory,” 247.

this context of the liturgical performative exegesis. The question will be approached in its broader state before applying the case study to a number of Byzantine rites such as the Proskomide, the vesting of the clergy, and the rite of Baptism.

2. Exploring the State of the Question

“The ancient Jewish mystical and apocalyptic texts are genuinely problematic,” states Seth Sanders.⁴ The problematic nature of such texts arises on the one hand from the inability to know for certain who wrote them, and on the other hand, the inability to reconstruct the original experiences that produced the texts and the experiences that accompanied the first readers. For decades, scholarly research has been focusing on the originality of the text and its experience in a way that has led academia to interpret the pseudonymity and decontextualized quality of the texts “as opaque surfaces interposed between the modern reader and the ancient visionary, hiding as much as they reveal.”⁵

The recent turn in the study of exegesis in relation to the performance and the experience of the text suggests a variety of methods in the process of interpretation that provide links to the history of the related beliefs, as well as to the practice of a given text, taking in consideration the premise that exegesis itself is a form of religious practice. When used in interpretation, these religious activities play a major role in bringing new perspectives to the relationship between the sacred text and its experience. It is important to define this recent scholarly turn in reading and interpreting a text using its liturgical performance, or what is called its *performative exegesis*. Bogdan Bucur’s book, *Scripture*

⁴ Seth L. Sanders, “Performative Exegesis,” in April DeConick, ed., *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2006), 57.

⁵ Seth L. Sanders, “Performative Exegesis,” 57.

Re-envisioned: Christophanic Exegesis and the Making of a Christian Bible,⁶ breaks ground for a new approach in employing the liturgical performance of a sacred text and its Christophanic reception within the Christian community in interpreting and linking the text to its experience.

Performative exegesis is considered to be a form of charismatic exegesis, which in turn and according to David Aune, can be defined as “essentially a hermeneutical ideology that provides divine legitimation for a particular understanding of sacred text.”⁷ The context of ritual and worship brings the sacred texts and imageries alive, and the “scholarly accounts are simply catching up with the assumptions underlying worship in the Jerusalem Temple and in the Christian Church.”⁸ Performative exegesis could play an essential role in these scholarly attempts, in that “performatives”, in a literary framework, are pronouncements in which the words of the sentence are not a mere description of an action, but rather the doing of an action.⁹ Additionally, according to Sanders, a performative is “simultaneously saying something and doing something by talking about saying and talking about doing.”¹⁰ Performative exegesis can be defined according to Bucur as follows: “A ritual reading of the sacred text in which the latter is used as script to be performed and reenacted, so that the reader is united with the rhetorical ‘I’ of the sacred text, enters the world of the text, and experiences that which the text describes.”¹¹

⁶ Bogdan G. Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned: Christophanic Exegesis and the Making of a Christian Bible*, (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

⁷ Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned*, 272.

⁸ Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned*, 272.

⁹ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 4-11.

¹⁰ Sanders, “Performative Exegesis,” 167.

¹¹ Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned*, 273, echoing Sanders, “Performative Exegesis,” and Angela Kim Harkins, “The Performative Reading of the Hodayot: The Arousal of Emotions and the Exegetical Generation of Texts,” *JSP* 21 (2011): 55–71.

The reenactment of a sacred text in a liturgical and ritualistic setting is well known, especially in apocalyptic circles such as Qumran. In such apocalyptic circles the main focus of the ritual was to re-experience the visions and the authentic experience of the seer. James Davila finds that Qumran rituals paralleled some ancient resources and vision like the *Hekhalot*: “The *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* describes the worship and sacrificial cult of the angels in the heavenly palaces and before the throne-chariot of God, anticipating many details of terminology and theology in the *Hekhalot* texts.”¹² In a similar way, Kaiser sees that the apocalyptic circles “did not view the texts as distant voices that needed to be exegeted”; rather, “Communities sought to re-experience the visions of some of their heroes, particularly those of prophets like Moses, Miriam, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.... The Kyriocentric visions they attributed to earlier prophets functioned as models of the visionary ecstasy to which they aspired.”¹³ Therefore, the place of a performative exegesis is intrinsically within the liturgy where the performative aspect is evident in hymns, iconography, and liturgical movements and rituals. These elements show the liturgy as a reenactment of a sacred text or/and sacred imagery. One could say that the community at worship is engaged in a performative reenactment of biblical texts meditated and sustained by ritual that finds the location in the liturgy of the Church and at the same time in the Heavenly Temple. The Christians in such a liturgical setting acknowledge and renew their participation and experience in the divine-human interaction, and it is in this environment that the sacred texts were appropriated as Christian Scripture. Performative exegesis is the solution suggested by both the new

¹² James R. Davila, *Liturgical Works* (Grand Rapids, MI/ Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2000), 12.

¹³ Christopher B. Kaiser, *Seeing the Lord's Glory: Kyriocentric Visions and the Dilemma of Early Christology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014), 31.

scholarship and the newly rediscovered trend in biblical exegesis to solve the confusion between the typological and allegorical methods in interpreting Scripture. Frances Young argues that “what is truly relevant for early Christian exegesis ... is neither the prophetic or messianic interpretation of the Bible, nor the distinction between literal and allegorical readings; rather, what is truly relevant is the question of reference.”¹⁴ This usage of the language is what she calls “sacramental,” which is neither allegorical nor metaphorical, and this usage reads the Bible mimetically by discerning in it patterns to be experienced. Expanding on Young’s “sharp lens” approach, Bucur suggests that what he calls “Christophanic exegesis of OT theophanies” follows the logic of “rewritten Bible” literature. Just as the Wisdom of Solomon identifies the heavenly agent at work in the Exodus events as Lady Wisdom, just as the Book of Jubilees has Moses receive the Law from the Angel of the Presence, and just as Philo identifies the theophanic agent as the Logos, so also do numerous Christian exegetical, doctrinal, hymnographic, and iconographic works identify the central character in biblical theophanies as Jesus Christ.¹⁵

3. The Liturgical Dimensions of the Clothing Metaphor in the Book of Revelation:

Without a doubt “clothing” is one of the essential metaphors that John used in writing the Book of Revelation. This metaphor is multifunctional throughout the Book of Revelation, and it alludes on the one hand to intrinsic dimensions that serve the theology of the book, and on the other hand to the liturgical performance of the book. The Book of Revelation followed the biblical language understanding in dealing with this metaphor, especially when it comes to the functionality of the clothes themselves or the figures who

¹⁴ Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned*, 263.

¹⁵ Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned*, 268.

wear them. Revelation depends on two Greek words in regard to most of the clothing imagery. The first word is *στολή*, which can be translated as robe, and is always colored white in the five times it is mentioned in Revelation. The second word is *ἱμάτιο* which can be translated as garment and is also always colored white in the seven times it is mentioned in Revelation.

The first imagery of clothing is found in Rev 1:9-20, with the vision of the One Like the Son of Man, who appears clothed with long white clothing, which link this vision to Ezekiel 9 and Daniel 10. The Greek word used the clothing in these verses is *ποδήρη* which represents the clothing of a person with an important position.¹⁶ In the general scholarly opinion, this garment is a priestly garment that was referenced in Exod 28:4, 29:5, and is the clothing of the high priest. Therefore, the robe in this vision can carry the functionality of the One Like the Son of Man as a High Priest.¹⁷ Another dimension of the clothing metaphor in Rev 1 is purity, which is also mentioned in Revelation 3:4 as referring to the people of Sardis who had not “defiled their clothing” and who will “walk in white.” One of the major imageries that relates clothing to purity is the robes washed or dipped in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14; 19:13; 22:14)¹⁸. The imagery of the robes being washed in the blood of the Lamb speaks of resurrection, as

¹⁶ Iulian Faraoanu, “The Spiritual Symbolism of Human Clothing in the Book of Revelation,” *SGEM* 15 (2015): 213-220, at 215.

¹⁷ Ross E. Winkle (“Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man’: Dress Imagery in Revelation 1 as an Indicator of High Priestly Status” [unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2012]) discusses this specific vision in Rev 1 with focus on the dress and the clothing of the figure seen in the vision. Going back to the Ancient Near East and to the Roman world, and from the OT to the NT, he states that the dress was not only understood as an important necessity, but also as a means of communicating much critical information to others. In his conclusions he affirms that the *ποδήρη* in Revelation 1, when seen in combination with the reference to the figure in the midst of the seven golden lampstands in Rev 1:12-13, communicates the identity of the high priest, who is Jesus Christ. This in many ways adds another Christological and liturgical dimension to the clothing metaphor.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1167&context=dissertations>.

¹⁸ More details about the blood and the purity are in an article by Kenneth Hanson, “Blood and Purity in Leviticus and Revelation,” *JRC* 28 (1993): 215-230.

confirmed by several elements, such as the fact that the people who wear them stand, which means they are risen from the dead; that they are in heaven and thus before the throne of God; and that they have palm branches in their hands which is the sign of the last victory of the Lamb. This image, therefore, reflects the resurrection and the eschatological rewards to those who were preserved in the great tribulation. Clothing in this imagery is washed, indicating that cleanness and purity are needed to get to the sacred realities, which is linked biblically to Exodus 19 and the ritual of washing clothing before meeting the Lord at Sinai. In Revelation, the washing could be an allusion to the Baptism that allows a member to become participant in the divine life and to set a goal of spiritual purity and faithful witness to Christ in their lives going forward. To accomplish this task, the author of Revelation presents a road map to become an inhabitant of the New Jerusalem the Holy City, which is the participation in Christ's sacrifice and to be partakers of the resurrection to come to the new life. This is the only way that the blood of the Lamb can whiten the robes of the faithful.

The vision of the throne room in Revelation 4 and 5 uses the clothing imagery to conduct and confirm the liturgical nature and function of the figures described in this vision. We read in chapter 4 that there are 24 elders with white robes (ἱμάτια λευκά) and golden crowns. David Aune in his commentaries on the Book of Revelation claims that John makes clothing an essential part of individuals' identity.¹⁹ The color of the vestment is also distinctive, as white in Judaism has the connotation of joy, purity, and social dignity. In the Old Testament, the high priest wears only a white linen ephod on the Day of Atonement when he enters the Holy of Holies (Exod 28:4, Lev 16:4). A white garment

¹⁹ David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5* (WBC 52A. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 293.

is also mentioned in Dan 7:9 as God's clothing. Garments used in Greek and Roman religious rituals are usually described as white, which directly links to the 24 elders of Revelation, who through these garments are presented as honored figures having an essential liturgical function, which is in turn evident in all the throne room visions that occurs in Revelation.

Faraoanu in his article states that "apart for the reference to the Old Testament, we need to mention the white color, a symbol of resurrection and reward to be received in the next life."²⁰ This connotation leads us to relate the clothing metaphor to eschatology. This allusion is supported by the adorned New Jerusalem in Revelation 22, and the bride of the Lamb that is dressed in fine linen, which is "the deeds of the righteous and the saints" in Rev 19:8. This eschatological link is also evident in the vision of the Woman Dressed in the Sun in Revelation 12, who has the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. This is a "garment of divinity,"²¹ which is in turn the image of God en clothed His people, as the Woman of Revelation is a symbol of God's people.²² God is wrapped in light- the famous image of Psalm 104 - and now His people will be clothed with light and splendor- the garment of salvation - in the Eschaton.

4. Performative Exegesis of the Clothing Metaphor in Byzantine Rites

1. The Proskomide Service

The liturgical rite of preparing the sacrificial Lamb before the Eucharist is also called the Proskomide (it is called Prothesis too) rite. The sacrificial Lamb of God is

²⁰ Faraoanu, "Spiritual Symbolism," 216.

²¹ Faraoanu, "Spiritual Symbolism," 217.

²² Faraoanu, "Spiritual Symbolism," 217.

extracted from the offering bread and marked with the Cross, which is the sign of His Passion. This piece of bread goes through several incisions and piercings. The Lamb is then transferred to a circular paten (called a *diskos*), to be encircled by the Church as symbolized with particles of bread that symbolize the Mother of God, the saints, the hierarchs, and the living and the reposed among the faithful. “Christ’s self-sacrifice, depicted through the physical marking on the Lamb, heralds the inauguration of His Kingdom: a reality in which time and eternity, earth and heaven...visualized in the gifts of bread and wine ritually prepared during the prothesis rite.”²³ The entire symbolism of the service in its completion of the Lamb in the center of the Theotokos, the saints, the living and the departed on a circled *diskos* reflects the earthly and the heavenly realm recalling Rev 5:1-14. The paten or *diskos* symbolizes heaven and that is why it is round and it has in its center the Master of heaven. All the piercing, the extracting of the other particles taken from the oblation bread are espoused to a set of prayers that quote the Old Testament prophecies, Psalms, and other authentic prayers that are just used to accompany the process of preparing the Prothesis. All that is followed with a veiling ritual to each the *diskos* and the chalice and to both at once with special clothing which in turn is espoused to verses from the Psalms and other authentic prayers.

The piece that represents the Theotokos is associated with Ps 45:9 for example, “the queen stood at your right hand, clothed and adorned in garment of pure gold.” This performance can be linked to Rev 12:1: “a woman clothed with the sun.” Most interpretations allude to that woman as the Church, the “new Israel” or “Virgin Mary.”

At general level, sun symbolizes God in the Old Testament. Consequently, the woman is clothed with the garment of divinity, radiating warmth and

²³ Stelyios S. Muksuris, *Economia and Eschatology: Liturgical Mystagogy in the Byzantine Prothesis Rite* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2013), XXII.

divine light. The sun the woman is clothed with can be the image of God clothing the Woman-people with his splendor, with the best he has got. In the Old Testament, God is wrapped in light, as with a garment (Psalms 104:2) and can wrap his bride in light. Jerusalem is invited to put on the garments of splendor (Isaiah 52:1) or the garments of salvation.²⁴

The veiling prayers at the end of the Proskomide used to cover the paten and the chalice are as follows:

1. “The Lord has reigned; He has clothed Himself with beauty; the Lord has clothed and girded Himself with power” (Ps 93:1). This is said while covering the paten.
2. “Your virtue, O Christ, covered the heavens and the earth is full of your praise.” This is said while covering the chalice.

After the eleventh century, the paten and the star on it were linked to the Nativity scene and the paten was looked at as the cave where the Savior was born. According to Muksuris, there is a dual interpretation commonly used in the Byzantine rite not only of events in Christ’s life but also of contrasting conditions in the Person of Jesus Christ, such as humility-sublimity and power-weakness. “The mystagogical symbolism then of the prothesis veils as the infant Jesus’ swaddling clothes, in this regard, does not reject the sublime majesty of God; if anything, it endorses a theology of salvation that views man as potential participant in the divine glory.”²⁵

The Proskomide service presents this dissertation with good research materials to focus on, especially in relation to the clothing prayers and rituals accompanying the rite. These in turn represent the rituals of the rite as a performative exegesis.

²⁴ Faraoanu, “The Spiritual Symbolism,” 216.

²⁵ Muksuris, *Economia and Eschatology*, 179-181.

2. *The Baptism Service*

The Baptism service in the Orthodox tradition combines three rituals: the preparation for Baptism, the Baptism itself, and the sacrament of Holy Chrismation. Through these three rich-in-theology services, the garment theme seems to be dominant. The first ritual begins with the “un-vesting” of the catechumen before Baptism, which in turn alludes to the rejection of the “old man” and the “old life.” This is followed by the exorcism prayers, which entreat God to make the soon-to-be-baptized

a rational sheep of the hoy flock of thy Christ... a consecrated vessel, a son of light, and an heir of thy kingdom; that having conducted himself (herself) in accordance with thy commandments, and having preserved the seal unbroken, and having kept his (her) garment unstained, he (she) may receive the blessedness of the saints in thy kingdom.²⁶

Moreover, right before the second ritual (Baptism itself) starts, the last prayer of preparation implies “garment” as it entreats God to “*put off from him/her the old man.*” The pervasiveness of the garment theme is even more apparent in the two remaining services.

The act of Baptism itself anticipates the events that are going to take place in the second ritual, as well as in the life of the person to be baptized. From the very beginning of this second ritual the community prays that “*he/she may preserve his/her baptismal garment [which he/she has not received yet] and the earnestness of the Spirit pure and undefiled unto the dread day of Christ.*” Further, and more interestingly, the community prays again “*that this water may be to him/her a laver of regeneration, unto remission of sins, and a garment of incorruption.*” Immediately after this, the priest affirms this prayer

²⁶ *The Services of Initiation into the Holy Orthodox-Catholic and Apostolic Church*. Translated, and edited by V. Rev. Fr. Michel Najim and V. Rev. Fr. Patrick B. O’Grady, (United States: Antiochian Orthodox Institute, 2017), 42.

in the sanctification of the baptismal water, in which he calls the water the “*garment of incorruption*.” The garment in this specific prayer seems to refer to the new man who is renewed after the image of the Creator. Immediately after the triple immersion, the person who has been baptized is vested in a garment (usually white), accompanied with a prayer in which the priest calls this garment “*the garment of righteousness*,” and “*the robe of light*.” This follows the example of Christ Who “clothed Himself with the light as with a garment.” The crowning of the Baptismal liturgy is completed with the receiving of the Holy Mysteries, and the celebration procession in which the community sings: “*as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ, Alleluia*,” in a clear signal that the garment is now Christ Himself. Therefore, the vesting of the robe of light and the garment of incorruption juxtaposes the un-vesting of the person in the beginning of the service, and on the other hand, this very garment seals the Baptism itself. This explicit and frequent occurrence of the “garment” make us wonder whether we are dealing with an “external symbolism”²⁷ as Alexander Schmemmann declares, or whether the efficacy of the garment symbol invites us to rethink the nature and the roots of such a usage in the baptismal liturgy.

The baptismal rite provides this dissertation with a fertile ground in which to argue for the liturgical performative exegesis of the clothing metaphor. The use of the garment in the Eastern baptismal praxis is an incubator of multi-layered biblical and intertestamental tradition. This intrinsic feature situates the baptismal liturgy in an authentic and well-rooted role in the process of contextualizing the Christian identity in

²⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974), 71.

its biblical and apocalyptic frame. A synthesis of the study of the baptismal rite can show how the Eastern baptismal praxis incubates the traditions on the garment of glory, and how the praxis itself was used in performing the garment theme in the Book of Revelation.

3. *The Clergy Vesting Prayers*

The second rite we will examine is the rite of vesting of the clergy. The vesting of the clergy in the Byzantine rite is part of the liturgical services. Each piece of the clergy's vestments is accompanied with a short prayer composed of scriptural verses. The vesting service can be viewed as a performative exegesis of the clothing metaphor in the Book of Revelation, in the sense of relating vesting prayers to major vesting/clothing themes in Revelation as follows:

As a clergyman dons the *sticharion* (alb), he says: "My soul shall exalt in the Lord, for *He has endued me with the robe of salvation, and with the garment of joy has He clothed me. He has set a crown on my head like a bridegroom, and like a bride He has adorned me with comeliness*" (Isa 61:10, emphasis added). It is noteworthy here that, first, the color of this piece of cloth according to the Byzantine rite must be always white regardless of the color of the vestment. In this respect, this vestment can be linked to the 24 elders in the throne room in Rev 4:4. On the other hand, the prayer mentioning the crown can also be linked to the crowns of the 24 elders. The clergy being adorned like a bride can be seen as a direct allusion to Rev 21:2 and the image of the Heavenly Jerusalem adorned as bride for her husband. The voice in Rev 21:3 says, "Behold the dwelling of God is with men, He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people." The

Byzantine rite contains two allusions to this in the same liturgical aspect. The clergy appear to be in the role of both the priest and of the temple at once. On the one hand, this is through God giving the priest the glory of Adam- “robe of salvation and garment of joy”, and on the other hand being linked to the dwelling place of God- the New Jerusalem- and to the ability to be himself the temple of God.

As he dons the *epigonation*, a diamond-shaped piece of stiffened cloth hung by a cord from the shoulder on the right side, Ps 45:3-5 (NRSV) is recited, “Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your glory and majesty. In your majesty ride on victoriously for the cause of truth and to defend the right; let your right hand teach you dread deeds. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you.” These verses contain another royal element, perhaps linked to the sharp two-edged sword of the Son of Man in Rev 1:12.

A special vestment for bishops alone is the *sakkos*, which the bishop puts on over his white robe and stole. The name of the piece is essential here, as it can be linked to the word used for the robes worn by the two witnesses of Revelation who stood with Christ in Rev 11:3. The word used for the robe in this verse is “sackcloth” (σακκος). According to Revelation, the two witnesses will be given this type of robe while they are prophesizing in the city for 1, 260 days. According to Eastern Orthodox canon law, the role of the bishop in the Church is to preach and teach the Gospel, which is why his ordination occurs before the reading of the Gospel in the order of the Byzantine Divine Liturgy. This is also why the bishop is ordained while a Gospel book is held opened over his head while the other bishops recite the ordination prayers.

As the bishop dons the *omophorion* (pallium), this prayer is recited: “Thou hast taken upon Thy shoulders our human nature that had gone astray, and hast ascended to heaven, bearing it to God the Father.” This differs from Philo's understanding of the high priest: that he was no longer a man when he entered the Holy of Holies (*On Dreams* II.189, 231).²⁸ The Eastern Orthodox bishop, like Christ, puts on human nature and carries it with Him to God's throne in heaven.

The vesting rite of the clergy, therefore, provides rich material for research, because it plays the role of performative exegesis of clothing in relation to serving the altar and performing priestly functions.

²⁸ Philo reads Lev 16:17 as “for when the high priest goes into the Holy of Holies, He will not be a man,” therefore, Philo makes his own translation of Lev 16:17
καὶ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ἔσται ἐν τῇ σκηνῇ τοῦμαρτυρίου εἰσπορευομένου αὐτοῦ ἐξιλιάσασθαι ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ ἕως ἂν ἐξέλθῃ καὶ ἐξιλιάσεται περιὰ τοῦ καὶ τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ καὶ περὶ πάσης συναγωγῆς υἰῶν Ἰσραὴλ. NRSV translates it as “no one shall be in the tent of meeting.” Philo builds his interpretation as follows claiming the high priest to be a perfect man, a father of sacred reasoning, he is a nature bordering on God, he is not God, but also not human, but he touches both extremities. (*On Dreams* II 185-189) “But the high priest of whom we are speaking is a perfect man, the husband of a virgin (a most extraordinary statement), who has never been made a woman; but who on the contrary, has ceased to be influenced by the customs of women in regard to her connection with her Husband. (Gen 18:11). And not only is this man competent to sow the seeds of unpolluted and virgin opinions, but he is also the father of sacred reasonings, some of which are overseers and superintendents of the affairs of nature, such as Eleazar and Ithamar; others are ministers of the worship of God, earnestly occupied in kindling and burning up the flame of heaven; for, as they are always uttering discourses relating to holiness, they cause it to shine, bringing forth the most divine kind of piety like fire from a flint; and the being who is at the same time the guide and father of those men is no insignificant part of the sacred assembly, but he is rather the person without whom the duly convened assembly of the parts of the soul could never be collected together at all; he is the president, the chairman, the creator of it, who, without the aid of any other being, is able by himself alone to consider and to do everything. He, when taken in conjunction with others, is insignificant in point of number, but when he is looked at by himself he becomes numerous; he is a tribunal, an entire council, the whole people, a complete multitude, the entire race of mankind, or rather, if one is to speak the real truth, he is a sort of nature bordering on God, inferior indeed to him, but superior to man; “for when,” the scripture say, “the high priest goes into the Holy of Holies he will not be a Man.” lev 16:17. What then will he be if he is not a man? Will he be a God? I would not venture to say that (for the chief prophet, Moses, did receive the inheritance of this name while he was still in Egypt, being called “the god of Pharaoh;”) (exd 7:1) nor again is he man, but he touches both these extremities as if he touched both the feet and the head.” And then in *On Dreams* II 231 he says: “And there is something which closely resembles this in the passage of scripture concerning the high priest; “For when,” says the scripture, “he goes into the holy of holies, he will not be a man till he has gone out Again.” (lev 16:17). But if at that time he is not a man, it is clear that he is not God either, but a minister of God, belonging as to his mortal nature to creation, but as to his immortal nature to the uncreated God.”

5. Methodology and Chapters Plan:

The main question of the research, as stated above, is how the Byzantine rite and its liturgical praxis actualize the liturgical dimensions of the Book of Revelation, with special focus on the clothing metaphor. The research will contribute to the study of the Byzantine and Orthodox liturgical rites and their hermeneutical role in the performative exegesis studies that have been tremendously increasing in academia. In order to explore the proposed research theme, I propose a threefold methodology, composed of a combination of hermeneutics, historical reception, and liturgical performance of the Revelation texts that implicitly or explicitly deal with the clothing metaphor. The first step in this process is to study in-depth biblical reception history as a growing field that has progressed to encompass methods of reading Scripture not as commentaries. The second step is to examine how the clothing metaphor made its way to the Book of Revelation, and how it can be interpreted and/or liturgically performed. In this step, it will also be important to examine how the clothing metaphor relates to liturgical issues, especially the clothing metaphor in the Throne Room, the 24 Elders, the Martyrs, the Woman, the Beasts, and the New Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation. The third step will be tracking the early Christian reception of the clothing metaphor of the Book of Revelation, and how the readers of Revelation received the imagery of clothing.

The major goal of this step will be to connect the biblical text with the liturgical reception and experience of the clothing metaphor in all its complexity in the Book of Revelation. A further step to complete the threefold methodology is to study the liturgical

performance of the clothing imagery in specific and selected Orthodox liturgical services. In accomplishing this task, the chapters of this dissertation are as follows:

Chapter 2 identifies the performative exegesis and its relation to the early Christian reception of the sacred text, and the intrinsic importance of the Christophanic visions in forming the performative method and its applications. This argument will be supported with examples from early Christian exegesis of core texts and their implications and integration in the liturgical praxis of the Byzantine rite.

Chapter 3 focuses on the liturgical dimension of the Book of Revelation through tracking of the imagery of the throne throughout the book, and through analyzing its context and liturgical elements. The main goal is to focus on the mutual elements here and in the other apocalyptic texts, which will be surveyed in the first section of this chapter. Then discovering the liturgical setting that John, the author, framed this vision within will help analyzing its nature and function. Before that, the literary analysis of the first appearance of the throne room in Revelation 4, 5 helps guiding this study and set it in the right direction.

Chapter 4 presents the clothing metaphor in the biblical realm with special focus on how the book of Revelation has employed this metaphor. In this chapter, selected texts will be presented to posit clothing imagery functionality in biblical and extrabiblical worlds. Then a special focus with detailed study will be dedicated to the clothing imagery in the Book of Revelation with case study of the imagery in Revelation 1:13, Revelation 7:14, and Revelation 12:1 and their usage as performative utterance within the liturgical frame of the text.

Chapter 5 examines three rites of the Orthodox Church: the Proskomide rite, the Baptismal rite, and the rite of the vesting of the clergy. In the Proskomide rite section an introduction and explanation of the rite will be provided to show how it is done and the element and the prayers involved. Along with that, the Christological and eschatological dimensions will be presented too. The study then will focus on the prayer that accompanies the extracting of the piece of the bread that resembles the Theotokos. The study shows how the prayer jointly with the liturgical praxis in this rite reflect the early Christian reception of the metaphor of clothing used in here.

The study moves then to the rite of Baptism as practiced in the Orthodox Church. This section argues that the use of the garment image in the Byzantine Baptismal praxis is a performative exegesis and an incubator of multi-layered biblical and intertestamental tradition. This intrinsic feature situates the Baptismal liturgy in an authentic and well-rooted role in the process of contextualizing the Christian identity in its biblical and apocalyptic frame. In the following, an analysis of the parallel between the Baptismal garment tradition and the Exodus priests' garments will be presented, then a survey of the apocalyptic and intertestamental garment of glory will be given to clarify the theological application of the Baptismal service. In searching for the performativity of the rite, the writings of Pseudo-Macarius and Ephrem the Syrian will show the early Christian reception of these traditions and their embodiment in the praxis of the Baptismal rite is deeply rooted in the biblical exegesis. A synthesis will show how the Eastern Baptismal praxis incubates the traditions of the garment of glory, and how the praxis itself was used in incorporating the garment themes into the writing of the Book of Revelation.

The last section studies the clergy vestments with the special focus on the inner white garment (sticharion). The study considers this rite in relation to the white robes in the Book of Revelation and presenting how the performance of the prayer of putting on the inner garment provides a faithful example of the Christian reception of Isaiah 61. The study unveils some implicit themes that relates to the priesthood which is indirectly integrated with the prayers of vesting. Among the themes discussed is the priesthood as martyrdom, the vestment as a transition to Heavenly Jerusalem and the vesting as human kenosis.

Chapter 6 presents the results of this study, along with its implications and contributions to the vastly growing field of liturgical performative exegesis. This study hopes to show the Orthodox liturgy as a vehicle of illumination of certain dimensions of the apocalyptic and biblical texts in its performative aspects, which it accomplishes by bringing the elements and the early reception of a sacred text into a level of interpretation as experience, and not just text. At the same time, this study will show the interesting ways in which the biblical and apocalyptic texts have informed the liturgical praxis of the Orthodox Church rites throughout the many centuries of their reception.

Chapter Two: Performative Exegesis in The Early Christian Reception

History

1. Introduction

The concept of performativity has not developed only within religious ritual context. Rather, it applies to literature, social life, and humans' daily conduct. Two pioneers who wrote about performativity in non-religious-targeted research, but rather in theatrical and linguistic performative areas, are Erving Goffman and J. L Austin. It is helpful for this chapter and for the research in general to present their studies since they introduce the nature of performativity.

Erving Goffman's *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*²⁹ is an analysis of the ways in which human activity itself is "performative" in its presentations. He points in his introduction to the fact that the expressiveness of an individual is composed of two sign-activity types:

1. Expression they give, or the performance of self they consciously put off. This is the more "traditional" communication model.
2. The expression they give off, or the wide range of actions that others can treat as symptomatic of the actor³⁰.

He examines the different aspects of "the presentation of self." The first, "performances," gives the reader an overview of the pieces of a "performance" which he had defined in his introduction as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants,"³¹ as well as the varying

²⁹ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin, 1959).

³⁰ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 2.

³¹ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 15

elements that can impact them. This in turn grounds the idea of performance in a socialized model, where all performances of self are culturally bound and present an idealized view or presentation. Since performances are idealized, they are also very fragile, and any number of mishaps can functionally ruin the illusion the performance is trying to put up. Goffman suggests that rather than everyone performing in an isolated solo event, most people function on social “teams” that must work together to “sustain a particular definition of the situation.”³² Goffman then moves on to geographical considerations in “Regions and Region Behavior,” carrying his theatrical metaphor through as he discusses the fact that any given performance has a “front” space where the performance is actively occurring, and a “back” space where performers are out of the view of an audience and can “drop the act” so long as they are in the back region. Besides the “front” and “back,” there is also an “outside” which is occupied by persons who are neither performers nor audiences for a given performance. Most of his research examines the in-between space where performers, audiences, or outsiders do not always slot neatly into their categories, but even when there are deviations from what is expected, those deviations often fit into categories.

In his seminal work, *How to Do Things with Words*,³³ John Austin begins by exploring the difference between statements of facts that are descriptive or constative, and what he introduces as a “performative.” A performative sentence or utterance, he tells us, is thus one in which the issuing of that utterance is in and of itself the performance of an action.³⁴ He then gives examples of performatives, highlighting how

³² Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 85

³³ John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962).

³⁴ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 6

they can be contractual (“I bet”), declaratory (“I declare”), etc. He also indicates that “performatives are dependent upon the circumstances in which the words are uttered.”³⁵

Austin delves deeper into the various rules that govern the operation of a performative.

He lays out six different rules that govern the success of a performative:³⁶

A1 – a conventional procedure with certain conventional effects exists with certain utterances that must be said by certain people in certain circumstances.

A2 – persons and circumstances must be appropriate for the procedure.

B1 – procedure must be done by all participants correctly.

B2 – procedure must be done by all participants completely.

Γ1 – if the procedure requires people to have certain thoughts or feelings, the persons involved have to have those thoughts/feelings.

Γ2 – persons must conduct themselves accordingly.

While a breach of any of these rules counts as an infelicity, Austin delineates the differences in breaking only certain sets of the rules (for instance, if you fail any of the A or B sets of rules the act is not achieved/completed, but if you fail at a Γ set rule the act is still achieved but not in the way it is supposed to be).

The core of Austin’s contribution in this work is introduced in his terms “locutionary,” “illocutionary,” and “perlocutionary acts.” A locutionary act is “saying something” in the traditional/physical sense³⁷, whereas an illocutionary act is the “sense” in which something is said, usually having a conventional force (i.e., things like warning, informing, undertaking, or ordering, etc.). A perlocutionary act is what is brought about

³⁵ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 10.

³⁶ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 14, 15.

³⁷ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 94.

or achieved by the utterance (i.e., convincing, persuading, etc.). Perlocutionary acts can also often be achieved through non-verbal means³⁸. He then unpacks those concepts, as he gradually complicates the distinction between performatives and statements, and ultimately suggests that the distinction is more of an illusion.

Finally, Austin introduces five classes of performatives to help distinguish them by what action they are performing:

1. *Verdictives* are the giving of a verdict.
2. *Exercitives* are the exercise of powers, rights, or influence.
3. *Commissives* promise or otherwise undertake something.
4. *Behabitives* are related to attitudes and social behavior (i.e., apologizing, congratulating, etc.).
5. *Expositives* point to how our utterances fit into conversations (i.e., “I reply, “I argue” etc.).

In what follows, research will be conducted to define the concept of performative on the level of the Scriptural exegesis, as based on Austin’s proposal. First, we will perform the important task of tracing the evolving process of performative exegesis through a presentation of the meaning of “charismatic exegesis,” “rewritten Bible,” and the “performance of the Kyriocentric visions.” Then, a case study of three major examples of the theophanic vision of Abraham at Mamre, the vision of Isaiah 6, and the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7 will be presented to show the multi-layered process of performative exegesis on hymnographic, iconographic, and textual levels, and how it crystalized the Christological understanding of the early Christian exegetes.

³⁸ Austin, *How to Do*, 117.

2. Performative Exegesis: A Definition

According to Austin, with performatives, words, sentences, and the text itself will not be merely descriptions of actions, but the *doing* of the action. This understanding was the cornerstone of the scholarly attempt to articulate how the sacred texts in Second Temple Judaism and the Christian Church “come alive in the course of ritual.”³⁹ An article by Seth Sanders builds on Austin’s approach and tries to crystalize a definition of “performatives” in contrast to other pragmatic language: “Performatives simultaneously say something and do something by talking about saying and talking about doing.”⁴⁰ Through his study, Sanders talks about performative utterances in the religious literature of the Ancient Near East, which differ greatly between cultures, according to each culture’s way of exemplifying and exploring its own ideas about how one does things with words. “Performatives are revealing because of their capacity to act as ideological prisms. In a performative utterance one can simultaneously talk, do, talk about talking, and talk about doing.”⁴¹

3. Development of Performative Exegesis

In the Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity the Scriptures were received and interpreted essentially through rituals that brought the sacred text alive. This process of exegesis was developed through stages, from charismatic exegesis, to rewritten bible, and then to performatives. According to Bucur, “Affirming that the ‘Christophanic’

³⁹ Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned*, 272.

⁴⁰ Seth L. Sanders, “Performative Utterances and Divine Language in Ugaritic,” *JNES* 63 (2004): 161–81, at 167.

⁴¹ Sanders, “Performative Utterances,” 170.

appropriation of the Septuagint as Christian Old Testament follows the logic of “rewritten Bible” literature allows us also to view the theological claims of Christian exegetes as related to those of the various Second Temple groups involved in the production of ‘rewritten Bible.’”⁴² Before identifying the “rewritten Bible” of the Second Temple and early Christianity, it is useful to first introduce the Charismatic exegesis, which is believed to be the source of the rewritten Bible literature.⁴³

1. Charismatic Exegesis

Charismatic exegesis cannot be identified as a type of biblical interpretation. It is rather, as David Aune puts it, “essentially a hermeneutical ideology that provides divine legitimation for a particular understanding of a sacred text which is shared with others who understand the text differently.”⁴⁴ This charismatic exegesis has distinctive features in that first, its procedure applies to dreams, visions, and oral communications or authoritative texts that have a divine origin. These dreams and visions are thought of as puzzling or enigmatic, while simultaneously as revelatory communication.⁴⁵ The general goal of using charismatic exegesis is to set the “in-group” apart from “others,” in what we call sectarian orientation. The divine origin of this exegesis makes it authoritative. The result of this charismatic exegesis was the rewritten Bible, which was very effective in the Second Temple and early Christianity.

⁴² Bucur, *Scripture*, 272

⁴³ Bucur, *Scripture*, 272

⁴⁴ David E. Aune, “Charismatic Exegesis in Early Judaism and Early Christianity,” in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth and C. A. Evans (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 126–50, at 130.

⁴⁵ Aune, “Charismatic Exegesis,” 149.

It has been made clear by scholarship that the Hebrew Bible reflects a long process of explanation and adaptation through interpretations that became part of the biblical text itself.⁴⁶ Thus, “one of the central convictions that permeated early Judaism was that the sacred texts of the past have a direct bearing on the present.”⁴⁷ This is reflected in the variety of genres in which various types of biblical interpretation find their home. One of the examples Aune provides towards this point is the various Apocalypses that use biblical texts in many different ways, in that it involves “the attribution of predictions about recent past, as well as the present and future.”⁴⁸ Prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible are heavily used in the apocalyptic literature to serve the goal of “legitimizing new elements by dressing them in familiar garments.”⁴⁹

2. Charismatic Exegesis and Early Christianity

The interpretations of the Scriptures in early Christianity were centered around Christology: the matter that gave special attention to the eschatological prophecies which demonstrated that Jesus is the Messiah, and that His life, death, and resurrection were all anticipated in the Scriptures. Aune puts it boldly that the “interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures was one of the central preoccupations of early Christianity.”⁵⁰ This is similar to Judaic interpretations, such as Qumran Community. Christians believed that they had a special wisdom and insight from God, as they were the new people of God, an idea that can be found in 1 Cor 1:18-31; Eph 1:9; Ignatius’s Epistle to Ephesus 14.1; and

⁴⁶ Michael Fishbane, “Revelation and Tradition: Aspects of Inner-Biblical Exegesis,” *JBL* 99 (1980): 343-61.

⁴⁷ Aune, “Charismatic Exegesis,” 140.

⁴⁸ Aune, “Charismatic Exegesis,” 141.

⁴⁹ Aune, “Charismatic Exegesis,” 141.

⁵⁰ Aune, “Charismatic Exegesis,” 143.

Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians 12.1). The Johannine community was convinced, for example, that the Spirit enabled them to understand the real meaning of the words of Jesus (John 14:26; 16:12-15). "Here the charismatic exegesis focuses on the oral transmission of Jesus Traditions, presumably to legitimate the particular understanding of that tradition cherished by the Johannine church."⁵¹ However, the charismatic exegesis in early Christianity served to show the Christological significance of the sacred texts of the Jewish Scriptures and to show and how this is a product of divine enlightenment.

3. "Rewritten Bible"

Writing about the Christian reception of Isaiah 6,⁵² Bucur states that the identification of the enthroned "Lord" of Isa 6:1 with the Lord Jesus Christ is a Christological reading, and that it could be viewed as a rewritten Bible. The term "rewritten Scripture" has been used most frequently by scholars to denote a group of texts that reproduce substantial portions of one or more biblical books, but modify the Scriptural text by means of addition, omission, paraphrase, rearrangement, or other types of change. The clearest examples of rewritten Scripture include texts found at Qumran, such as the Book of Jubilees, the Genesis Apocryphon, the Temple Scroll, and perhaps the Reworked Pentateuch manuscripts, as well as the New Testament Book of Revelation.

Geza Vermes offered the following reflection on the term he coined some fifty years ago who coined the term "rewritten Bible," was defined by Geza Vermes in "The

⁵¹ Aune, *Charismatic Exegesis*, 145 and David Aune, "The Presence of God in the Community: The Eucharist in its Early Christian Cultic Context," *SJT* 29 (1976), 451-59.

⁵² Bucur, "I Saw the Lord: Observations on the Early Christian Reception of Isaiah 6," *ProEccl* 23 (2014): 309-30. Expanded version in Ch. 6 of *Scripture Re-envisioned*.

Genesis of the Concept of ‘Rewritten Bible,’” found in *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques?: A Last Dialogue with Geza Vermes*. He gives an explicit example to demonstrate how “rewritten Bible” works in Genesis 12:13:

Abraham, the father of the Jewish people and the prototype of righteousness, is said to have married Sarah, his sister, or if we follow Genesis 20:12, his half-sister, degrees of union strictly forbidden by the Law (Lev 18:19; 20:17). In order to avoid the suspicion that the Jewish people originated from an incestuous marriage, the re-writers of the Bible inserted into the text a gloss which diluted in advance the meaning of the term “sister.” In Genesis 11:29 the Pseudo-Jonathan Targum makes of Sarah, not Abraham’s sister, but his niece, the daughter of his brother, whom he could take as his wife according to general custom.... Finally, just in case some ultra-pious group (like the Qumran Essenes) objected to matrimony between uncle and niece, another re-writer redefined the relationship and turned Sarah into Abraham’s first cousin. In Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Gen 20:2 Abraham identifies Sarah as “the daughter of my father’s brother.”⁵³

This same pattern was used by Christian exegetical, hymnographic, iconographic, and liturgical performance works to show the Christological centrality of the Christophanic visions and the way the community received them. The question remains, Can the early Christian reception phenomenon be a mere rewritten Bible in imitation of that in Second Temple Judaism? Having advocated this in a number of articles, Bucur later changed his mind on the appropriateness of using the term rewritten Bible for the Old Testament theophanies.⁵⁴ One of the intrinsic problems he argues is “the charge of ambiguity that

⁵³ Geza Vermes, “The Genesis of the Concept of ‘Rewritten Bible,’” in *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques?: A Last Dialogue with Geza Vermes*, ed. J. Zsengellér (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014), 3–9, at 5. See also “Genesis of the Concept of ‘Rewritten Bible,’” 8: “Whereas it is perfectly legitimate to investigate the Dead Sea Scrolls within the framework of the ‘Rewritten Bible,’ I believe it would be a gross mistake to restrict the area of investigation to documents from Qumran. A priceless mine of well-dated information is contained in the Antiquities of Josephus and in Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*. And this may be the bee in my bonnet, the works gathered under the umbrella of the Palestinian Pentateuch Targum are ideal sources for the study of the ‘Rewritten Bible.’”

⁵⁴ Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned*, 268.

stems from the observation that “rewritten Bible” can stand for a literary genre or for an exegetical strategy.”⁵⁵

Scholars have been choosing one direction or the other in their scholarship, which makes the rewritten Bible more problematic. The texts that Bucur uses in his book, which belong to a variety of genres (hymnography, iconography, and doctrinal writings), attest that rewritten Bible is only an exegetical strategy. Albeit that conclusion, Bucur proposes what he calls a “Scripture re-envisioned not rewritten” approach to reveal how the early Christian exegetes understood and received the sacred texts and the Old Testament theophanies. “The rewritten Bible must refer to the production of actual texts,” which is not always the case in early Christian exegesis of Old Testament theophanies, although some genres of exegesis produced texts such as hymnography. There is a blurred line between the rewritten Bible and the early Christian exegesis. Bucur concludes that it becomes

necessary to find yet another, more specific, term to designate the kind of literature for which Vermes coined the term “rewritten Bible” in the first place: ‘a narrative that follows Scripture but includes a substantial amount of supplements and interpretative developments. This erosion of the descriptive power of the concept derives from its metaphorization; the root problem is to have allowed “rewritten” to stand for “interpreted.”’⁵⁶

As can be gleaned from the above brief introduction to the crucial terms used to describe the early Christian exegesis, the solid ground in dealing with Christian reception and interpretation of the sacred texts is in performative exegesis. Performative exegesis may be defined as “a ritual reading of the sacred text in which the latter is used as a script to be performed and reenacted, so that the reader is united with the rhetorical “I” of the

⁵⁵ Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned*, 270.

⁵⁶ Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned*, 271.

sacred text, enters the world of the text, and experiences that which the text describes.”⁵⁷In the chapters to follow, this definition will be applied to chosen rites in the Orthodox Church in order to examine, on the one hand, its validity, and on the other hand its contributions to deeper understanding of the early exegesis in the early Christian community, which was liturgical in essence. This is crucial, especially when dealing with apocalyptic communities and writings, where the sacred text was viewed as a call for the community “to reexperience the vision of some of their heroes, particularly those of prophets like Moses, Miriam, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel...The Kyriocentric visions they attributed to earlier prophets functioned as models of the visionary ecstasy to which the aspired.”⁵⁸

4. Kyriocentric Visions: Early Christians Christological exegesis:

Kaiser discusses the motifs associated with Kyriocentric visions in apocalyptic and early Rabbinic Literature and elicits the evidence for performance of Kyriocentric visions before, during, and after the New Testament period. He examines examples of “the scripted rehearsal of visions and auditions that were attributed to the patriarchs and prophets” as they appear in apocalyptic texts and early Rabbinic and *Hekhalot* literature, as it hopes to identify some motifs that should appear in the New Testament literature if the Kyriocentric argument will work.⁵⁹

Kyriocentric visions connected the community to the glorious age-to-come, as well as to the heavenly world and cosmos. The idea of connections is related to the

⁵⁷ Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned*, 273

⁵⁸ Kaiser, *Seeing the Lord's Glory*, 31.

⁵⁹ Kaiser, *Seeing the Lord's Glory*, 43.

practice of prayer, for example, and to how the repeated use of classic models across apocalyptic texts shows a type of “scripturalization” of visions in the late Second Temple era.⁶⁰ This scripturalization, in turn, is the result of performative prayers in the apocalyptic circles, which makes us believe that the Kyriocentric visions were re-lived or performed by the pious Jews of the New Testament era. These visions were performed within a liturgical setting and the context of prayer. Kaiser presents some good examples from the apocalyptic literature to support this point.⁶¹ This is a very important point, as it alludes to the possibility that the early Christian community, as started by the disciples, could have conceivably experienced these Kyriocentric visions and performative prayers.

The narrative of the road to Emmaus in the Gospel of Luke 24 serves as very good example of the intrinsic relationship between the Kyriocentric and the liturgical performative setting. Bucur devoted the first chapter of his book *Scripture Re-envisioned* to interpreting this narrative using methodological and hermeneutical prolegomenon⁶². The narrative shows that the presence of the risen Lord, which was veiled, was revealed by the opening of the Scripture, opening of the eyes on the disciples in a liturgical Eucharistic setting in the breaking of the bread. It is “revealed to have accompanied the disciples all along, and prospectively envisioned as accompanying future recipients of the Gospel and opening their eyes to discerning Christ ‘in all Scripture.’”⁶³ This discernment

⁶⁰ Kaiser, *Seeing the Lord's Glory*, 50.

⁶¹ See Kaiser, 82-93. Kaiser studied the vision of Enoch in the Book of watchers, where Enoch writes down a prayer to petition for the forgiveness of the Watchers, who were group of condemned angels. This prayer is based on mental script for liturgical performances of Enoch community. Early Christian Apocalyptic texts are also presented, like the *Martyrdom of Isaiah* and also some text of the Epistles of Paul and the New Testament.

⁶² Bucur, *Scripture Re-Envisioned*, 6-41.

⁶³ Bucur, *Scripture*, 275.

cannot be reached without the liturgical context and the ‘performativeness’ of the community practices.

4. Examples of Christophanic Receptions

Performative as defined in the section above is not just a method of biblical criticism or solely an academic exercise: rather, it is a tool to help us perceive how the early Christian community and exegetes received the sacred texts. Consider the following: the overwhelming majority of first century Christians experienced their traditions, including gospels, letters, and apocalypses, in some form of oral performance.⁶⁴ Therefore, one can assume that the early community received its sacred narratives composed in performance orally by dictation or written for use in oral performance in worship and liturgical settings.

It seems helpful to present some examples from early Christian exegetes and how they received the texts of the Hebrew Bible, especially the Theophanic visions, and how they put them into a Christological context. In the following, I will be summarizing and presenting the Christophanic visions that were studied in detail in Bucur’s book *Scripture Re-envisioned*, with some added observation and supporting texts.

1. Abraham and the Theophany at Mamre

⁶⁴ David Rhoads, “Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies-Part 1,” *BTL* 36 (2006): 118-137 at 118.

According to Genesis 18, when God appeared to Abraham, the patriarch saw and conversed with three men, offering them hospitality. Abraham walked gradually through this divine revelation until he came to understand that he was visited by God.⁶⁵

Now God appeared to him near the oak of Mamre, while he was sitting at the door of his tent at midday. And looking up with his eyes he saw, and see, three men stood over him. And when he saw them, he ran forward from his tent door to meet them and did obeisance upon the ground and said, “Lord, if perchance I have found favor before you, do not pass by your servant. Do let water be taken, and let them wash your feet, and you cool off under the tree. And I shall take bread, and you will eat, and after that you will pass by on your way—inasmuch as you have turned aside to your servant.” And they said, “So do, as you have said.” And Abraham hurried over to the tent to Sara and said to her, “Hurry, and mix three measures of fine flour, and make loaves baked in ashes.” And Abraham ran to the cows and took a little calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, and he hastened to prepare it. Then he took butter and milk and the little calf that he had prepared and set it before them, and they ate, and he stood by them under the tree. And he said to him, “Where is your wife Sara?” And he said in reply, “There, in the tent.” And he said, “I will come to you, when I return, during this season next year, and Sara your wife shall have a son.” ... Then the Lord said, “The outcry concerning Sodom and Gomorra has been increased, and their sins are very great! So when I go down I shall see whether they are perpetrating according to the outcry concerning them that is coming to me, but if not—that I may know.” And after the men had turned away from there, they went to Sodom, but Abraham was still standing before the Lord. Then when Abraham had come near, he said, “Surely you will not destroy the righteous with the ungodly, and the righteous will be as the ungodly? ... Then the Lord went away, when he had left off speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.

Bucur offers a survey through both Jewish and Christian resources presenting how the exegetes answered the question of what or whom did Abraham see.⁶⁶ Philo sees in these three guests “the Father of the universe,” “the creative power,” and “the royal

⁶⁵ Bucur, *Scripture*, 43. In the footnote no.5 Bucur quotes George Sarvan work “Encountering the Divine: Theophany in Biblical Narrative” who indicated that Abraham remains unaware of the nature of his guests until 18:9 where the question about his wife Sarah came, which becomes more pronounced when the narrator starts using YHWH in 18:13.

⁶⁶ Bucur, 44-75.

one.” Bucur puts Philo’s terms into scriptural terms as “He-Who-Is (ὁ ὢν), “God” (θεός), and “Lord” (κύριος).” In Philo, these are different aspects of the one Divinity, and the alteration between singular and plural functions to teach about the higher and the lower modes of spiritual perception. Other interpretations in Judaism distinguish between the “apparition of God and that of the three visitors, in order to draw out Abraham’s bold choice of hospitality as supreme religious duty, and God’s approval of this choice.”⁶⁷

Other sources name the angelic visitors as Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. *Bava Mezia* 86b reads: “Who were the three men? Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Michael came to bring the tidings to Sarah; Raphael, to heal Abraham; and Gabriel, to overturn Sodom.”⁶⁸

The early Christian reception of this episode sees in the three visitors the Son of God and His two angelic assistants. One can see how the Christological interpretation was the center of interest for the early Christian exegetes. Among these are Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyon, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others “who not only bear witness to the received catechetical tradition, but also deploy it as a valuable weapon in a variety of polemical (anti-Jewish, anti-Dualistic, anti-modalistic) contexts.”⁶⁹ One other distinctive reading of this episode held by many exegetes, and which is still very much circulated in the Orthodox tradition, uses not just the Christological interpretation but also a Trinitarian one. The indications from the text itself urged some exegetes to take a Trinitarian approach. These indicators include three visitors, three measures of flour, and the request of Sarah to bake cakes “hidden” under hot ashes. Origen, for example, considered this episode to be both mystical and sacramental, and he ends his homily with

⁶⁷ Bucur, *Scripture*, 45-46.

⁶⁸ Bucur, *Scripture*, footnote 12 on page 46.

⁶⁹ Bucur, *Scripture*, 49.

an exhortation for people to seek the mystery of the Trinity “through the revelation of Christ.”⁷⁰

This episode of the divine revelation to Abraham was not just received in the shape of writings and literature. Rather, it impacted other performative practices, such as hymns and icons. Origen’s phrase that “Abraham saw three but worshipped only one” has become the pointer of the proceeding exegesis. Over the centuries, some circles pushed this interpretation to its limit by considering the three visitors to be the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Hymnology reflects the Christological and the Trinitarian exegesis. For example, Romanos the Melodist, whose sixth century hymns are still widely used, especially in the Orthodox Church, viewed the Theophany at Mamre as a Christophany, since Abraham saw Christ to-be-incarnate; therefore, “Abraham saw the Word in veiled manner.”⁷¹ After the fifth century, the Trinitarian exegesis was enshrined by way of the hymns of weekly services, such as the Sunday Midnight Office, where the hymns speak about Abraham seeing God in human form and God revealing the doctrine of the three-hypostatic Godhead:

God in three persons appeared to Abraham at the oak of Mamre, and through mercy he was given reward for his hospitality Isaac: that God we now glorify as God of our Fathers”; “When you appeared to the Patriarch Abraham in human form (ἐν σχήματι νδρικῶ), O triple Unity, you revealed the unchangeable nature of your lovingkindness and dominion”; “Even that of old you might clearly reveal the triple hypostasis of the one Lordship, you appeared, my God, in human form (ἐν σχήματι νθρώπων) to Abraham as he praised your single might”; “As an alien in a foreign land Abraham was counted worthy to welcome in figure (τυπικῶς) the single Lord beyond being in three persons, in human form”; “Of old as you

⁷⁰ Bucur, *Scripture*, 52.

⁷¹ Bucur, *Scripture*, 58. He mentions Romanos’s hymn in the Second Hymn of Theophany : “Sarai received God and two archangels.”

appeared clearly to Abraham, triple in person and single by the nature of the Godhead, you revealed in figure (τῷπικῶς) the pure doctrine of the Godhead, and faithfully we sing your praise, God the sole ruler of triple sun.⁷²

Bucur illustrates Gabriel Bunge's presentation of important mosaics that depict the Hospitality of Abraham, one at San Vitale in Ravenna, and the other at Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. Both mosaics give special attention to the middle figures among the guests; this figure corresponds to Christ in order to make it clear that Abraham seeing the Lord was the earliest Christian reception of the text performed in these iconographies. This Christological understanding of the episode remains dominant in iconography until around the turn of the first millennium. It is after that point that we start seeing the icon of the Hospitality of Abraham begin to be called "the Icon of the Holy Trinity." There was an inherent contradiction with the icon being called this, because the middle figure continued to be considered Christ until the around the middle of the second millennium. At that time, we see Andrei Rublev's famous icon of the three figures, which marked the transition from a Christological to a Trinitarian iconographic performative exegesis of the theophany at Mamre.

The Kyriocentric exegesis along with the performative exegeses reflected in both hymnography and iconography provide the reader today with a major understanding of how this text from Genesis was heard, read, and received by the early Christians. It is through the hymns, the icons, and the mosaics that the believer can see and believe that Christ was there at Mamre, and at the same time that God revealed the doctrine of the Holy Trinity to Abraham. Above all, the figure of Abraham is presented as a figure to

⁷² As quoted by Bucur, 59 from the Canon of Midnight Office for Sunday, Tone 3, Ode 7, Troparion 3; Tone 4, Ode 3, Troparion 2; Tone 5, Ode 8, Troparion 1; Tone 3, Ode 6, Troparion 1; Tone 1, Ode 3, Troparion 1

imitate, so that the person who sees the icon or hears the hymn will be urged to practice hospitality, and to reach a state of being in the presence of the Lord. The Hospitality, along with the Christological and Trinitarian exegeses performed in hymns and icons, provides us with a Eucharistic and liturgical setting that puts the appeal of the exegeses into the right context.

2. Isaiah 6 and the Encountering with the Glory of God

The vision of Isaiah as we read it in Isaiah 6 has a crucial importance in the liturgical texts and practices of both the Second Temple era and the Christian Church due to its prominent components, including of the text itself and its authorship. The vision of Isaiah in Isaiah 6 includes the enthroned figure, the seraphim, the Trisagion hymn, the divine glory, the temple, and the purification of Isaiah's mouth, all of which played major role in shaping later liturgical practices both in Judaism and Christianity, along with development of later apocalyptic texts.

And it happened in the year that King Ozias died that I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and raised up, and the house was full of his glory. And seraphim stood around him; the one had six wings and the one had six wings, and with two they covered their face, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And they cried out one to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Sabaoth; the whole earth is full of his glory." And the lintel was raised at the voice with which they cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "O wretched that I am! I am stunned; for being a man and having unclean lips, I live among a people having unclean lips, and I have seen the King, the Lord Sabaoth, with my eyes!" Then one of the seraphim was sent to me, and he had in his hand a live coal that he had taken from the altar with the tongs. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips, and it will take away your lawlessness and purify your sins." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom should I send, and who will go to this people?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

The Temple of the Lord came alive in this vision, and the details therein "correspond, quite transparently, to the furnishing of the Temple," as Bucur justly states.⁷³ The throne is the counterpart of the Ark of the Covenant, the seraphim parallel the Cherubim around the Mercy Seat, the Lord Whom Isaiah saw is the invisible divine presence above the Mercy Seat, and the smoke brings the Israelites' encounter with God on Sinai alive.

The early Christian exegetes and the Gospel of John have perceived the Lord of Sabaoth of Isaiah 6 as linked to the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52-53, as both are connected to the Lord Jesus Christ lifted upon His Cross. Bucur takes it further by suggesting that, "[P]erhaps Magdalene's bold claim to have seen the Lord (John 20:18, Ἐώρακα τὸν κύριον) followed by the same claim on the part of the other disciples (John 20:25, Ἐωράκαμεν τὸν κύριον), echoes Isaiah's εἶδον τὸν κύριον. It is clear, in any case, that the Gospel of John identifies the kyrios in Isaiah's vision with the kyrios of Christian worship: "[Isaiah] saw His glory" (John 12:41), just as 'we have seen His glory' (John 1:14)."⁷⁴

The Book of Revelation, on the other hand, extends the thrice-holy hymn found in Isaiah to be directed to the slaughtered Lamb of Revelation 4-5. The four living creatures in Revelation 4 correspond to the seraphim of Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel's vision and give thanks to the Lord by singing a version of the Trisagion Hymn, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, Who was, and is and is to come" (Revelation 4:8). Revelation 5, on the

⁷³ Bucur, *Scripture*, 159-160.

⁷⁴ Bucur, *Scripture*, 160, 161: He packs his argument with the research of Martin McNamara "*Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible*" where John 12:14 claimed to use good Targumic language. According to Bucur, the Targum to Isaiah has "I saw the glory of the Lord" for MT "I saw the LORD," and "the temple was filled with the brightness of his glory" for MT "the hem of his robe filled the temple," while the LXX reads "the house was full of his glory."

other hand, shifts the worship and praise to “Him Who sits on the throne,” and to the slaughtered Lamb. In Revelation, the worship and praise are offered by the 24 elders.

This Christological interpretation was not limited to Scripture, but rather was echoed by prominent exegetes of the pre-Nicene era, whose interpretations are surveyed by Bucur⁷⁵. They all, although in different the degrees of centrality which they assign to the Christological theme, have agreed that the Prophets and the Patriarchs have received the vision of the Son. Among these pre-Nicene exegetes were Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyon, Clement of Alexandria, Ambrose of Milan, and Eusebius of Caesarea. Isaiah 6 was also perceived by them as a Trinitarian text. According to Bucur and Darrell Hannah, the Christians were reading the vision of Isaiah 6 in a Trinitarian manner by the end of the first century, or at the latest in the opening decades of the second century⁷⁶. The apocalyptic book of the Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah from the second century states that the prophet gazed upon a triad of the glorious one, “the Father of the Lord” and His two attendants, deemed “the Lord Jesus” and “the angel of the Holy Spirit.” With Irenaeus, this exegesis changed significantly, since he considered the two seraphim/cherubim subordinated to the Son and the Spirit. Origen, on the other hand, “claims that the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel are the source of the enigmatic triad of Ps-Plato’s *Second Epistle*.”⁷⁷ The pro-Nicene Fathers used a different type of Trinitarian interpretation of Isaiah 6. Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, and Evagrius saw in the thrice-holy hymn in Isaiah 6 a suggestion of the mystery of the Trinity⁷⁸.

⁷⁵ Bucur, *Scripture*, 162 and the following pages.

⁷⁶ Bucur, *Scripture*, 168; Darrell Hannah, “Vision in the Ascension of Isaiah,” 101.

⁷⁷ Bucur, *Scripture*, 160 and also Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology*, 61, 141-142.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Bucur, 170 note 42 Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 1.23.310–312 [SC 524: 118]); through those whom Isaiah calls seraphim, “the mystery of the Trinity was proclaimed with clarity” (ἐναργῶς τὸ

In the hymnographic realm, hymns composed using Isaiah 6 reflect both the Christological and Trinitarian exegeses. For example, one of the hymns of the *Katavasis* of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord to the Temple gives a clear performance of the vision in Isaiah 6: “Isaiah *beheld God symbolically on an exalted throne* attended by Angels of glory, he cried: O wretched man that I am! *For I have seen beforehand the incarnate God, the Lord of peace and unwaning light.*”⁷⁹ Another example of the Christological exegesis in the hymnological use of Isaiah 6 comes from the festal hymns for Palm Sunday:

Come forth, O ye nations; come forth, ye peoples; and see today the King of the Heavens coming to Jerusalem on a common colt *as upon an exalted throne*. O unbelieving and adulterous generation of the Jews, *come and behold Him Whom Esaias saw coming in the flesh for our sakes*, how He taketh unto Himself the new Sion as a chaste bride, and casteth away the condemned synagogue. And the children, innocent and undefiled, have come together as to an undefiled and incorrupt wedding-feast, loudly singing praise. Joining them in song, let us cry out the angelic hymn: Hosanna in the highest unto Him Who hath great mercy.⁸⁰

By contrast, the hymns of the Sunday Midnight Office, as composed in the ninth century, popularized the Trinitarian reading of Isaiah 6⁸¹:

The seraphim glorify the one source in three hypostases, without beginning, eternal, maker of all things, incomprehensible, Whom every tongue faithfully honors in songs.

τῆς τριάδος ἐκηρύχθη μυστήριον); Basil of Caesarea, *Eun.* 3.3 (SC 305:154): “I think also that Isaiah wrote that the seraphim were crying out ‘Holy!’ three times for this reason: because holiness in nature is observed in three hypostases” (ἐν τρισὶ ταῖς ὑποστάσεσιν ὁ κατὰ φύσιν ἁγιασμός θεωρεῖται); Evagrius, *De Seraphim* (Muyldermans, 373–74).

⁷⁹ The text is taken from the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America online Liturgical guide for the feast on February 2nd.
<https://antiochianprodsa.blob.core.windows.net/servicetexts/Jan%2026%202020%20Bilingual%20ORTHR OS.pdf>

⁸⁰ From the Festal Orthos of Palm Sunday: the Praises Hymns:
<https://antiochianprodsa.blob.core.windows.net/servicetexts/6-Palm-Sunday-ORTHROS.pdf>

⁸¹ Bucur, *Scripture*, 175

With mouths unsullied, cherubim and seraphim glorify You, the one God of threefold light, with equal-matching glory; with them, Lord, also accept us sinners, who magnify your might.

Isaias when he saw in image the one lordship, God in three persons, being glorified by the unsullied voices of the seraphim, was sent to go and proclaim the Being with triple light and the Unity with triple sun.

When Isaias saw You seated upon a lofty throne, being praised with thrice-holy hymns, he came to know the triple substance of the one Deity⁸²

One more example of the Christological reading in hymnography of Isaiah 6 is from the ninth ode of the Matins service of the feast of the Presentation of the Lord. The hymn performs the whole event of the presentation of the Lord to the Temple with special focus on the Theotokos, Symeon and that the Lord is the creator of the Law. Part of this hymn uses a specific part of Isaiah 6 which is the live coal and the tong held in the hand of the seraphim who in turn touched the lips of the prophet. This part of the hymn presents Christ as the live coal while the tong is the womb of the Theotokos. “Thou, O Maiden Mary Art in truth the *mystic tongs*, Who within thy blessed womb Hast *conceived the Ember, Christ.*”⁸³

What seems important in this piece of the hymn is that the performative of this part of the vision does not just stop on the hymn level, but it is practiced in every Divine Liturgy. In the Orthodox tradition all the believers will receive Holy Communion, which is the real body and the real blood of the Lord Jesus Christ from one chalice and via a spoon that is called “tong.” This presents another way in performing Isaiah 6 where the tong is the Communion spoon and the live coal is Jesus Christ himself in His Body and

⁸² As quoted in Bucur, 175, footnote 59: Canon of Midnight Office for Sunday Tone 1, Ode 1, Troparion 1; Tone 5, Ode 9, Troparion 2; Tone 3, Ode 5, Troparion 1; Tone 4, Ode 6, Troparion 2.

⁸³ Festal Orthros of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. The Ninth Ode.
<https://antiochianprodsa.blob.core.windows.net/servicetexts/Feb%202002%20Bilingual%20ORTHROS.pdf>

Blood⁸⁴, the incarnate Lord that Isaiah saw. Upon partaking from Communion, the priest exclaims, to the people who partook, the same words spoken by the seraph to Isaiah: “Behold, this has touched your lips, and it will take away your lawlessness and purify your sins.” This is a direct quotation from Isaiah 6, and when performed, it makes the priest parallel the angel and invites people to be Apostles sent by God, just like Isaiah in Isaiah 6 vision. This last part of calling people to be sent is again performed in the divine liturgy through the exclamation that the priest does at the end of the liturgy calling the believer to “depart in peace.” It should be noted that in the Byzantine rite the priest commune themselves if a bishop is not serving, and upon partaking, the priest exclaims to himself: “behold this has touched my lips and shall purge away all my sins.” This Eucharistic re-enactment of the Isaiah’s vision makes the priest first as Isaiah when receiving the Communion himself, and on the other hand, he, the priest, is the seraph after extending Communion to the believers. This “points to the doxological and experiential context in which the early Christian and later Byzantine exegesis of Isaiah took shape.”⁸⁵

The Trisagion hymn in Isaiah 6 has become an intrinsic element in the Byzantine Liturgy. It is very well contextualized in the Liturgy of John Chrysostom as follows:

Holy God at rest in the holy place, hymned by the Seraphim with the thrice-holy song (τρισάγιω φωνῆ), glorified by the Cherubim and worshipped by every heavenly Power: ... Accept, Master, the Thrice-holy Hymn (τὸν τρισάγιον ὕμνον) even from the mouth of us sinners;

⁸⁴ The living coal as foreshadowing of the Eucharist is from Ephrem of Nisibis, Hymns on Faith 10.8-11: “In your bread is hidden the Spirit which cannot be eaten. In your wine dwells the fire that cannot be drunk. Spirit in your bread, fire in your wine: It is a distinct wonder that our lips have received ... The Seraph did not touch the coal with his fingers. It touched only the mouth of Isaiah. [The Seraph] did not hold it, and [Isaiah] did not eat it. But to us our Lord has given both.... A new marvel of our great Lord: for bodily ones, fire and spirit to eat and drink!”

⁸⁵ Bucur, *Scripture*, 187.

We who in a mystery represent (εικονίζοντες) the cherubim and sing the thrice-holy hymn (τὸν τρισάγιον ὕμνον) to the life-giving Trinity, let us now lay aside every care of this life;

With these blessed Powers, Master, Lover of mankind, we also cry aloud and say: holy are you and all-holy, you and your only-begotten Son and your Holy Spirit; holy are you and all-holy, and magnificent is your glory.⁸⁶

The worshipping community performing this vision is basically asking to be like the cherubim and join in the praises of the Trisagion and be part of the heavenly worship. Bucur states that “the sense of overwhelming awe and paradox, which is infused in these liturgical exclamations, hearkens back to Isaiah: the heavenly Trisagion resounds “even from the mouth of us sinners”, and imperfect humans are thereby perfected into living icons of the cherubim and seraphim.

The vision of Isaiah 6 is not just foreshadowing of the mystery of Incarnation, and it is not limited to the heavenly praises presentation, and not just of Christological and hymnological usage, but rather it opens the horizon of worship to the worshippers today and transforms them through performative exegesis and re-enactment to become the eschatological community worshipping in the heavenly throne room, joining the angels and the elders and the new creation in praising God Almighty the incarnate and the slaughtered for the salvation of humanity.

3. Jesus Christ the Ancient of Days

At the Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Hunt Valley, MD where I am serving, there is a huge icon painted on the arch of the altar depicting the event of

⁸⁶ The excerpted passages are from the Prayer of the Trisagion Hymn, the Cherubic Hymn, and the Prayer of the Anaphora. Greek Text and English translation by Ephrem Lash in *The Divine Liturgy of our Father among the Saints John Chrysostom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 12, 24, 32.

Pentecost. In that icon the figure of the Ancient of Days as described in Daniel 7 is also depicted in the middle of the icon, with engraving says: ΙΣ ΧΣ (Jesus Christ) the Ancient of Days.” The icon as written, gives the impression that the tongues of fire are coming from the figure of the Ancient of Days. I have received many objections and become involved in many discussions about the canonical status of this icon, since there is a great possibility that it confuses what the Orthodox dogma teaches regarding the proceeding of the Holy Spirit. One of the arguments was that this icon confirms the “Filioque” in that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son too, which is considered heretical in the Orthodox Dogma. The full answer of this argument is found in the chapter about the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days in Bucur’s book the *Scripture Re-envisioned*. The following is a presentation of the resources of the text of Daniel 7 and its reception history to clarify the confusion that this icon thought to be presenting.



Figure 1: The Arch Icon of the Pentecost at the Nativity of the Theotokos Antiochian Orthodox Church in Hunt Valley, MD. Written in 2015 by the hands of Dionysius Bouloubasis



Figure 2: The Ancient of Days in the Middle top of the Arch where the above icon is written.

Bucur starts his presentation pointing out the textual divergence between the Old Greek and the Theodotian variants of Daniel 7:13. “[w]hile Theodotion, faithful to the Aramaic text, speaks of “one like a son of man” being presented to the Ancient of Days (ὡς υἱὸς νθρώπου ἐρχόμενος ἦν καὶ ἕως τοῦ παλαιοῦ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἔφθασεν), the Old Greek depicts “one like a son of man” approaching “like the Ancient of Days” (ὡς υἱὸς νθρώπου ἤρχετο καὶ ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν παρῆν), thus identifying or very intimately linking the two figures.”⁸⁷ This tells us that Christians have received interpretation that distinguishes the two figures, but also they have received an interpretation that presents Jesus Christ as the Son of man and the Ancient of Days. Bucur notes that identifying Jesus Christ with the Ancient of Days is “an old and very widespread Christian tradition.”⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Bucur, *Scripture*, 208.

⁸⁸ Bucur, *Scripture*, 208.

Distinguished Fathers interpreted the Son of Man as the Logos from the Ancient of Days as the Father when interpreting Daniel 7. Among them, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyon, Hippolytus of Rome, Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, and John of Damascus. Their interpretation became dominant part of the Christian theology, but it is noteworthy that the context of their writings was emerging heresies that urged them to defend the Christian faith that emphasizes the full hypostatic distinction of the divine Logos from the Father. With that being the case, one cannot assume neither that there was a clear cut between the two exegetical trends, nor did all the exegeses above refused the identification exegetical trend.

I will borrow the text as quoted by Bucur from Hippolytus of Rome who identifies the Son of Man as Logos and the Ancient of Days as the Father also states in “*Contra Noetum*: “a different view ascribing the Ancient of Days surrounded by hosts of angels “to the enfleshed Logos, Jesus Christ”

Surely, he [Noetus] is not going to say that he was flesh while still in heaven? ... But there was no flesh prior to this [Incarnation] in heaven. Who, then, was he in heaven but the fleshless Word (Λόγος ἄσαρκος)? ... He was taking to himself the name which is common among men and understood by them; and this—‘the Son of man’—he was called from the beginning with a view to the future, even though he was not yet a man. Just as Daniel attests when he says, ‘I looked, and behold! on the clouds of heaven there was one coming like a Son of man’ ... And he is scorned by Herod—he who is the future judge of all the earth; and he is flogged by Pilate—he who took upon himself our infirmities; and he is made the sport of soldiers—he at whose side stand a thousand thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand angels and archangels; and by the Jews he is fixed to the wood—he who fixed the heaven like a vault ... This is Jesus the Nazarene ... For his sake the sun is darkened, the day has no light, the rocks are rent, the veil is torn apart, the foundations of the earth are shaken, tombs are opened, and the dead are raised up, and the chief powers deeply shamed. For on the Cross they beheld him who sets the universe upon in order ... and when creation saw that he had given up the

Spirit, it was deep disturbed, and, in its inability to take in his superabounding glory, it grew dark⁸⁹.

The divinity of Jesus Christ was an important topic to emphasize facing Arianism and Eunomian polemics. Daniel 7 was used to aid this argument in that the Son is fully divine as he was given a throne and was attended by angelic hosts. The image here is for the Ancient of Days too and it perhaps that Athanasius the Great and John Chrysostom understood Christ as the Ancient of Days. Leaving the apologetic theology and its usage of Daniel 7, Bucur notes that “in the hymnographic memory of the Church, Daniel is honored as an eschatological visionary and Dan 7:9 is understood as a vision of Christ as the eschatological judge.”⁹⁰ The homily on the Meeting of the Lord ascribed to Cyril of Jerusalem, Bucur quotes, presents the “paradoxical identification of the enthroned and omnipotent Ancient of Days with the fragile baby in the arm of Simeon.”

Another homily on the Feast of the Nativity emphasizes this point:

I behold a strange mystery: in place of the sun, the Sun of Righteousness placed in the Virgin in an uncircumscribed manner ... Today God, He-Who-Is and preexists, becomes what he was not; for being God, he becomes a human being without stepping out of his being God.... The Ancient of Days is born as a child.⁹¹

Another example in support of the Christological identification of the Ancient of Days is from the Second Kontakion of the Feast of the Theophany:

Let us all raise our eyes to God in heaven, as we cry like Jeremiah: The One who appeared on earth, this is our God, who also willingly lived among men (cf. Bar 3:38), and underwent no change, who showed himself in different shapes to the prophets, Whom Ezekiel contemplated like the form of a man on the fiery chariot, *and Daniel as a son of man and*

⁸⁹ Hippolytus of Rome *Contra Noetum* 4.10–13; 18.3, 7–8. Greek text and English translation in Robert Butterworth, Hippolytus of Rome, *Contra Noetum* (London: Heythrop, 1977), 52–55, 86–91. As quoted in Bucur, 218–219.

⁹⁰ Bucur, *Scripture*, 222.

⁹¹ As translated by Bucur, *Scripture*, 223.

*ancient of days, proclaiming the ancient and the young to be one Lord:
The One who appeared and enlightened all things.*

The Lity of the Great Vespers of the feast of the Presentation of the Lord we read another hymn composed by Romanos the Melodist: “The Ancient of Days, having become a babe in the flesh, is brought to the Temple by a Virgin Mother, thus fulfilling the statute of His own Law. Receiving Him, Simeon said: Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, O Lord.”⁹² One another hymnological proof of the firm belief of the Christology of the Ancient of Days is evident in the dismissal of all vespers service, when the priest exclaims “Christ our God, the existing one (He-Who-Is, ó ōv) is blessed always now and ever and unto ages of ages,” affirms that Christ is perceived as the He-Who-Is, the creator and the Ancient of Days.

Bucur claims that the identification of the Ancient of Days and Jesus Christ in Daniel 7 is nothing new in the early Christian literature. “It falls, rather, within the category of ‘polymorphic Christology.’”⁹³ This Christology is well known in the early Christian apocalyptic writings and apocryphal texts too. The clearest example of the polymorphic Christology according to Bucur is from the apocryphal *Acts of Peter* where the aged infant and the infant God theme have a source that hymnology and iconography used later on:

... that you may love him, this Great and Small One [lit. “smallest one,” minimum] ... this Young Man and Old Man, appearing in time, yet utterly invisible in eternity; whom a human hand has not grasped, yet is held by his servants, whom flesh has not seen and now sees; ... who was before the world and is now perceived in time ... to him be praise in all eternity. Amen.⁹⁴

⁹² The Lity of the Great Vespers of the Presentation:
<https://antiochianprodsa.blob.core.windows.net/servicetexts/Feb%2001%20Bilingual%20LITART.pdf>

⁹³ Bucur, *Scripture*, 227.

⁹⁴ Bucur, *Scripture*, 227-228

Back to the argument about the icon of Pentecost and Jesus Christ the Ancient of Days in it, it seems helpful to see that early Christian reception of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Ancient of Days has two contexts if we can say. The first one is that they distinguished between the two figures due to the time of conducting the interpretation whether writing or preaching and what that time confronted the Church with heresies and other shifts in the line of Theology. At the same time, this early reception has received the identification between Jesus Christ and the Ancient of Days, and the Christian community performed this understanding through iconography and hymnology. The apocalyptic texts known and circulated in the communities helped and supported this performative exegesis trend of identification. One of the influential texts is Rev 1:13-14 where the One Like the Son of Man correspond to the Ancient of Days in Dan 7:13, and I believe this fed the iconography to depict Jesus Christ as an old age figure with white hair.⁹⁵ This icon in the figures above is faithful to this polymorphic Christology and the early Christian reception history of the text of Daniel, the Book of Revelation and other influential texts and traditions the community held through the centuries.

5. Conclusion

As noted earlier, in performatives statements words, sentences, and the txt itself will not be merely description of actions but the doing of the action. Building upon this definition, the chapter above tried to track the performative exegesis process, starting

⁹⁵ The Orthodox Church rejects the icon that depicts the three figures of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit where God the Father is depicted as older and aged figure, and Christ is the younger one.

with the charismatic exegesis, then to the Second Temple rewritten Bible, to the early Christian Kyriocentric and Christophanic reception of the Old Testament texts.

We found that charismatic exegesis is a hermeneutical ideology that provides divine legitimation for a particular understanding of a sacred text. This kind of exegesis was used in early Christianity resembling a way of receiving the Jewish Scriptures and to start implementing Christological significance on these texts.

On the other hand, “rewritten Bible” is “a narrative that follows Scripture but includes a substantial amount of supplements and interpretative developments.” I presented the problem of such a definition in that it allows the rewritten to stand for interpreted according to Bucur. The chapter then, showed the kyriocentric and Christophanic way that been used by the early Christian to read, understand, and interpret the Old Testament text, and other Second Temple apocalyptic texts. The early Christians re-envisioned the theophanies and they saw Jesus Christ present in these theophanies talking to the prophets and the fathers of the people. This re-envisioning process was translated into texts, hymnography, iconography and homilies, to show the people through salvation history as the men and women of Christ and to invite the readers, listeners, worshipers to be inscribe themselves and follow the example presented by the exegesis.

The chapter then confers three cases of Christophanic performative exegesis of Abraham and the theophany at Mamre, the vision in Isaiah 6 and the glory of the Lord, Daniel 7, and the Ancient of Days. Bucur provided a solid resource for these three cases. The cases focused on showing the Christological and the Trinitarian approach of these texts. The reception of these text chronologically was performed as writings,

hymnography, art, iconography, and liturgical movement to situate the scriptural text within a liturgical and Eucharistic frame, which in turn maintain a faithful Christian exegesis to the sacred text.

The last study case on the Ancient of Days was particularly focused on the icon of the Pentecost at The Nativity of the Theotokos Antiochian Orthodox Church in Hunt valley, MD. What is interesting and unique in this icon is that it has the icon of the Jesus Christ the Ancient of Days integrated in the depicted event. The study found that the depiction of the Ancient of the Day as Jesus Christ is very faithful to the early Christian exegesis on Daniel 7. The subject matter that appeared more clearly in the liturgical text and hymnography presented above. And on the other hand, depicting Jesus Christ the Ancient of Days in the icon of the Pentecost conveys an incarnation truth in that icons belongs to the Incarnation of the God. We were able to write icons merely because Jesus Christ was incarnate and with that the economic realm is a matter to be depicted in icons. Therefore, Jesus Christ the Ancient of Days in the icon of Pentecost convey the truth that Jesus Christ sends the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, and that the icon in no way depicts the proceeding of the Holy Spirit from the Father.

Chapter Three: The Book of Revelation: A Liturgical Book

1. Introduction

This chapter begins with a bold premise: the Book of Revelation is a liturgical book that was written to be used in a worship setting, and that furthermore, apocalyptic language is a liturgical language par-excellence. The frame within which these texts have been received in Judaism and early Christianity down to this day is liturgical. There are many pieces of internal and textual evidence of the liturgical dimensions of the Book of Revelation, along with linguistic and form elements. Images, hymns, and metaphors in the vision of Revelation link directly or indirectly to the heavenly worship and liturgical rituals; the crown of such imagery is the imagery of the Throne room.

On one hand, this imagery seems to be a very intrinsic element in the plot of book, and on the other hand, it is the result of reading and understanding earlier apocalyptic literature and the Old Testament. Before surveying and studying the clothing imageries in the Book of Revelation, it seems important to present the liturgical nature of the book and how the “liturgical key” is the right exegetical tool to use when reading the book of Revelation.

This chapter focuses on the liturgical dimension of the Book of Revelation through a tracking of the imagery of the throne throughout the book, and through analyzing its context and liturgical elements. The main goal is to focus on the mutual elements here and in the other apocalyptic texts, which will be surveyed in the first section of this chapter. Subsequently, discovering the liturgical setting that John, the author, framed the vision of Revelation within will help in analyzing its nature and

function. Before doing any of this, though, the literary analysis of the first appearance of the throne room in Revelation 4 and 5 will help to guide this study and set it in the right direction.

2. The Throne in Jewish Biblical and Apocalyptic Literature

1. Kingship of God

This section seeks the theme of “God as a King,” including its metaphors and functions. “The kingship of God has naturally been one of the most popular subjects in the field of the Old Testament.”⁹⁶ The theme of God’s kingship is usually expressed in the books of the Old Testament by the formula “יהוה מלך”⁹⁷. YHWH is qualified with the epithet “King” 41 times and occurs 13 times as the subject of “מלך”. The theme of the throne is associated with the kingship of God, especially “that God’s kingship in Israel was patterned after human kingship”⁹⁸. The title “King” appears when God is described, and it unveils a variety of meanings, such as a warrior:

Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!
And the **king of glory** shall come in. Who is this **king of glory**? The Lord
strong and mighty, The Lord **mighty in battle** (Ps 24: 7-8, NKJV).

Then the Lord will go forth **and fight** against those nations, as He fights in
the day of **battle**... and the Lord shall be king over all the earth. In that
day it shall be-- "The Lord is one," and His name one, and the **Lord shall
be king over all the earth** (Zech 14:3, 9, NKJV).

⁹⁶ Timo Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation* (WUNT 142; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 44.

⁹⁷ Translated as “The Lord is king.”

⁹⁸ Eskola, *Messiah*, 45.

Moreover, the appellation “king” appears in a context where God is depicted as judge (Isa 41:21, Ps 5:3). God is a king when he is called a shepherd (Mic 2:13). Furthermore, God the king is the creator (Isa 43:15; Ps 149:2).

The most majestic descriptions of God as a king can be found in the book of Psalms. In the kingship psalms, many descriptions of God as a king and especially of the enthronement of God are present. A very quick reading through Psalms 96-99 can give the sense that the liturgical tone is clear and attached to the kingship of the Lord (cf. Ps 98:6 and Psalm 96).

These Psalms connote the liturgical contexts of God’s kingship themes. “The purpose of the liturgy reflected e.g., in Psalm 96 is to assert and to enact YHWH’s legitimate governance over the nations and the peoples of the world”⁹⁹. Therefore, the liturgical element supports the enthronement theme of God and emphasizes the sovereignty of God.

Eskola states that “a liturgical element is evident further in the cultic acclamation that appears in several of these ‘Kingship-of-Yahweh’ psalms.”¹⁰⁰ Psalm 99 shows that

The Lord reigns; Let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; Let the earth be moved! The Lord is great in Zion, and He is high above all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome name. He is holy. Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool. He is holy. Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool. He is holy.” (Ps 99:1-3, 5).¹⁰¹

From this point of view, God is not just the king of Israel, but he is the King of universe. “Say among the nations, the Lord is King” (Ps 96:10). Therefore, God’s throne emphasizes the kingship of God throughout all of these contexts.

⁹⁹ Eskola, *Messiah*, 47.

¹⁰⁰ Eskola, *Messiah*, 48.

¹⁰¹ Eskola, *Messiah*, 48. I added the underline to add emphasis.

2. Temple, Throne and Ark

The people of God expressed His sovereignty in variety of ways. One is “worship,” in which the people adore the King on His throne. Even though they recognize the transcendence of God and His heavenly realm, they believe that the throne of God is to be found on earth, on the most special and holy spot in their history, that is, in the Temple, in the Holy of Holies.

The texts of the Old Testament describe some basic features of the throne in the Temple. For example, in Exodus, God’s royal tent is described as follows:

And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the Ark, and in the Ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the Ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel. (Exd 25:20-25).

The holiest place seems to be the Tent/Tabernacle, and in this holiest place the Ark of the Covenant is placed. “According to the testimony of the Torah, the throne of God the King was located first in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple of Jerusalem”¹⁰². 1 Samuel 3-6 mentions the Temple in Shiloh where the Ark was housed, and where God is mentioned as the One Who is enthroned on the Cherubim: “So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim” (1 Sam 4:4).

It seems that there was a strong relationship between the presence of the Ark amidst the people and the glory of Israel, which is related to the presence of God enthroned as king. Here one could understand why Eli’s daughter-in-law said, “The glory

¹⁰² Eskola, *Messiah*, 50.

has departed from Israel, for the Ark of God has been captured.” (1 Sam 4:22). Therefore, God’s enthronement is related to the Ark and the Ark’s resting place, which is the holiest place and from whence the commandments of God were given after the Exodus from Egypt. In 1 Samuel 5 and 6, it is obvious how God manifests His power among other people, and again how He works through the Ark. Where the Ark is, therefore, the power of the God of Israel is. Another crucial element is the presence of the priesthood, with the characters of Samuel and Eli, which gives a ritualistic and liturgical frame around the text of the Ark/Throne of God.

The Merkabah of God is found in several passages, as we showed above. Moreover, the place of the throne seems to be both in heaven and on earth. “The Lord is in His Holy Temple; the Lord’s throne is in Heaven” (Ps 11:4). The throne is located in heaven *and* inside the Temple. For example, Psalm 103 reads:

The Lord has established **His throne in heaven**, and His kingdom rules over all. Bless the Lord, you His angels, Who excel in strength, who do His word, Heeding the voice of His word. Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, You ministers of His, who do His will. Bless the Lord, all His works, **in all places of His dominion**. Bless the Lord, O my soul. (Ps 103:19-22).

The heavenly worship in front of the throne is present, which is performed by the angels and the hosts of heaven. Simultaneously, the unity of the heavenly and earthly realm is evident as the call for praise is to all His works in all places of His dominion. Therefore, there is a kind of interdependence between the heavenly worship and the earthly Temple worship, especially as it is conducted before the throne of God. “One might suggest that in the Temple of Jerusalem heaven touches earth”¹⁰³; thus, the throne in the Holy of

¹⁰³ Eskola, *Messiah*, 54.

Holies may be seen as an imitation of the heavenly one. The relationship between the heavenly and the earthly realms seems to be an isomorphic relationship.

In other words, the Old Testament gives us a majestic scene of God the King and of the Temple as His own palace. There is no crown to indicate God's kingship, but a throne in the Holy of Holies. God is to be met before His throne and from this throne derive mercy, salvation, and judgment. This is completely parallel with the Jewish theocratic theology that is the mainstay of Merkabah mysticism and many Christian apocalypses afterwards.

The Old Testament provides the following features when dealing with the throne of God:

1. God is on the throne, as He is the king.
2. The cultic aspect is strongly present.
3. The throne is a mercy seat and sign of judgment, and it is the place where God meets His people and delivers His salvation and condemnation.

The Throne in the Old Testament is a metaphor of mediation, power, and mercy. These aspects later combine the throne discourses with the pre-Christian Jewish literature, with a full background of the throne as a center of worship and a communication between God, and people especially with the atonement. It always reflects the presence of God, and later it indicates the enthronement of other figures.

Silviu Bunta, in his study on Ezekiel 1, argues that for Ezekiel the earthly temple is the heavenly temple, therefore, the temple is heaven. And on the other hand, Ezekiel 1 makes the Divine Presence *the temple itself*, as an "intention to safeguard the divine

presence in front of the destruction of Jerusalem temple.”¹⁰⁴ With biblical and extra biblical evidence, the heavenly temple and the earthly temple are not two separate entities, but rather, identical place defined by the presence of God. For example, “the psalms dedicated to Zion and the temple...emphasize the same idea: the temple (Zion or Jerusalem) is literally the house of God (Pss 43:3; 46:5; 50:2; 76:3; 132:13-14).”¹⁰⁵ The distinction between Heaven and the temple of earth comes from the postexilic period in which the temple started to serve as a union between heaven and earth, or a sacred meeting place between heaven and earth.

3. The Throne in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature¹⁰⁶

The writings that include the throne as a major theme use various elements in constructing their heavenly visions. Most of the visions present a seer who is a righteous chosen one, guided by an angel to visit heaven or the heavens. This angel is a guide and an interpreter for many scenes and events that the seer sees in his journey. Usually, the climax of the story will be a meeting with God on His throne; in this meeting the seer will be instructed by God to conduct God’s words to men on earth. The following section presents a quick survey through selected writings, tracking the throne visions and their liturgical elements.

¹⁰⁴ Silviu N. Bunta, “In Heaven or on Earth: A Misplaced Temple Question about Ezekiel’s Visions,” in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Elior*, ed. By D. V. Arbel and A. A. Orlov (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 29-44 at 30.

¹⁰⁵ Bunta, “In Heaven,” 34.

¹⁰⁶ The original texts in this section are taken from: *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature & Testaments* (volume 1 and 2). Edited, James Charlesworth New York: Doubleday & Company, INC, 1983, 1985.

1. The Book of Watchers (1 Enoch 1–36)

This book is the introduction of the Enoch literature. It consists of the first 36 chapters in 1 Enoch. The book may be divided, according to Collins, into three sections: Chapters 1-5, 6-16, and 17-36.¹⁰⁷ “Parts of the text have been found in Qumran, and there seems to be a close connection with the book of Daniel, as well.”¹⁰⁸ In this book, we see palace, throne, cherubim and fire, the same elements that we have seen before in the Old Testament prophetic passages.

Chapter 14 presents the vision of the throne where Enoch went and entered two houses (14:8-11). The first house has fire and precious stones, which direct us to Ezekiel’s vision. In the second house, the “excellent” house, Enoch sees the throne: “And I observed and saw inside it a lofty throne, and its appearance was like crystal and its wheel like the shining sun” (1 En 14:18, 19). The throne is high and shining, and there are cherubim around it. Again, a river of fire is seen flowing out of the throne: “And from beneath the throne were issuing streams of flaming fire.” (1 En 14: 19). After this, Enoch sees God enthroned on this throne, with the Holy Ones near Him. Again, here “the Great Glory was sitting upon it” and was surrounded by fire (1 En 14: 20, 22). Enoch, before this vision, trembles, is afraid and his face is down (1 En 14: 24).

1 Enoch 14 carries the conception of the identity of the earthly temple as heaven in considering the heavenly ascent of Enoch starting at the foot of Mount Hermon. As reaching up to the summit of the mountain, Enoch was reaching heaven; “it is probable

¹⁰⁷ John, Collins. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature.*, 47.

¹⁰⁸ Eskola, *Messiah*, 72.

that the intriguing temple and heaven in 1 Enoch 14 are located at the top of Mount Hermon.”¹⁰⁹ This reflects the theology of entering the temple is equal to reaching the top of the sacred mountain and at the same time it is entering heaven.

Afterward, God reveals to Enoch the secrets concerning the watchers, or fallen angels. Enoch’s mission is to deliver judgment to the watchers derived from the throne and He Who sits on it.¹¹⁰ The judgment aspect here is both present and eschatological. After the evil spirits spread on earth, the watchers will not have peace: “Say to them therefore: You will have no peace” (1 En 16:3).

Later on, 1 En 25:3 reads, “This tall mountain which you saw whose summit resembles the Throne of the God is (indeed) his throne, on which the Holy and Great Lord of Glory, the Eternal king, will sit when he descends to visit the earth with goodness.” Therefore, the throne here is a source of salvation, and it is the tree of life from which the righteous will eat: “This is for the righteous and the humble” (1 En 25:5).

There are important features in this text which have their connections with the Old Testament and then to the general apocalyptic themes. First, the vision of the two houses points us to Isaiah and Daniel. Moreover, the imagery of the two houses, with one excelled and more glorious than another, with the throne of God connects to the Temple, where God is in the Holy of Holies sitting on His throne. Only Enoch could enter to the throne room and “none of the Angels was able to come in and see the face of the Excellent and the Glorious One.” (1 En 14:21), mirroring the high priest entering into the Holy of Holies once a year. The appearance of divinity, rivers of fire beneath the throne,

¹⁰⁹ Bunta, “In Heaven,” 32.

¹¹⁰ See 1 Enoch 15-16.

and the entourage of Holy Ones recall Daniel 7, and “suggest that even the more historically oriented apocalypses drew on mystical traditions.”¹¹¹ Secondly, the judgment and salvation aspects which derive from God Who sits on the Throne are also connected with the prophetic tradition and with the Jewish faith of One God calling the chosen people.

The liturgical dimensions of these writings are evident. First, “the sound of cherubim” (14:18) around the throne is a sign of a liturgical element in this vision. Then, the location of the throne and the second house, where Enoch enters, guides us to understand Enoch’s role here as a priestly role. Moreover, the connection to the Temple is clear with the Holy Ones near to the throne, staying there and not leaving day or night. The praises also give a strong clue that there is a liturgy performed before the throne.

2. *Qumran Writings*

The importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for understanding the apocalyptic literature is twofold, as J. Collins states.¹¹² On the one hand, they give a strong understanding of the origin and the early development of apocalyptic literature. On the other hand, the writings are interested in an angelic world and in eschatology, which are basic elements in apocalyptic literature. In Qumran writings, the throne visions and

¹¹¹ Collins, *The Apocalyptic*, 54.

¹¹² Collins, *The Apocalyptic* 145.

enthronement themes, in addition to messianic expectations and the cultic¹¹³ settings, are major elements.

a. The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifices

In the Bible, the earthly sanctuary is depicted as a replica of the heavenly one, (Exod 25:9, 26:30). This seems to be continued in postbiblical literature. James R. Davila notices that “the Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice is one of the most extended and striking examples from the Second Temple period of the theme of the archetypal temple.”¹¹⁴ *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifices* present a description for the Sabbath worship and how the angelic priests offer sacrifices in the heavenly Temple. The document contains thirteen songs, one for each Sabbath in the first quarter of the year.

The songs are quite similar to the apocalyptic visions. In these visions, a description of the throne of God and the thrones of glory, in addition to the liturgy that is conducted before the throne of God by angels, are evident. Song XII, which is from 4Q405, 20ii-21-22:6-14¹¹⁵, reads: “The cherubim fall before Him and they bless when they raise themselves...they are blessing the structure of a throne-chariot (Merkabah) above the firmament of the cherubim and they chant the effulgence of the firmament of light from beneath His glorious seat.”

In the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, the heavenly worship and the praises of God occupy almost the whole document and have the most prominent place. Moreover,

¹¹³ The scholars use the term “cult” in a neutral and technical sense to mean any set of rituals used in a given religious tradition. James Davila, *Liturgical Works* (ECDSS 6; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 6.

¹¹⁴ James Davila, *Liturgical Works*, 83.

¹¹⁵ The text is quoted directly from the Davila, *Liturgical Works*, 147.

the kingship of God is evident and essential to understanding such a document¹¹⁶.

Furthermore, as in the *Book of the Watchers*, the worship around the throne suggests that the liturgical dimension is another prominent feature in the document and in the performance of the Qumran community as well.

*b. 4QBerakhot*¹¹⁷

Key for understanding this document is the centrality of the covenant ratified at Sinai between God and Israel in the theology of the Qumran sectarians.¹¹⁸ According to this, the Qumran community saw themselves as the true Israel, and thus were in conflict with the Jerusalem Temple priests at that time, considering them to be apostates. This is exactly what *Berakhot* presents. This document is considered the “one version of the sectarian community’s annual covenant renewal liturgy.”¹¹⁹

The liturgical aspect of the throne room is clear also in this document, especially in the hymns of the heavenly realm sung by the heavenly beings. These hymns praise God and His works and describe the throne room with its inhabitants. Here is an example of one of these liturgical exaltation hymns:

Your worthy seat and the footstool of Your glorious feet in the heights of Your station and the floor of Your Holiness and the chariot of Your glory, their cherubim and their ophanim and all their foundations, foundations of fire and sparks of brightness and radiances of effulgence, rivers of fires and luminaries of wonder (4Q286 1ii).

The basic liturgical elements exist here: the throne, the luminaries, and the cherubim, as well as the fire and sparks of brightness. Moreover, the angels are in the heavenly realm,

¹¹⁶ Eskola, *Messiah*, 81.

¹¹⁷ The Qumran texts are quoted from Davila, *Liturgical Works*.

¹¹⁸ Davila, *Liturgical*, 41.

¹¹⁹ Davila, *Liturgical*, 41.

as the following reads: “In the palaces of Your Kingdom... all your attendants in the ornamentation of their adornments, angels of Your Holiness in the dwelling ... angels of your righteousness” (4Q286 12:1-3a).

There is a repetition of “Amen” throughout the hymns, and praises and blessings offered to God by angels and by an appointed priest before God. Furthermore, the document presents the judgment aspect in the hymns that reflect the destruction of the wicked. All of these elements support the liturgical setting and performance of this document in the Qumran community’s weekly rituals.

4. The Throne in Other Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Texts

These writings are not necessarily Christian but are mainly composed of Jewish writings preserved by the Christian community or the subject of Christian redactions. The development of the throne visions and their settings is remarkable and reflects a liturgical reception of these texts.

In the following, two examples from these texts will be researched. The first is the *Similitudes of Enoch* and the second is the *Ascension of Isaiah*.

1. Similitudes of Enoch

The *Similitudes of Enoch*, or the *Book of the Three Parables*, belongs to the Enochic literature. The Son of Man plays an essential role in this book. J. Collins states that “it is unlikely that a Jewish author would have accorded such a central role to a ‘Son of Man’ figure after that expression had become established as a Christological title.”¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Collins, *The Apocalyptic*, 178.

He concludes that the “Son of Man” passages in the Gospel of Matthew, which combined with the glorious throne, seem to depend on the *Similitudes*.

The *Similitudes* shows several features of the “Merkabah” tradition. It has proper apocalyptic beginnings, with the ascent of Enoch to heaven. Within this ascension there are several elements, including the throne, angels, praises, and for the first time, the secrets-to-be-revealed. One of the main figures in the divine agency is the Son of Man or the Elect One. This Son of Man is an attractive figure to be studied, as “the *Similitudes* are exceptional among the Jewish apocalypses in focusing attention on a single figure, who is designated as the Chosen One, or that Son of Man, or even Messiah.”¹²¹

Enoch in this book travels to heaven escorted by an angel, who guides him, interprets the visions, and answers Enoch’s questions. In 39:3, Enoch starts his journey from the “face of the earth” and the clouds and storms “set *him* down at the end of heaven.” Enoch saw the dwelling of the Holy; this place seems to have special features.

So there my eyes saw their dwelling places with the holy angels, and their resting places with the holy ones, and they interceded and petitioned and prayed, on behalf of the children of the people; and righteousness, like water, flowed before them, and mercy like dew upon the earth, and thus it is in their midst forever and ever. (1 En 39:5)

Once again, the liturgical framework of this vision is evident, and is a crucial feature which culminates with the thrice-holy praise of the Lord of Spirits Who created the world and Who has the authority over everything. “Those who do not sleep bless you, and they stand before Your Glory, and bless and praise and exalt, saying: “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Spirits; he fills the earth with spirits” (1 En 39:12).

¹²¹ Collins, *The Apocalyptic*, 183.

The angelic tradition is also present especially with the presence of the four archangels who stand on the four sides of the Lord of Spirits, praising and interceding (1 En 40:2-10). This feature can be added to the cultic setting of the vision. This setting will reach a climax in chapter 41, when all the creation, including the sun and moon praises the Lord. Therefore, the vision's setting is liturgical; the liturgical act is not limited to men and angels but is performed by the universe. The Son of Man appears in chapter 45 in a judgmental context; he is an eschatological judge and from the very beginning, his position seems to be extraordinary, as we read: "On that day the Chosen One will sit on the Throne of Glory and will choose their works. And their resting places will be without number and their spirits within them will grow strong when they see My Chosen One and those who appeal to My Holy and Glorious Name." (1 En 45:3).

The Chosen One in chapter 46 is described as the Son of Man. The Son of Man seems to be introduced in this chapter in a context very close to Daniel 7. He is with "Who Had the Head of Days" and he has a face of man: "And there I saw one who had a 'Head of Days' and his head was white like wool. And with him there was another whose face had the appearance of a man." (1 En 46:1).

This chapter describes the Son of Man's function, which identifies him more than his appearance does. There has been a debate about whether this figure is a human or an angel. In apocalyptic literature, a figure with the appearance of a man is quite commonly found to be an angel (cf., Dan 8:15, 9:21, 12:6).¹²² This specific figure carries the eschatological associations of Daniel 7. 1 Enoch 46 presents the following function:

This is the Son of Man who has righteousness and with whom righteousness dwells. He will reveal all the treasures of that which is secret, for the Lord of Spirits has chosen him (46:3).

¹²² Collins, *The Apocalyptic*, 184.

And this Son of Man, who you have seen, will rouse the kings and the powerful from their resting places, and the strong from their thrones, and will loose the reins of the strong, and will break the teeth of the sinners (46:4).

Therefore, Son of Man functions as an eschatological revealer and judge, who provides salvation to the righteous, and condemnation to the sinners. Moreover, this figure is related to the human and the heavenly righteous, as his function is defined in relation to the human righteous ones:¹²³ “He will be a staff to the righteous and the holy, that they may lean on him and not fall” (1 En 48:4).

In sum, the book of *Similitudes* gives new dimensions to the Merkabah mysticism and apocalyptic literature. First, the power and function of the Son of Man is brought to be his main features. He will judge, give salvation, and reassure the righteous that their destiny is secured in his own hands. On the other hand, the denial of his power and name will bring condemnation. The book of *Similitudes* occurs within a liturgical framework and is performed by angels, men, and the whole universe. This liturgical discourse is more obvious than in the previous literature. This liturgical discourse plays the role of engaging the righteous, the sinner, and the entire universe in the eschatological event of judgment. Therefore, it is a proof that the enthronement discourse has a liturgical and setting, which as we shall see in the remainder of this chapter further developed throughout the centuries.

2. *The Ascension of Isaiah*

¹²³ Collins, *The Apocalyptic*, 185.

This apocryphal book has a composite structure created from three distinct parts, one of which is Jewish, and the others two are Christian. This book appears to have been combined in its present form by a Christian editor sometime in the second century AD. It seems that the original language of all its parts was Greek, even if the Jewish part may depend on a Hebrew or Aramaic prototype.

The first part of this book, *The Martyrdom of Isaiah*, is a Jewish writing; the second part *The Testament of Hezekiah*, is a Christian writing which provides the reader with an idea of Jesus, the redemption of the world, the Church, and its persecution by Nero. The third part, which is our point of interest, is *The Vision of Isaiah*, a Christian writing presenting a typical Jewish accession with an inauguration of the Christian apocalyptic.

The Vision of Isaiah begins as a normal Jewish description of a heavenly journey, which contains a seer and an angel who guides the seer, explains the visions, and answers the seer's questions.

When I prophesied in accordance with the message which you have heard, I saw a glorious angel; his glory was not like the glory of the angels which I always used to see, but he had great glory, and an office, such that I cannot describe the glory of this angel. And I saw when he took hold of me by my hand, and I said to him, "Who are you? And what is your name? And where are you taking me up?" (7:2-3)¹²⁴

The journey passes through all seven heavens; each heaven seems to have a throne, except for the sixth one since it is directed by the power of the seventh heaven. This is the only exception in respect to the other Jewish apocalypses.¹²⁵ In the seventh heaven there is no throne, but there is God's throne of glory in the center of the highest heaven. It

¹²⁴ *The Martyrdoms and Ascension of Isaiah in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 165.

¹²⁵ Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 59.

seems that the traditional Jewish Merkabah has been replaced with a Christian message.¹²⁶

The first distinctive element in the book is the liturgical element. This element manifests in the ritualistic discourses that are founded in each heaven with the praises and worship around the throne. This scene will be repeated in each heaven, even in the sixth heaven where there is no throne. “And there I saw a throne in the midst, and on his right and on his left were angels. And [the angels on the left were] not like unto the angels who stood on the right, but those who stood on the right had the greater glory, and they all praised with one voice,” (7:14-15)

The second element is the praises and worship. *The Ascension of Isaiah*, tells that the praise is only to God. This is clear in the conversation between the seer and the angel:

And I asked the angel who led me, and said to him: “To whom is this praise directed?” And he said to me: “To the praise of [One who sits in] the seventh heaven: The One who rests in the holy world, and to his Beloved, from where I was sent to you. To there it is directed. (7:16-17).

The book forbids worship of any other heavenly agents, such as angels. Although angels have a prominent place in the visions, worshipping the angels is explicitly prohibited:

And I fell on my face to worship him, and the angel who led me would not let me, but said to me: “Worship neither throne nor angel from the six heavens, from where I was sent to lead you, before I tell you in the Seventh heaven. (7:21).

In this book, the enthronement theme was applied to the patriarchs and the righteous. This theme is expanded to include the enthronement of all believers:

And I saw there many garments laid up, and many thrones and many crowns. And I said to the angel: “Whose are these garments and thrones and crowns?” And he said unto me: “These garments many from that

¹²⁶ According to Eskola, *Messiah*, 110.

world will receive, believing in the words of That One, who shall be named, as I told thee, and they will observe those things, and believe in them, and believe in His cross: for them are these laid up” (9:24-26)¹²⁷.

Therefore, the Ascension of Isaiah provides the theme of the enthronement built on a Jewish ascension structure and presents the Christian theology and a prototype of Christian apocalypses. Some elements remained the same, such as ascension, enthronement of the righteous, and the liturgical aspect.

Through this selective survey of some of the Jewish and Christian apocalyptic texts, these elements, along with the Old Testament theme of the kingship of God, seem to be of essence:

1. The throne room and the theme of enthronement.
2. The liturgical aspect that is combined with the throne vision. It is revealed through praises, clothes, ritualistic movement, and logistical setting.
3. The judgment aspect that combines with the throne and the enthronement, and which is executed in a liturgical framework.

These writings, with all the features and elements they present, played a major role in the composing of generations of apocalyptic texts in the future. The liturgical framework seems intrinsic in the apocalyptic language. This framework was inherited with a Christological reception in the Book of Revelation.

Having explored the liturgical elements in the throne phenomenon throughout Jewish and Christian literature, the throne in the Book of Revelation is now the focus of the following section, which will finally prove the liturgical dimensions of Revelation and that the liturgical key is the appropriate exegetical tool.

¹²⁷ Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 169.

5. The Simplicity of the Heavenly Ascent

The first thing one notices in reading Revelation 4 is the simplicity of the description of heavenly ascent,¹²⁸ in comparison with some of the visions explored above. Revelation 4:1-2 is an ascension narrative shorter than the narratives in the Jewish Merkabah, and it consists of three important motifs. First is the door [Θύρα], and this door is “opened” [ἠνεωγμένη]. This participle is passive and used as circumlocution for divine activity.¹²⁹ Therefore, this is a door to heaven opened by God. Second, the voice from heaven summons John to ascend. Third is the ensuing vision of God upon His heavenly Throne.

It is a very short and quick ascension to heaven here, in comparison with the Jewish Merkabah. Often an apocalyptic seer records more specific details of his ascension, “and here the author is not very interested in conveying knowledge of heavenly geography as in asserting close connections between the heavenly and earthly realm.”¹³⁰ John likely wanted to make the narrative shorter because the main point conveyed to the readers relates a heavenly perspective of what is happening on earth, more than the justification of his prophecy or ascension. It is obvious that John amply demonstrates that he can substantially modify the imagery and tradition perceived here.

The author uses an Old Testament conception of a “door to heaven,” as we can find this used only in Gen 28:17 in relation to an epiphanic heaven. Moreover, this motif

¹²⁸ L. W. Hurtado, "Revelation 4-5 in the Light of Jewish Apocalyptic Analogies," *JSNT* 25 (1985): 105-124, at 110.

¹²⁹ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 280.

¹³⁰ Frederick J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon: The Revelation of John* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), 170.

can be found in 1 En 14:14-15, where there is door opened and the vision of the throne of God occurs after this in 14:18. According to David Aune,¹³¹ this image is also important in Greek literature and in the Hellenistic and Roman mentality of the people in southwest Asia Minor. The distinctive point is that the “opened door” refers to Artemis’s temple. John uses a very short and good motif to grasp the attention of his readers with Hellenistic and Jewish-Christian mentalities, and to guide them toward the heavenly Temple. This is a liturgical clue, as it opens the vision to heaven and to its Temple. This is the first signifier that all that will come in the rest of the vision is moderated and controlled within the liturgical praxis of the heavenly throne room.

6. The Throne and the Concentric Circles

The throne room in Revelation 4 and 5 is structured like “growing concentric circles.” The phrase “around the throne” occurs three times in (4:3, 4, and 6), and is used to indicate the rainbow, the 24 elders, and the four creatures. Examining these concentric circles will help unveil the purpose of such imagery.

“A throne stood in heaven”- a great symbol of God’s sovereignty- is the first thing John saw in his vision! This image is quite familiar and is brought from the Old Testament and the Jewish Merkabah. The word *θρόνος* appears 47 times in Revelation, and in all but seven instances, it refers to the heavenly throne of God.¹³² The throne is not empty but has “one seated on it,” and this figure is described using precious stones

¹³¹ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 280-281.

¹³² The throne in heaven is found in Isa 6:1, Jer 17:12, Ezek 1:26, 10:1 and Dan 7:9.

imagery, unlike Daniel's and Jewish Merkabah's tradition of personifying God on the throne. These stones have colors,¹³³ which is found only in Ezekiel's visions. On the other hand, the Jewish apocalyptic literature does not usually use precious stones to describe the throne of God.¹³⁴ John uses jasper to describe the New Jerusalem in Rev 21:11, which both manifests the glory of God and at the same time is the same stone used to describe God Himself on His Throne.

1. The Rainbow

The first circle surrounding the throne is the rainbow. This is a direct allusion to Ezek 1:27-28, where the throne of God appears. In the biblical tradition the rainbow is presented in the story of Noah and the Flood in Gen 9:13-16. What is important in this image is that the rainbow was and continues to be a divine sign that this kind of flood will never happen again. It is a sign of covenant between God and man, a sign of God's love and promise not to destroy man in a flood again. The use of the rainbow has a twofold aspect: firstly, it is a reminder that God Who sits on the Throne in Glory can destroy the earth, but secondly, it is He who brings salvation to the earth, as He did with Noah.

2. Twenty-Four Elders

The second circle is of the 24 thrones with elders seated on them, and this circle presents the major theme of the Throne vision. In 1 Kings 22:19 the throne of God is encircled by the hosts of heaven on the right and the left. Aune refers to the same

¹³³ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 285.

¹³⁴ Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 86.

arrangement found in the *Apostolic Church Order*, “for there are twenty-four elders, twelve on the right and twelve on the left.”¹³⁵ On the other hand, the multiple thrones vision, which occurs elsewhere in Jewish apocalyptic literature and even in early Christian period, is performed here in Revelation 4, along with the thrones of this choir of elders.

The image of the 24 elders seems to be very important in this vision due to its rare occurrence. First of all, the noun “elders” [πρεσβυτέρους] is anarthrous. Therefore, these elders are not meant to represent anyone in particular; these elders would not represent any known person in the reader’s community. Another aspect to consider is that this image has no parallel in the apocalyptic literature.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word זקן is often the equivalent of the Greek word πρεσβύτερος. There are different contexts where this word occurs, such as a group of elders present before YHWH, as in Isaiah 24:23 and Exodus 24:9-10. In the first, God manifests His glory before His elders, while in the second, the 70 elders on the mountain eat the covenant meal. The common feature here is that the two texts allude to mountains, the first being Zion and the second being Sinai, both of which indicate a context of worship. Moreover, this term refers to a position of leadership in Israel.¹³⁶ According to Aune, it is familiar in the phrase “the elders of Israel.”¹³⁷ There is a remarkable occurrence of this term in Lev 4:15, which reads: “And the *elders of the congregation* (emphasis added) shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the Lord. Then the

¹³⁵ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 286.

¹³⁶ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 287.

¹³⁷ Exod 3 :16, 18; 12:21; Num 11:14-17.

bull shall be killed before the Lord.” It is apparent that the elders may have a liturgical role among the people of Israel, or the congregation.

Nevertheless, the elders in Qumran were accorded a place of honor after the priests. This term is used also in the Jewish synagogue to refer to its members.¹³⁸ Afterwards, the term has been used by early Christians to refer to a leadership role (Acts 11:30, 1 Tim 5:1, 1 Pet 5:1). Therefore, the term “elders” seems to point to a leadership role and a position of honor among the people of God.

The key to unpacking the function of the image of the elders in the Book of Revelation is actually their number, 24. This number (24) occurs only in Revelation. No other early Jewish or early Christian composition depicts God in His heavenly court surrounded by 24 elders. The function of the 24 elders within Revelation seems to be liturgical, because of their role in worshiping God. The term “elders” occurs 12 times in Revelation, all but two of which occur in the context of worshiping God through a liturgical movement, whether praises or prostration. The other two (Rev 5:5, 7:13) are occurrences where the elder is explaining a vision to John.

It is appropriate to state that there is a priestly function related to the elders, taking into consideration the liturgical setting of Revelation 1 and 4. First, the elders are given a very prominent place in this vision, being mentioned right after the reference to the throne. Secondly, as John did not seem to be interested in showing more details about the heavenly structure but rather to confer what is the elders’ function.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 287.

¹³⁹ Hurtado, *Analogies*, 112.

The 24 elders play an important role in the heavenly worship of God, as they are described in the following way. First, they wear white robes and golden crowns. It seems that clothing is an important feature in this book¹⁴⁰, as John makes it an essential part of individuals' characteristics.¹⁴¹ "In Judaism, white or light garments connoted joy, purity, and social dignity."¹⁴² In the Old Testament the high priest wore only a white linen ephod on the Day of Atonement when he entered the Holy of Holies (Exod 28:4, Lev 16:4). Moreover, the white garment is mentioned in Daniel 7:9 as God's clothing. Aune claims that in the Jewish tradition angels wear white and that this is reflected in New Testament writings.¹⁴³ Garments used in Greek and Roman religious rituals are usually described as white; therefore, the white garment was appropriate cultic attire for praying and sacrificing. The elders in Revelation have an honored place and their white garments provide the clue to their liturgical function.

The golden crowns are another indication of the priestly function of the elders in Revelation. The priests of imperial cult in the Roman period in Asia Minor customarily wore gold crowns displaying busts of the emperor.¹⁴⁴ It looks like John used the biblical tradition along with the social, political, and cultic tradition of his readers to describe the elders, and to convey the function of these 24 elders.

Second, they prostrate themselves before God in a worshiping movement, and then offer their golden crowns as a clear part of a heavenly liturgy before the throne of

¹⁴⁰ Chapter 4 will study in detail the clothing metaphor in the Book of Revelation.

¹⁴¹ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 293.

¹⁴² Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 293.

¹⁴³ Mark 16:5, Matt 28:3, Luke 24:4, John 20:12.

¹⁴⁴ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 295.

God. Furthermore, in Rev 19:4 they respond with “Alleluia” and “Amen,” and always lead the “worthy hymn” to God.

Third, they sing hymns of praise to God, as in Rev 4:11, and they have harps and censers to represent the prayers of the saints in Rev 5:8.

2.1. The Number 24

This number is an enigma, as it is an uncommon number in this kind of literature, and that is why this number has been a topic studied by many scholars.¹⁴⁵ The biblical tradition provides us with this number in 1 Chronicles 24:4-6, where we have 24 priestly courses of the second Temple period described: “There were more leaders found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar, and thus they were divided. Among the sons of Eleazar were sixteen heads of their fathers' houses, and eight heads of their fathers' houses among the sons of Ithamar.”

The priests of the Levites were divided into 24 courses within their assigned class. The length of Temple service for each course was 7 days, according to 1 Chron 9:25. The week of service began and ended on the Sabbath (2 Chron 23:8). In addition, all the priests served for 3 extra weeks during the year,¹⁴⁶ which is to complete the Jewish year, which is 51 weeks. Deut 16:16 mentions that the three feasts when all the priestly courses served together are: the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of

¹⁴⁵ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 289.

¹⁴⁶ Deuteronomy 16:16.

Booths. The first one refers to the people's exodus from Egypt in Exod 12:34, and the unleavened bread is to celebrate the quick salvation of God. The second feast is mentioned in Exod 34:22 and is a feast of the joyful receiving of the Law on Mount Sinai. The third feast is a great joyous feast, and its distinctive feature is the number of sacrifices which are offered to God.¹⁴⁷

This is a very important piece of information that leads us to conclude that the image of the 24 elders seems to be the most important image here, being well-rooted in the Temple tradition and Jewish tradition. John uses this image while bearing in mind the Temple services and the priestly services. The 24 courses of priests served together in three main "joyful" feasts which is symbolized salvation, judgment (as to have a Law, so one is under judgment), and sacrifices. In parallel, the 24 elders of Revelation gathered before the throne of God in heaven, or more precise in the Heavenly Temple, to celebrate salvation and the judgment of evil. These are clearly the themes through the following chapters of Revelation. The elders in Revelation celebrate, in a majestic liturgy, the sacrifice of Christ, which is evident in their hymn in Rev 5:9: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

Before the third circle is described, John returns to the apocalyptic literature elements and the Old Testament tradition. From the throne flashes of lightning, voices, and peals of thunder come out (Rev 4:5), in a direct reference to the Sinai theophany in

¹⁴⁷ The General ideas are derived from the reading of Sol Scharfstein, *Understanding Jewish Holidays and Customs: Historical and Contemporary* (Hong Kong: KTAV publishing, Inc., 1999), 15-40.

Exod 19:16-19. This image is also found in the Jewish Merkabah texts,¹⁴⁸ along with fire and water which were associated with the vision of the throne.

4. The Four Living Creatures

The third circle around the throne is the circle of the four living creatures. John seems to be faithful to the LXX of Isaiah 6:2, as he states the place of the four creatures “round the throne” [κύκλω αὐτοῦ]. This is how the LXX translates the Hebrew of Isa 6:2, “above it,” ממעל לו. The use of the living creatures is a result of the author’s dependence on Ezek 1:5-25, where the creatures carry the throne (chariot) of God. Psalms presents God as riding on the cherubim (Pss 80:1; 99:1), as does Isa 37:16. The common point here is that this description of God occurs in hymns and prayer in the texts mentioned above. On the other hand, the apocalyptic tradition presented in 1 Enoch 71 is another source of this imagery in Revelation 4. The imagery of the four creatures is interpreted as angels here in Revelation, cherubim in Ezekiel, and the four angels who are responsible for directing the physical world in 1 Enoch.

Another modification is presented by John in the description of the angels. John simplifies Ezekiel’s description of the angels’ likeness; he kept the four faces, while presenting them in a different order and adding two wings to each of them. Therefore, we have six wings and holy-holy-holy, like Isaiah’s seraphim; and four creatures (four faces), like Ezekiel’s cherubim. What is the function of these four angels?¹⁴⁹ In Ezekiel, they carry the chariot, but here the throne is not moveable. Moreover, the image of the

¹⁴⁸ See above study in the apocalyptic literature.

¹⁴⁹ G. B Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 64-65.

Cherubim is depicted on the sides of the Ark, as 1 Sam 4:4 reads. The Ark represents God's heavenly throne, as shown in the above section. John moves from Enoch to Ezekiel and then Isaiah in presenting this vision of the creatures. In examining this text of Revelation, Isaiah is the right source to answer our question. The function of the angels is clear in Rev 4:8: they ceaselessly praise God.

The sole role of the four creatures is to lead the worship of heavenly liturgy, as we read in Rev 4:8-11, where the first circle of liturgy is performed before God's throne. This liturgical circle will expand in Revelation 5 as the heavenly liturgy becomes the cosmic liturgy. The heavenly liturgy begins though with the "Sanctus," or thrice holy hymn. This hymn is the first of a series of hymns punctuating Revelation. This hymn is sung by heavenly creatures that are able to know the right order.¹⁵⁰ Now the readers of Revelation are introduced to this order and to this liturgy.

The Sanctus is addressed to God the Creator and the Lord Almighty. The first line of this hymn is derived from Isa 6:3, which is clearly alluded to when John altered the number of the wings from four in Ezekiel to six as in Isaiah. This hymn in Isaiah¹⁵¹ inaugurates the vision, and here it inaugurates the heavenly liturgy that is to be celebrated throughout the whole book. Aune suggests that the hymn may be quoted from the Temple liturgy, or that it is at least a liturgical formula.¹⁵² Qumran developed the notion of the Thrice-Holy to the extent that the community regarded itself as standing amid God and His angels (1QS 11:7-9).¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Murphy, *Fallen*, 186.

¹⁵¹ Cf., Chapter 1: Performative Exegesis.

¹⁵² Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 303.

¹⁵³ Michael Wise, Martin Abegg JR. and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (rev. and enl. ed.; New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 134.

“Lord God Almighty” [παντοκράτωρ] occurs five times in Revelation. All but the last occurrence in Rev 21:22 are found within the context of praise and worship. The LXX translates the term יהוה אלהי הצבאות as παντοκράτωρ seven times.¹⁵⁴ “Who was and Who is and is to come,” carries threefold exposition of the Divine Name. It seems to parallel the thrice holy. Aune presents a possible example in *Hekhalot* literature:¹⁵⁵ “And the earth says, ‘The Lord was king, the Lord is king, the Lord will be king forever and ever.’”

Once again, John is presenting a multi-referenced hymn trying to combine more than one resource to present his theology. The liturgy focuses first on God the Creator, the Almighty, and the eternal Lord of Hosts. The heavenly hosts declare this, and the elders, who are the priests in the Temple (congregation), respond that God is worthy to receive glory and honor and power, for He is the creator of everything, and by His will everything existed and was created. This is the hymn of the heavenly liturgy, which had started before the throne by the hymn of the four creatures, and which will be responded to in the second circle in the throne room, the elders, with the “worthy” prayer.

In sum, John uses many resources and traditions skillfully to present the throne liturgy and to engage the readers/hearers with this heavenly perspective of what is happening on earth. This liturgy will be the base of the Christian liturgy later on, especially after the engagement of the Lamb in this liturgy in Revelation 5.

7. The Fulfillment of the Liturgical Circle

¹⁵⁴ Hos 12:6, Amos 3:13, 4:13; 5:8, 14, 15, 16; 9:5; Nah 3:5.

¹⁵⁵ As quoted in Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 307.

Hurtado states in his article that “there is hardly disagreement with the view that chapter 5 clearly displays the radical alteration of apocalyptic perspective resulting from early Christian faith.”¹⁵⁶ This is a good starting point, which emphasizes that John, in Revelation 5, tries to clearly state his theology, Christology, and soteriology. This Christian theology appears in the imagery of the Lamb and how this Lamb becomes a subject of a universal worship (Rev 5:13-14).

John directed this chapter carefully and skillfully. First, he did not depart from the throne room, and then he engaged his vision with Ezekiel 2:9-10 in the image of the scroll, and at the same time recalls Isaiah 29:11 and Daniel 12:4 in his description of the scroll as “sealed.” Therefore, John is still faithful to the prophetic tradition that he knew well. The question in Revelation 5 is asked by “a strong angel,” the action is taken by “the Lamb,” and the answer is reiterated by multiple liturgical circles.

The vision continues towards its climax. A scroll is at the right hand of God enthroned, and no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth is able to open it. It seems impossible for the scroll to be opened, possibly leaving the reader be confused, asking “Now what?” John’s readers knew that this scroll is very important, just as they knew Ezekiel’s scroll was, and that “there was writing on the inside and on the outside and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe” (Ezek 2:10). This climax starts to resolve with a quick conversation between John and one of the elders, in a parallel to the conversations that we saw in apocalyptic literature between the seer and the interpreter angel.

¹⁵⁶ Hurtado, *Analogies*, 116.

The elder gives John and his readers a prophecy about Christ, the Savior: “The lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” (Rev 5:5). This imagery finds its source as image in Gen 49:9, 10, and as prophecy in Isaiah 11:1, 10. Let us compare these texts in an attempt to understand what John wants to convey to his readers and to us.

1. Gen 49:9, 10: “Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.” The scepter shall not depart, and all the people shall obey him. The future tense is obvious here: what is prophesied here is *to be*.

2. Isa 11:1, 10: “There shall come forth a Rod from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. And in that day, there shall be a root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.” Again, this is a clear prophecy about Christ, and it is *to be*, as indicated by the use of the future tense.

3. Rev 5:5: John, in a very skillful literary device, recalled the two prophecies but as *fulfilled*. This fulfillment is declared by one of the elders, who as we saw has a priestly function, when he says: “The lion of Judah... *has conquered*.” Therefore, Christ has already fulfilled the prophecy, and by His death and Resurrection He has conquered and brought God’s salvation and judgment.

In this way, John defines Jesus Christ to the readers, and immediately he introduces the imagery of the “Lamb¹⁵⁷ standing, as though it had been slain.” This Lamb has a very specific and intrinsic role in the throne room. He is not around the throne: He is at the center of all. The liturgy of the Lamb is about to begin now as He takes the scroll. John does not leave any room for doubt about Who the Lamb is, with the two prophecies and with a hint to Zech 3:9 and 4:10, and the allusion to the eyes of the Lord (YHWH) through the seven eyes of the Lamb.

After this identity has been revealed, the response will be liturgical. The four creatures and the elders fall down before Christ the Lamb with harps, censers, and the prayers of all the saints. At this point, the angel asks: “Who is worthy to open the scroll?” The inhabitants of the throne room and the celebrants of the heavenly liturgy answer that the Lamb is worthy. His worthiness derives from His action, His own salvific action, in which all of Creation has been bought and ransomed for God. This redemption made them kings and priests to God.

The heavenly liturgy at this point will be a cosmic liturgy, and all Creation will join the throne room inhabitants. John paints his last circle in liturgical color, with thousands of angels around the throne, the creatures, and the elders praising the Lamb

¹⁵⁷ H, Balz shows us that the Greek word that John used is *Ἀρνίον*. This is a diminutive of *ἄρην*. This is distinctive and special word to use. The Septuagint uses the word *ἄμνος* to indicate the Passover Lamb (Exod 12: 1-30), and the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53, H, Balz and Gerhard Schneider, “*ἄμνος*,” *EDNT* 71-73. Hillar says: “The Septuagint uses *ἄμνος* about a hundred times in connection with lambs for sacrifice.” Norman Hillar, “The Lamb in the Apocalypse” (Paper presented at Tyndale Fellowship at Tyndale House, Cambridge, 1970), 228-236. The word that John the author of the Apocalypse used occurs just once in the LXX, in Jeremiah 11:19, where the God of Israel speaks to His people through Jeremiah, rebuking them for having left the covenant with Him. It seems that John kept Jeremiah in mind as he is beginning to speak about Jesus Christ, not only as a slaughtered lamb and only about his sacrifice, but rather about his victory and the judgment that he is to convey. The word “Lamb,” as John uses it, gives the reader a hint that this Lamb is not just a sacrifice, and His role does not end at the Cross, but rather begins there and will last to the End of Days.

with the “worthy hymn,” and here in Rev 5:12 the Lamb will take the same honor, glory, and power that belongs to God, as we read in Rev 4:11. The response of this liturgy comes from every creature in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, which is exactly where no one was able to open the scroll. They respond to this great liturgy by giving the blessing, the glory, honor, and might to God and to the Lamb. The four creatures will approve the hymn with the “Amen!” and the elders fall down and worship. And with that John, the author of the book, voices up his ecstatic and overwhelming experience of being able to participate in this liturgy and able to see it, on the Day of the Lord.

8. Revelation and the Jewish Apocalyptic: Worshiping of Christ

According to Hurtado, “the recognition that Revelation 5 reflects a profoundly Christian adjustment of the apocalyptic, heavenly-vision tradition suggests again that we are dealing with an author whose Christian faith served to rearrange and re-orient, not merely to redecorate in superficial way, his apocalyptic heritage.”¹⁵⁸ John uses these traditions, but in his own way, to present his theology, Christology, and soteriology, producing a pure Christian prophetic, liturgical, and apocalyptic book. Therefore, we can infer that John knew the Qumran tradition, and understood how this community made a strong relationship between apocalypses and liturgy, as we studied before in the liturgical texts of Qumran.¹⁵⁹ John emphasizes the important role of liturgical context in order to present his book as preserving the faith in One God. By presenting God and the Lamb in a liturgical context and cultic discourse, he does not replace one by the other.

¹⁵⁸ Hurtado, *Analogies*, 117.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. above, the songs of Sabbath sacrifices.

Jewish monotheism presents a firm line between God and other creatures. This line in religious practice was defined by worship. God alone is to be worshiped; no creature may be worshiped. This feature is very clear in Jewish apocalyptic literature with the refusal of the angel to be worshiped by the seer. This feature has been preserved by John in the book of Revelation, as we read in 19:10 and 22:8-9. The remarkable development that Christianity made was to recognize Jesus Christ as worthy to be worshipped. As in apocalyptic literature, the *Ascension of Isaiah* and the book of Revelation present Jesus Christ as worthy of being worshiped.¹⁶⁰ John does not present Jesus as a heavenly agent Who has a mission or some type of subsidiary role in the Judgment: Jesus is presented as Savior and as sharing God's Salvation and Judgment just because of His redeeming death and His sacrifice on the Cross. Since it is He who has achieved the salvation on the Cross, it is He Who must bring it to completion in the final eschatological events.¹⁶¹ Christ in Revelation does not have an instrumental role like angels in this book or in other places in apocalyptic literature, and therefore, John shows angels appearing in the visions in which he portrays the Lamb's execution of the judgment. Therefore, the instrumental role of angels is sharply distinguished from the role of Christ as the divine agent of salvation and judgment. For Christ's acceptance of this unique role, He receives the worthiness to be worshiped with God.

The parallel that I mentioned before between Rev 4:8-11 and 5:12-14 reflects how John, while holding Christ worthy of worship, remains sensitive to the issue of monotheism in worship. Christ is not an alternative object of worship alongside God, but

¹⁶⁰ Richard, Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993, 119.

¹⁶¹ Bauckham, *Climax*, 136.

rather he shares in glory and received the worship due to God. So, the specific worship to Christ in Revelation 5 leads to the joint worship of God and Christ, in a formula in which God retains the primacy.¹⁶²

9. The Book of Revelation: A Liturgical Perspective

The image of the throne in the book of Revelation, as presented above, seems to have a special role. First, it controls all the following visions and events as the author recalls it in specific places within his plot. Second, this image is a liturgical image in regard to its elements and occurs within a liturgical context that has been composed by John's theology, legacy, and traditions.

The study below tracks the image of the throne within the plot of Revelation, specifying its place and elements in each occurrence. Then, it presents an approach to prove that liturgy is the key to starting a right and acceptable interpretation of this book. In this approach, the main point to focus on is how John presents the heavenly liturgy, and what kind of tools he used to make the connection between liturgy and history.

10. The Throne Imagery Makes the Book Liturgical

The throne imagery inaugurates the main vision in the book of Revelation in chapters 4 and 5. But these are not the only places the imagery of the throne room occurs. The second occurrence, in Rev 7:9-8:4, after the opening of the Sixth Seal and before the Seventh, the throne room appears again. The imagery here has all the nations, all tribes,

¹⁶² Bauckham, *Climax*, 139.

and peoples, and tongues clothed in white robes; they praise God and the Lamb. The creatures and the elders prove their praise with the “Amen!” All this is accompanied with prostrations and worshipping.

After this, in a third occurrence, an angel with a censer standing at the altar offering prayers and incense is presented. This a liturgy par-excellence, which closes a phase of Revelation and inaugurates another. After this liturgy, the destruction of the earth will take place. The imagery of the throne here has a distinctive element that makes the liturgical aspect crucial. This element is the “Altar before the throne” (Rev 8:3), which recalls the Temple and the Holy of Holies. Therefore, what happens at this Altar is, without any doubt, a liturgy, and more specifically, a cosmic liturgy.

The fourth occurrence is in Rev 11:15-19, after the seven trumpets. The imagery now inaugurates the triumph of God and His Messiah. The liturgy continues with the elders/priests and creatures/angels giving a long thanksgiving, ending with the opening of God’s Temple in heaven. This event has a special element, which is the Ark of the Covenant, associated with flashes, voices, earthquakes, and peals of thunder (Rev 11:19). John alludes back to the Old Testament, to the earthly throne of God, the Ark, and more specifically to the center of worship in the events of the Exodus. Here again, the liturgy dominates the flow of the vision after the destruction and exactly before of the salvation of God.

The fifth occurrence happens in Revelation 14:1-5, with a new hymn before the throne. This imagery has very special elements. First, the place is Mount Zion, the Mount of God where God is to be worshiped. Then the Lamb is to be worshipped there as well, by those who have His Name and God’s Name on their foreheads. Here the eternal

Gospel (Rev 14:6) will be proclaimed to the whole earth. This is the heart of the liturgy that the early Christian community embraced and continued to practice, performing the Book of Revelation with all its rich resources.

In Rev 15:2-8, the vision also includes liturgical elements that guide us again to the assurance that the imagery of the throne has a pure liturgical role. John recalls the Old Testament with the altar, the Tent of Witness and Moses' hymn, and the angels, who, coming out from the Tent, are robed with Old Testament style priestly vestments.¹⁶³

In Rev 19:1-10, the liturgy continues with the Alleluia from all the liturgical circles that were presented above, starting with the heavenly circle and reaching all the cosmos. Here is a clear connection to Christ and His Church (bride) and the inauguration of the New Earth and the New Heaven in Revelation 20, followed by the final and eternal triumph of God and Christ.

11. The Appropriate Exegetical Key to Approach the Book of Revelation

One of the conspicuous features of the heavenly throne room in Revelation is the presence of hymns. Aune claims that these hymns, with the exception of the single hymn in Rev 15:3b-4, are arranged in seven antiphonal units (Rev 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:9-12; 11:15-18; 16:5-7; 19:1-4, 19:5-8).¹⁶⁴ This important observation leads us to believe that John was not just quoting the Old Testament and the traditional Jewish hymns with which

¹⁶³ Compare Rev 15:6 with Exod 28:6, 8

¹⁶⁴ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 315.

he was familiar, but rather “he wrote new hymns for their present context making use of some traditional Jewish and Christian liturgical traditions.”¹⁶⁵

The hymnic forms that John uses are well-known in Judaism and in Christianity as well. These hymns are well connected with the liturgical practices of both traditions. There are variety of hymns, such as the Alleluia, the Amen, the Sanctus, doxologies, and acclamations. The Old Testament and the Jewish apocalypses present angels as chief participants in the heavenly liturgy, singing praises to God. It seems that John used this tradition to present the expansion of the liturgical circle to include the whole cosmos.

There is an interrelation between liturgy and apocalypse, and as we tracked the throne within the book of Revelation, this becomes obvious. The message that is to be received by the readers of Revelation is that the apocalypse is, or at least should be, the key to discovering the real meaning of liturgy and its relation to history, salvation, and eschatology.

In the Old Testament, the liturgy revolves around the event of the Exodus, and the eschatological salvation was anticipated as a new “Exodus,” with the help of the new redeemer and through a New Testament. According to Petros Vassiliadis, “the Apocalypse of John, in exactly the same way describes this same dynamic liturgy, this time revolving around the Slaughtered Lamb.”¹⁶⁶ The imagery that John uses in Revelation reflects the same imagery in Old Testament and Jewish Merkabah mysticism, especially the one that describes the grandeur and glory of God, the Theophany at Sinai, the description of the inhabitants of the throne room, and the common liturgical elements that have been used in these traditions and other traditions. These all should not leave any

¹⁶⁵ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 315.

¹⁶⁶ Petros Vassiliadis, "Apocalypse and Liturgy." *SVTQ* 41 (1997): 95-112, at 98.

doubt about the cosmic and heavenly liturgy in Revelation, and by extension Christian worship.

John uses two types of visions: the dramatic narratives, and the heavenly liturgy.¹⁶⁷ These two types are composed by the author in a special way to produce the plot that we studied. The first are used as literary forms through which John projects eschatological realities before the inauguration of the new world. However, what is important is how John makes a close connection between the two types. He places, as we saw before, the throne liturgy at important turning points throughout his narrative, and with that he gives the book a liturgical key and placed the foundations of the relationship between the Christian liturgy and history.

The Sanctus in Rev 4:8 is for the author, as Savas Agourides says,¹⁶⁸

the reality of the world beneath what is manifest. It is the predominance of God's truth and of the righteousness and love of the Lamb... So the purpose of the heavenly liturgy is to point to the insofar invisible yet true and authentic meaning of history, as opposed to the falsification and lies that seem to dominate its visible course... It is precisely with the "eschaton," that the world and history outlive their real life and orientation. The transition from one period of the world to the other is presented as extremely painful."

With the liturgical context of the throne's image and the liturgy that surround the tragic and terrible events, the reader is more oriented to the idea that the events are to be the end, with a final solution that is the New Heavens and New Earth. Liturgically, this is not a message of revenge or frustration or even terror, but rather a message of victory, of hope, and of salvation. This salvation begins and ends with liturgy around the Lamb and

¹⁶⁷ Vassiliadis, "Apocalypse," 99.

¹⁶⁸ Savas Agouridis, *The Apocalypse of John: A Historical and Synchronic Hermeneutical Attempt* (Athens: Μαλακό εξώφυλλο, 1978), 41-42. This is my translation of the Greek text in Σάββα Αγουριδη, *Η Αποκάλυψη του Ιωάννη: Ιστορική και Συγχρονιστική Ερμηνευτική Προσηάθεια* (Αθήνα: Μαλακό εξώφυλλο 1978), 41-42.

with His followers. Therefore, the right understanding of the terrible eschatological narratives of Revelation is impossible without linking them to liturgy. This is the reason John concentrated on liturgical discourses within his vision.

The heavenly liturgy is not detachment and withdrawal from earthly things, but the interpretation of the earthly things from the angle of God and their redemption from powers hostile to God. This constitutes the real meaning of Christian worship.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, the purpose of the heavenly liturgy is incomprehensibly connected with history,¹⁷⁰ since for John liturgy, prayer, God, Heaven, and all the unspeakable and terrifying things happening on earth are not unrelated to each other. Rather, they form a unity.

John talks about the salvation offered by God, not as in another world, but in our world; not outside history or achieved individually, “but rather in the context of true communion with other people, which is the end and at once the surpassing of history.”¹⁷¹ John uses not only his writing experience, but the other traditions as well. Finally, he supports his theology with a series of terms that help to show the historical projections of the heavenly liturgy. He uses “the Almighty” and “worthy,” which would be known to his readers through the enthronement of Roman emperors.¹⁷² These terms denote and reveal through symbols the struggle between the worship of God and the Lamb on one hand, and the Roman authority and Emperor on the other.

12. Conclusion

¹⁶⁹ Agourides, *The Apocalypse*, 83.

¹⁷⁰ Vassiliadis, “Apocalypse,” 101.

¹⁷¹ Agourides, *The Apocalypse*, 29.

¹⁷² Vassiliadis, “Apocalypse,” 102.

The above study confirms that the function of the imagery of the throne is to convey to the readers of every era that the liturgy before the throne is not separated from what is occurring on earth and among the people of the Church. It is not presented to separate God from history, but rather to assure that God is the Lord, and to declare the dominion of God, not any emperor. The vision of the throne is crowned not only with a new heaven, but side by side with a new earth performing a thanksgiving liturgy to the creator God and His Messiah, Christ the slaughtered Lamb (Revelation 21).

The liturgy as the primary key to solve the problem of exegesis and interpretation of the Book of Revelation is not only supported by the image of the throne and its dominion throughout the book. This key is also confirmed by some additional elements, such as the epistolary element, which makes the book suitable for oral performance. The oral performance is a distinctive element in liturgy in Jewish tradition, Qumran, and the Church. Moreover, Rev 1:3 and its parallel in Rev 22:6 imply a liturgical setting of the book (see Table 1 below):

Rev 1:3	Rev 22:6-7
Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy , and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near	Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true. " And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book

Table 1: Correspondence between Rev 1:3 and Rev 22:6-7

Another proof is that the whole vision happens “on the Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10), and on the Lord’s Day we hear the Baptismal formula just like the one in Revelation 1:5-6: “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Finally, the last verse in Revelation impactfully demonstrates that the liturgy remains strong and should continue: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” (Rev 22:21).

John, with a remarkable skillfulness, wrote this vision and framed it with liturgy. He uses prominent imagery and composes with the traditions that he seems to be very familiar with. At the same time, it seems that he did not want to copy or to imitate previous tradition, on one hand, and did not want what he saw to be just empty imagery, numbers, and events on the other hand. The liturgical framework seemed for him to be the guarantee to give his readers/hearers a material to be understood, and to convey the deep truth that God is the Lord. His Christianity recognizes that God is not separated from history, and at the same time his churches live the mystery of the Incarnation. For that, he preferred to confirm this nature of liturgy, and to assure his readers/hearers that liturgy is the way to live Christianity in the world- a world that will always be in tension with God.

This chapter, which began with a bold premise, will also end with one: John, in his book of Revelation, set the first foundations of the liturgy that we celebrate today,

and, moreover, he took the step forward to distinguish the Christian liturgy from both the Jewish liturgy and from the other kinds of liturgies that were known in his era.

Chapter Four: The Clothing Metaphor in The Biblical Realm and in The Book of Revelation

1. Introduction

Sebastian Brock asserts that “the entire span of salvation history can be expressed in terms of clothing imagery.”¹⁷³ His conclusion is made in the light of the Syriac interpretation of biblical and extrabiblical texts such as Gen 3:7, Genesis 21, Sir 50:11; 1 En 62:15, Mat 22:12, Rom 13:14, and Gal 3:27. He notes that particular clothing language was used in the biblical tradition to refer to Adam, Christ as the second Adam, individuals, and the eschatological kingdom.¹⁷⁴ In the Hebrew understanding, the attire of the person relates to his identity, as we read in Sir 19:30 (NRSV): “A person’s attire and hearty laughter, and the way he walks, show what he is.” Therefore, clothing has a dimension other than practical use, which is communicating definitive information about a figure, its identity, and its role. To stress the importance of clothing, Sir 29:21 states that there are four necessities in life: water, bread, clothing, and a house. Whether the clothing imagery was used literally, metaphorically, or symbolically, it served more purpose than merely alluding to identity. It refers to the functionality of the figure described.

¹⁷³ Sebastian Brock, “Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition.” In *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter: Internationales Kolloquium, Eichstätt 1981*, edited by Margot Schmidt in cooperation with Carl Friedrich Geyer, 11-38 at 11.

¹⁷⁴ Brock, “Clothing Metaphors,” 22.

The metaphorical use¹⁷⁵ of clothing occurs when figures are described as dressed in essentially non-dress items or concepts (i.e., the woman in Revelation 12 clothed with the sun). The function of the clothing metaphor is to describe types of language, “and the types of language we use has very little to do with the truth or falsity of what we say and with the existence or non-existence of the things we refer to.”¹⁷⁶ Therefore, the word metaphor refers to the nature of the language employed in the text to serve either a cognitive or informative goal, and gives access to fact “which would otherwise be unobserved or to truth which would otherwise remain hidden.”¹⁷⁷

The symbolic use of clothing, on the other hand, is different from metaphorical use, in that the subject is described with real clothing materials, and these materials symbolize something other than the dress item itself. In the following, selected texts will be presented to posit the functionality of clothing imagery in biblical and extrabiblical worlds. Then, a special focus with detailed study will be dedicated to the clothing imagery in the Book of Revelation, with a case study of the imagery in Rev 1:13, 7:14, and 12:1, and their usage as performative utterance within the liturgical frame of the text.

2. Garment of God and of the Righteous in Enoch

The garments and clothing metaphors play an intrinsic role in the apocalyptic literature. The metaphor was associated with people, some exalted characters, heavenly

¹⁷⁵ cf. Menahem Haran, “The Shining of Moses’ Face: A Case Study in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography,” in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström*, ed. W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer, JSOTSup 31 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 167-68; Seth L. Sanders, “Old Light on Moses’ Shining Face,” *VT* 52 (2002): 404-405.

¹⁷⁶ Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1997), 131.

¹⁷⁷ Caird, *The Language*, 153

agents, and even God. 1 Enoch serves as a very good example in showing the garment of God. 1 En 14:8-25¹⁷⁸ recounts the heavenly experience of Enoch where he sees the throne of God, and the garment of God:

And I observed and saw inside it a lofty throne—its appearance was like crystal and its wheels like the shining sun; and (I heard?) the voice of the cherubim; 19 and from beneath the throne were issuing streams of flaming fire. It was difficult to look at it. 20 And the Great Glory was sitting upon it—as for his gown, which was shining more brightly than the sun, it was whiter than any snow. 21 None of the angels was able to come in and see the face of the Excellent and the Glorious One; and no one of the flesh can see him

The Great Glory is God, and His glory is described in terms of pre-eminent radiance and whiteness of the garment. This garment of glory is radiant and white, and it reflects the Jewish understanding of glory in association with light. J. H. Kim notes that the author of 1 Enoch had the earthly Temple as the replica of the Heavenly Temple in mind while he was writing this text. Therefore, one can assume the relation between the Garment of God in 1 Enoch and the high priest garments used in the Temple.

The concept of whiteness seems to be influenced by the whiteness of the high priest's linen garments, which he wore when he entered the most holy place once a year (cf. Lev. 16.4). In the Book of the Watchers (7 Enoch 1-36) which includes 14.20, heaven is pictured as a temple, so the heavenly temple is considered as corresponding to the earthly temple. According to this scheme, God's throne is thought of as the heavenly holy of holies; angels, as heavenly priests; and Enoch, as the heavenly high priest. The whole picture of heaven as a temple might remind the author of the white linen garments of the high priest and further encourage him to apply the whiteness to God's gown, as God's throne was considered the most holy place of the heavenly temple. As the high priest's white linen garments are called 'sacred garments' (cf. Lev. 16.4, 32), it is probable that the whiteness of God's garment stands for his holiness.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ E. Isaac, 1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch', in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), OTP, I (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 21.

¹⁷⁹ J.H. Kim, "Clothing Imagery in its History-of-Religions Background," in *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 7-103, at 33.

Another prominent feature of this text is performing the glory of God as a garment.¹⁸⁰

The reason is the social and religious perspective regarding clothing. The clothing and the identity of the figure wearing them is essential to the point where the garment and the figure always go together, and the garment will become part of the figure. Therefore, in this example, the glory of God is also in his radiant and white garment.

1 En 62:15-16 talks about the righteous and his redemption after death and the blessedness he will acquire. This idea is conducted through clothing imagery:

The righteous and elect ones shall rise from the earth and shall cease being of downcast face. They shall wear the garments of glory. These garments of yours shall become the garments of life from the Lord of the Spirits. Neither shall your garments wear out, nor your glory come to an end before the Lord of the Spirits.¹⁸¹

What is this garment that the righteous will have? Kim states that this garment is “the heavenly body which will be owned by the righteous after their earthly lives.”¹⁸² The life and the glory that the righteous will have is the point that this text is making, and the source of this glory and life is the Lord of Spirits. This life and this glory will be immortal, as the life dictates the appearance of the future body of the righteous.

The garment as used in the above examples reflects the character of the figure wearing it, so for God it reflects His gloriousness and holiness, and for the righteous it reflects his existence after death, showing the immortal life that waits for the righteous. Therefore, clothing imagery can reflect a belief, as well as describe things indescribable, such as the glory of God.

¹⁸⁰ More details about this point and the garment of glory that Adam lost in Paradise will be discussed in detail in the next chapter when the Baptismal Rite will be studied.

¹⁸¹ E. Isaac, 1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch', in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), OTP, I (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 44.

¹⁸² Kim, “Clothing Imagery,” 34.

3. Clothing Metaphor Functions in the Biblical World

In the Old Testament the image of clothing occurs extensively throughout many books. Its uses are sometimes literal and other times figurative. According to Jung Kim, the Old Testament clothing imagery is used with several different meanings.¹⁸³ First, it can connote the covering of Adam and his wife's nakedness, about which they became ashamed after the Fall. Gen 3:21, where God covers them with garments of skin, belongs to this category. Second, the clothing imagery reflects a figure's social status and role. Kings, priests, widows, penitents, hairy garments- they all reflect not just the type of clothing, but different functions and roles. Third, clothing imagery manifests the figure's characteristics: for example, God or humans being clothed with honor and glory, or with strength, light,¹⁸⁴ or salvation.¹⁸⁵ Other characteristics associated with the clothing imagery are righteousness, shame, glory, joy, despair, gladness, and darkness. A good example might be the priestly garment in the Old Testament, where this garment signifies that the priest is identified with the sacredness, glory, and beauty of his garment (Exod 28:2, 40). Fourth, clothing imagery "can also stand for a wearer's allegiance to the principle of one true God, keeping him/herself separate from all idols and idolatry."¹⁸⁶ The priestly garments also function well in this category. Finally, clothing imagery can reflect the critical change of the cosmos from the present to the future state. Ps 102:26

¹⁸³ Kim, "Clothing Imagery," 11.

¹⁸⁴ cf., Job 40:10; Ps 93:1a; Ps 104:1//Ps. 18:32, 39; 65:6; 93:1b; Isa. 51:9; 52.:1.

¹⁸⁵ cf., 2 Chron. 6:41; Ps. 132:16; Isa. 61:10. The last verse in Isa 61:10 will be focused on in the following chapter when exploring the vesting of the clergy performative prayer.

¹⁸⁶ Kim, "Clothing Imagery," 11.

reads “They will perish, but you endure; they will all wear out like a garment. You change them like clothing, and they pass away.”

Nissan Rubin and Admiel Kosman present a very interesting concept of time and how clothing in the biblical and Midrashic traditions fits into the perception of time.¹⁸⁷ The following is a presentation of the clothing imagery function when it is understood in the frame of time, as perceived in the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic sources.

Clothing functions as representative of a perception of time, since the two basic axes in time and space are “a vertical axis that connects the world above with the one below, and a horizontal axis linking the world of the past to the future.”¹⁸⁸ Clothing metaphor was one of the ways to express those conceptions of time and space. Clothing serves both the biblical authors and the Sages as a means of conveying their differing perceptions of the time and of the space. For example, to express the boundaries between holy and unholy, they used the priests’ garments that separated the priest from the rest of the nation in a visible form, and at the same time, served as bridge between two worlds.

Clothing metaphor has helped in expressing the idea of separation, and at the same time the bridging between the world above and the world below. God and the heavenly agents are clothed with a garment either in the Bible or apocalyptic literature. God commanded Moses in Exod 28:2 to “make a holy garment for your brother Aaron...for respect and glory.”¹⁸⁹ Therefore, donning the vestment helps to sanctify the

¹⁸⁷ Nissan Rubin and Admiel Kosman. “The Clothing of the Primordial Adam as a Symbol of Apocalyptic Time in the Midrashic Sources,” *HTR* 90 (1997): 155-74.

¹⁸⁸ Rubin, “The Clothing,” *Harvard Theological Review* 90 (1997): 155-74, at 163.

¹⁸⁹ See the extensive discussion in Bogdan Bucur and Vladimir Ivanovici, “The Image of Adam’s Glory: Observation on the Early Christian Tradition of Luminosity as Iconic Garment,” *RIHA Journal* 0224 (2019): [https://www.riha-journal.org/articles/2019/0222-0229-special-issue-paradigms-of-corporeal-
iconicity/0224-bucur-and-ivanovici](https://www.riha-journal.org/articles/2019/0222-0229-special-issue-paradigms-of-corporeal-iconicity/0224-bucur-and-ivanovici)

priest. Exod 28:3 elaborates on the above through saying “they shall make the garments of Aaron to sanctify him.” From Ezek 42:14 and 44:19 we learn that these cloths cannot leave the holy precincts, and the priest must take them off before leaving the Temple.

Clothing stresses authority in some cases, such as the Num 20:25-28, where Aaron’s priestly garments were transferred to Eleazer his son, whereupon Eleazer assumed Aaron’s authority. As another example, Elijah’s mantle in 1 Kings 19:13 continues to be miraculous in Elisha’s hand. “The holy garments of the Bible thus help link the world above to that below. Here the garment does not function for personal territorial separation and defense of selfhood, but for linking the worlds.”¹⁹⁰

In the above sections, selected themes, functions, and texts were discussed with no intention to survey them but rather to show the functionality and multilevel use of the clothing metaphor. One other reason for such an approach is to be selective of the functions and performances of the metaphor that related to the main research provided in the following section about the clothing metaphor in the Book of Revelation, and in the following chapter about the performance that the Orthodox rites follow in using this same metaphor.

4. Clothing Imagery in the Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation pays great attention to the clothing metaphor. Three major words are used in this metaphor: Ποδήρης, μάτιο, Στολή translates as garment, appearing five times in the Book of Revelation, with every occurrence mentioning that the garment is white. Ιμάτιο translates as cloak, is mentioned seven times, and is almost

¹⁹⁰ Rubin, “Clothing,” 164.

always referred to as the same color, white. Ποδήρης translates as feet-length robe, appearing just once, in Rev 1:13. In general, the book of Revelation, as well as other apocalyptic literature texts, “deploy clothing and adornment motifs frequently to express eschatological, ethical and theological values.”¹⁹¹ Significantly more attention is given to the color of the garments in the Book of Revelation rather than to the materials. For example, the white robes are frequent in the book to reflect purity, holiness, glory, and Baptism. Moreover, the color represents the identity of the person wearing the garment, such as whether the person shares with the reign of Jesus Christ, or with the beast. This is the reason why the Book of Revelation juxtaposes imageries using the clothing metaphor, such as the Woman giving birth to the child in Revelation 12, the harlot of Babylon in Revelation 17, Christ, the beast, Babylon, and the New Jerusalem.

The faithful witnesses are glorified by simple one-colored garments, while the corrupt have luxurious colorful clothing. This is an echoing to the Old Testament communal ideals of separation from and opposition to a corrupt world, with its attachment to luxury. It is another example of the clothing imagery manifesting not just as dress materials, but as revealing the inner characteristics of the figure clothed.

The Book of Revelation employs the clothing imagery and metaphor to declare civic, ethical, moral, theological, liturgical, and eschatological values. The following table lists the passages in Revelation that use the clothing imagery:

¹⁹¹ D. Neufeld, “Sumptuous Clothing and Ornamentation in the Apocalypse,” *HTS* 58 (2002): 664-89, at 676.

Text	Figure	Clothing Metaphor
Rev 1:13	Son of Man	Long robe, golden sash
Rev 3:4	The faithful in Sardis	White robes
Rev 3:17	Figuratively: the people of Laodicea church	Prosperous but naked, need to be clothed with white robe
Rev 4:4	The 24 elders	White robes, golden crowns
Rev 6:11	Persecuted witnesses	White robes
Rev 7:9	Great crowd	White robes
Rev 7:13	Those who came out of the tribulation	Whitened robes
Rev 12:1	Woman	Clothed with the sun, moon under her feet, crown of the twelve stars
Rev 15:5	Seven angels	Pure white linen and golden sashes
Rev 16:15	Anonymous	Clothed and not naked
Rev 17:4	Woman	Clothed in purple, scarlet, jewels, gold, and pearls
Rev 18:16	Great City	Fine linen, purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold, jewels, and pearls
Rev 19:7	Bride	Clothed with fine linen, bright and pure
Rev 19:13	Word of God/armies of heaven	Robe dipped in the blood, the armies robed in white and pure linen
Rev 21:2-9	Holy City/Bride	Festooned with jewelry
Rev 22:14	The righteous who are saved	Washed robes

Table 2: List of Passages in Revelation That Use Clothing Imagery

It is clear how the clothing metaphors in Revelation are unusually pervasive, and this includes “not only their presence but also their absence.”¹⁹² Nakedness has been understood to be symbolic of the loss of personal identity and shameful, or, as will be discussed in the next chapter, as a loss of glory. The book of Revelation addresses the absence of clothing in 3:17, 18; 16:15; 17:16, which, according to the context, is either an

¹⁹² Ross Winkle, “‘You Are What You Wear’: The Dress and Identity of Jesus as High Priest in John’s Apocalypse, The Image of Adam’s” in *Sacrifice, Cult, and Atonement in Early Judaism and Christianity: Constituents and Critique*, eds. H. Wiley and C. Eberhart (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017), 336.

identifier of judgment or a warning. In this way, Revelation uses the “absence of the clothing” to underscore the significance of the being clothed within the book’s overall rhetoric. Neufeld notes that in the book of Revelation “clothes and jewelry are a part of each other character’s identity kit that aids in playing out assigned social roles.”¹⁹³ He also believes that clothing such as in Rev 1:13 provides “clues” to the identity of the figure. The clothing imagery in the book of Revelation presents “every present semiotic for expressing identity and intention, for upholding the status quo or subverting it.”¹⁹⁴ Table 2 above clarifies this idea with examples and descriptions.

As mentioned above, the clothing metaphor in the book of Revelation reveals not only the identity, but the role-related identity as well. Two examples will illustrate this point and clarify it. The first is Rev 11:3, where John is describing the two witnesses who prophesy for 1, 260 days “dressed in sackcloth” made of goat and camel hair.¹⁹⁵ This is not the first time the biblical text mentions garments of animal hair. John the Baptist, as read in Mat 3:4 and Mark 1:6, wore clothes made from animal hair, following the example of the prophet Elias in 2 Kgs 1:8. Therefore, the clothing of the two witnesses of Revelation indicates that their role is to prophesy the message of repentance along the line with John and Elias.¹⁹⁶ The second is the image of the harlot in Rev 17:1. As we see in Table 2, she was clothed in purple and scarlet with gold and precious stones. This is an example of clothing imagery that is multivalent in meaning, since it connotes not only socioeconomic status but also symbolizes immorality. The prophet Jeremiah portrayed Israel as an immoral wife who wore scarlet clothes and golden ornaments and painted her

¹⁹³ Neufeld, “Sumptuous Clothing,” 679. The idea is explained more at 678 and 686.

¹⁹⁴ Neufeld, “Sumptuous Clothing,” 678.

¹⁹⁵ Hanson, “Blood and Purity,” 224.

¹⁹⁶ Beale, *Revelation*, 576.

eyes for her multiple lovers: “And you, O desolate one, what do you mean that you dress in crimson, that you deck yourself with ornaments of gold, that you enlarge your eyes with paint? In vain you beautify yourself. Your lovers despise you; they seek your life” (Jer 4:30).

Neufeld observes that the narrative of Revelation “is literally strewn with clothes.”¹⁹⁷ In the following case study, I will examine the role of three clothing imageries in Revelation, showing the role of liturgical and performative exegesis in providing an early Christian reception of functionality of the clothed figures in each example.

5. Case Study

1. Revelation 1:13: “The One Like the Son of Man Clothed with a Long Robe”

(Ποδήρης)

This is the first occurrence of clothing metaphor in the Book of Revelation, and it is the only time the word ποδήρης is used in the New Testament text. Ποδήρης appears twelve times in the LXX, and in eight of these occurrences, the word is associated with the high priest.¹⁹⁸ Ποδήρης is a robe that falls over the feet, and it indicates the robe of the high priest.¹⁹⁹ Scholarship is divided as to whether this word alludes to the function of the priesthood, or whether it is just the general clothing of general people. In the Second Temple and early Christian literatures, ποδήρης refers in almost all texts to high priest

¹⁹⁷ Dietmar Neufeld, “Under the Cover of Clothing: Scripted Clothing Performances in the Apocalypse of John,” *BTB* 35 (2005): 67-76, at 71.

¹⁹⁸ Exod 25:7; 28:4, 31; 29:5; 35:9; Zech 3:4; Wis 18:24; Sir 45:8 (LXX).

¹⁹⁹ *The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*, <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsg/#eid=86679>

functionality, except of three occurrences in Philo and Josephus.²⁰⁰ Aune claims that the word does not allude in any way to the high priest.²⁰¹ Ross Winkle²⁰² has done an extensive grammatical study of Old Testament sources of the word ποδήρης to prove that the use of Rev 1:13 is to support that “the One like the Son of Man,” Jesus Christ, is the High Priest. He elicits “that the word ποδήρης in a Jewish and/or Christian context up to the time of Revelation normally carried a high priestly meaning and that such would be the default meaning in Revelation 1:13.”²⁰³ Aune on the other hand refers to Daniel 10:5 (“And I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a man clothed in linen, and his loins were girt with gold of Ophaz”) as the source that John used in Rev 1:13 to describe the long robe and does not in any way refer to a priestly function²⁰⁴. Aune refers also to Ezek 9:2 as a possible source for Rev 1:13, which also describes an angelic being.

It seems important to investigate the word ποδήρης in biblical and other Jewish and early Christian literature, examining its usage in relation to priesthood and the high priest. Sir 27:8 LXX reads: “ἐὰν διώκης τὸ δίκαιον καταλήμψη καὶ ἐνδύσῃ αὐτὸ ὡς ποδήρη δόξης” (“If you pursue justice, you will attain and wear it as a foot-length robe of glory”). While there is not direct connection to the high priest in this verse, the word “glory” makes it an indirect connection to the high priest. “Glory” in Sirach appears

²⁰⁰ 83 Let. Aris. 96; Philo Fug. 185, Her. 176, Leg. 1.81 and 2.56, Mos. 2.117, 118, 120, 121, 133, and 143, Mut. 43, Somn. 1.214, Spec. 1.85 (2x), 93, 94, and Frg. 117 on LXX Exod 28:27 (text in Philo, LCL, 12:257); Josephus A.J. 3.153 and 159, 8.93, 20.6, and B.J. 5.231; Barn. 7:9; T. Levi 8:2. Philo Mos. 2.118 and Spec. 1.85b along with Josephus A.J. 3.153 did not associate this word with the high priest.

²⁰¹ David, Aune, *Revelation*, 93.

²⁰² Ross E. Winkle, “*Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man*”: *Dress Imagery in Revelation 1 as an Indicator of High Priestly Status*, Andrews University, Digital Commons, 2012. Winkle, Ross E., “*Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man*”: *Dress Imagery in Revelation 1 as an Indicator of High Priestly Status*” (2012). Dissertations. 168. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/168>

²⁰³ Winkle, “*Clothes*,” 283.

²⁰⁴ Aune contends that the term translates “five different Hebrew words מַעֲלֵל, חֹשֶׁן, אֶפֶסֶד, בֶּד, מַחְלָצוֹת so that the Greek term ποδήρης can hardly be understood as a technical term” (Revelation 1-5, 93).

several times in relation to the high priest,²⁰⁵ such as in Sirach 45:7 LXX, which refers to Aaron's glorious robe, and 50:11, which directly refers to the high priest's robe of glory, Sirach 50:5-10 read:

How glorified (ὡς ἐδοξάσθη) he was as he spun around the shrine, as he exited from the house of the veil. Like a morning star in the midst of a cloud, like the full moon in the days of a feast, like the sun shining on the shrine of the Most High, like the rainbow gleaming in clouds of glory [...] When he put on a robe of glory (στολήν δόξης; ׳ גל׳ תי כפ) [...] in ascending the holy altar, he glorified the enclosure of the holy precinct.²⁰⁶

In Sirach 45:8 the term ποδήρης appears in connection to the vestments of Aaron, which serves as another allusion to the linkage between the word ποδήρης and the high priestly vestment. Sirach along with Philo were two important literatures where the theme of “the priestly garments are made “for glory.”²⁰⁷ This concept is rooted in Adam's iconic aura and the robe of glory he and Eve wore before the Fall.²⁰⁸

In the *Letter of Aristeas*, which is a pseudepigraphal work of pseudo-history produced in Alexandria, probably in the mid-second century BC, in order to promote the cause of Judaism. Amid the conflict in the Jewish community of that time as whether to embrace or reject Hellenistic culture, “the author's purpose was to present Judaism in a favorable light to pagans and make strict observance of religious laws attractive to Hellenistic Jews.”²⁰⁹ In this letter the word ποδήρης occurs once, where the author

²⁰⁵ cf. Sir 45:7, 20; 50:7, 11.

²⁰⁶ A New English Translation of the Septuagint, ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, New York 2007, 760

²⁰⁷ Bucur, Bogdan and Ivanovici, Vladimir, “The Image of Adam's Glory: Observation on the Early Christian Tradition of Luminosity as Iconic Garment.” *RIHA Journal* 0224 (2019) : <https://www.riha-journal.org/articles/2019/0222-0229-special-issue-paradigms-of-corporeal-iconicity/0224-bucur-and-ivanovici> at 5.

²⁰⁸ Adam's Robe of glory will be discussed in details in the next chapter when we analyze the Baptism rite.

²⁰⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/art/epistle>

expresses his great astonishment when he saw the high priest Eliezer vested in his liturgical vestment. *Letter of Aristeas* 97 reads:

We were greatly astonished, when we saw Eleazar engaged in the ministration, at the mode of his dress, and the majesty of his appearance, which was revealed in *the robe which* he wore and the precious stones upon his person. There were golden bells upon the garment which reached down to his feet, giving forth a peculiar kind of melody, and on both sides of them there were pomegranates with variegated flowers of a wonderful hue.²¹⁰

The *Epistle of Barnabas*, which is a text that comes from the early second century AD,²¹¹ uses the term ποδήρης to allude to LXX Zech 3:5 supporting a high priestly understanding of ποδήρης. In chapter 7 the writer explains the ritual of the two goats of Yom Kippur as pointing to Christ's death on the Cross and His Second Coming. In this passage, Barnabas parallels a tradition known in the rabbinic sources and in Tertullian and Justin Martyr²¹². The letter mentions that when Jesus returns, he will be "wearing the scarlet foot-length robe," and when those who crucified him will see this robe, they will recognize him as the one they were violently opposed to on earth. The connotation here is intrinsic between the eschatological robe and the robe Jesus wore before his crucifixion. This text is important as it shows the early Christian reception of Christ as the high priest, especially in the time of His Passion.

²¹⁰ https://www.sefaria.org/Letter_of_Aristeas?lang=bi Emphasis added.

²¹¹ "The developing consensus would seem to be for a Hadrianic date sometime in the 130s" (James Carleton Paget, "The Epistle of Barnabas," *ExpTim* 117 [2006]: 442-43).

²¹² Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 224-25; James Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background*, WUNT 64 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 137-139; and Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile*, NovTSup 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 307-308.

The *Testament of Levi*, a work of Christian authorship probably from the late second century AD,²¹³ uses ποδήρης in the discussion of the patriarch Levi (8:2). The usage of the term in this verse is as the central item of seven vestment pieces, several of which were associated with the high priest: the robe, the crown of righteousness, the breastplate of understanding, the foot-length robe of truth, the head ornament of faith, the turban of sign, and the ephod of prophecy. However, as Winkle claims,²¹⁴ in the wider context of 8:1-18, “This investiture deviates widely from the biblical prescription for priestly vestment, the term Ποδήρης cannot be denied the reference to the high priestly vestment.”

It is of a great importance, as discussed above, to put the Book of Revelation in the right context, which is a liturgical one. Therefore, the hermeneutical and exegetical work on Revelation should take into consideration the liturgical framework of the book. Rev 1:12-17 and the dress code in it is not solely a matter of the biblical source that John used in this piece. I believe Rev 1:12-17 is a Kyriocentric vision and reflects early Christian reception of Old Testament texts and Temple traditions. The description of the figure of the “One Like a Son of Man” is a rewritten of Dan 7:9 showing the Christological reading of the Ancient of Days as discussed in the previous chapter. The context of Rev 1:13 is liturgical par excellence, starting with Rev 1:10, which tells the

²¹³ cf. M. de Jonge, “Defining the Major Issues in the Study of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs” and “The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs as a Document Transmitted by Christians,” in M. de Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament as Part of Christian Literature: The Case of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve*, *Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigrapha* 18 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 71-83 and 84-106, respectively; and Michael E. Stone, “Aramaic Levi Document and Greek Testament of Levi,” in *Emanuel: Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov*, ed. Shalom M. Paul et al., *VTSup* 94 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 429-30.

²¹⁴ Winkle, “Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man”, 196.

time of the vision (“the Lord’s Day”), then the seven golden lampstands, followed with the description of the dress code of the “One Like a Son of Man.”

Looking at the lampstand and the clothing imagery integrated together in Rev 1:12-17 makes the case to link it to Exod 27:20-28:5. In the Exodus text, YHWH tells Moses to command the “sons of Israel” to provide oil “for the lamp” and for Aaron and his son to tend to the lamp evening to morning. Right after that, the text in Exodus 28 moves to the clothing of the high priest: “And these are the garments which they shall make: the breast-plate, and the shoulder-piece, and *the full-length robe*, and the tunic with a fringe, and the mitre (crown), and the girdle; and they shall make holy garments for Aaron and his sons to minister to me as priests.”

Rev 1:12-17 describes the One Like the Son of Man wearing a long robe, suggesting a Christological reading of Exodus, Daniel, and Ezekiel to portray Jesus Christ as the high priest, and to show his priesthood function that will be made clear in Revelation chapter 5 with the imagery of the slaughtered Lamb. The long robe will be used later in the vestments of the clergy according to the Byzantine tradition, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter 3. This reading of Rev 1:12-17 is confirmed with the performative that the Orthodox Church practices. For example, there is a throne in every church reserved for instances when the bishop, who represents the icon of Jesus Christ, presides at the Liturgy. On that throne there is always an icon called “Christ the High Priest.” This is also supported in hymnography, such as of the Nativity, which reads “You [Jesus Christ] are the priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” The Christian reception of Jesus Christ as the High Priest is prominent, and it is reflected in the literature before and after Revelation.

Faraoanu claims that this robe in Rev 1:13 has connection to the high priest not only regarding the Old Testament sources, but also because of its color, white.²¹⁵ The white color, as he states, is “a symbol of resurrection and reward to be received in the next life. For the Jews of the New Testament, white color was known as liturgical color either for the priests or for the faithful gathered for the celebration.”²¹⁶ Through this liturgical use, the color white indicates the dignity of the priesthood, and the ritual purity. Because of the connotations between the color white, purity, and cleanness, this color “came to represent God” in the religious mentality²¹⁷. This color of the stole mentioned in Rev 1:13 supports the argument of the high priestly image of Jesus Christ in the inauguration of the Revelation vision.

2. Revelation 7:14: Robes Made White by the Blood (ἐπλυναν τὰς στολάς αὐτῶν καὶ ελεύκαναν αὐτὰς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ ἀρνίου)

In Rev 7:12-17, one of the 24 elders asks John, “Who are these clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?” This same elder gives the answer: “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Faraoanu states that this image talks about the General Resurrection, as the people in the imagery are standing, “which means they have risen from the dead...they are in heaven, before the throne.”²¹⁸ He continues to claim that the imagery of whitening the robes by washing them in the blood of the Lamb carries a

²¹⁵ Faraoanu, “Spiritual Symbolism,” 215-16.

²¹⁶ Faraoanu, “Spiritual Symbolism,” 215.

²¹⁷ Faraoanu, “Spiritual Symbolism,” 215.

²¹⁸ Faraoanu, “The Spiritual,” 217

spiritual level in which the believers must suffer “to be partakers of Resurrection.”²¹⁹

While this explanation is interesting, the link to the Resurrection does not seem to be supported enough by the text, form and context wise. Nevertheless, the imagery of the white robes in this verse has more to provide to the readers.

The key to understanding this vision of multitude of people wearing white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb is in the questions asked by one of the elders in Rev 7:12. “These questions serve to focus the interest in the preceding scene on the identity, the clothing, and the origin of the innumerable host.”²²⁰ First, the elder answers the question of origin “these are they who have come out of the great tribulation.”²²¹ Aune states that it is grammatically improbable to translate the present substantival principal “have come οἱ ἐρχόμενοι” as “those who are coming,” as if the scene of Revelation 7:9-17 were occurring precisely when it was narrated by the author, and “to regard martyrdom of Christians as a process that will not be completed as long as the eschatological consummation remains in the future.”²²² This eschatological aspect is important here, as the early Christians regarded their experience of persecution as part of the eschatological period of tribulation presaging the End. This is evident in New Testament texts such as Mark 13:9-20, Mat 24:9-22, Luke 21:12-24, and Rev 1:9, 2:9-10. Therefore, these people are martyrs, either through martyrdom in blood, or by being steadfast in their witness and testimony to Jesus Christ. This understanding of the text sheds extra light on the interpretation of Rev 7:4-8 about the 144,000 being “protected

²¹⁹ Faraoanu, “The Spiritual,” 217

²²⁰ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 472.

²²¹ Aune explains the using of this phrase “these are” οὗτοί εἰσιν, as a demonstrative explanation, which is a stylistic feature of Jewish apocalypses, also used in the OT, such as Ezekiel 40-48 and Zechariah 1-8. This model occurs five times in Revelation 7:14; 11:4; 14:4; 20:5, 14.

²²² Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 473

from tribulation.” Basically, it confirms that “being protected from the tribulation” cannot be employed as an interpretation of Rev 7:4-8, otherwise the text in Revelation 7 contradicts itself.

Whitening the robes by washing them in the blood of the Lamb “may be understood by the author as a testing and purifying process.”²²³ Rev 7:14b can be considered to be an allusion to Dan 11:35: “And some of those who are wise shall fall, to refine and to cleanse them and to make them white, until the time of the end, for it is yet for the time appointed.” Washing clothes is a ritualistic practice known in the Old Testament and Qumran communities. In the Old Testament, washing after the shedding of blood is mentioned in Num 31:19-20, 19:19. In the Qumran communities, washing is applied to the aftermath of the eschatological war, as in 1 QM 14:2-3: “In the morning, they shall clean their garments and wash themselves of the blood of the guilty corpse.”²²⁴ Dan 12:1 mentions that the wise who fall victims to sword or fire are said to have been “tested, refined, and made shining white,” which supports the understanding that martyrdom is a theme in this imagery of Revelation 7, and that it purifies the people.

The phrase “the blood of the Lamb” occurs in Rev 12:11, “and they [the faithful witnesses/martyrs] have conquered him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.” The blood of the Christ “is metonymy for the death of Christ.”²²⁵ To be more specific, it is metonymy for the salvific death of Christ. From Lev 17:11 (“For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood

²²³ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 474; also, Bauckham, *War Scroll*, 227.

²²⁴ Bauckham, *War Scroll*, 226.

²²⁵ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 475

that makes atonement by reason of the life”) we know that the Israelite sacrificial ritual gives the blood an atoning effectual operation. The blood from sacrifices both removes sin and consecrates the persons to which it is physically applied for purification (Exod 29:12, 16, 20-21). In 1 John 1:7 we read that the blood of Jesus is to cleanse from all sins, and in Hebrews 9:14 this same blood purifies the conscience.

Gen 49:11 reads that the garments should be washed in wine and the vesture in the blood of grapes. Aune elaborate on this verse and relates it to the Jerusalem Targum to support the interpretation of the image of washing robes in the blood as referring to martyrdom or Baptism and victory, along with purity and holiness:

The Jerusalem Targum on Gen 49:11, however, reads ‘his garments will be dipped in blood.’ This phrase has been interpreted to refer to (1) martyrdom, (2) Baptism, or (3) more generally victory, purity, holiness, or festal participation. The metaphorical character of the white robes is evident in this passage, where they are washed white by the blood of the Lamb, i.e., the sin of those who wear them has been atoned for by the sacrificial death of Christ.²²⁶

From the preceding discussion, one can infer that the image of white robes whitened by washing them in the blood of the Lamb has a liturgical function. It refers to those who participated in the death of Christ and His Resurrection through the Baptismal font, through which they received the forgiveness of their sins. After their Baptism, they steadfastly stood faithful to the testimony to Jesus Christ, either by practicing their faith, or by giving their lives and shedding their own blood for the sake of their belief. This reading corresponds to the parallel of Rev 7:14 found in Rev 22:14, which reads, “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.” Those who are baptized and after their

²²⁶ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 475.

Baptism hold on to the testimony of Jesus Christ, some of whom have given their lives for the Word of God, will be the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem. The same Greek word describes martyrdom and testimony, which is μαρτυρία “martyrdom.” More explanation about how this understanding of the clothing imagery in Revelation 7 is liturgically performed in the Baptismal rite of the Orthodox Church will be given in the next chapter, along with the vesting of the priest with the under-garment.

3. The Imagery of the Woman Clothed with the Sun in Revelation 12:1

This imagery includes an intrinsic shift in the use of the clothing metaphor, as John dressed the woman with a cosmic element, the sun, and not with clothing material as the rest of the images that contain clothing. The context of this verse is very important to revealing the meaning and the function of such clothing metaphors. The end of Revelation 11 starts with the announcement of the sovereignty of the Kingdom of God and the eternal reign of Christ. This announcement is followed with heavenly liturgy seen in 11:16-19. This liturgy ends with the opening of the Temple in heaven, and the bringing forth the Ark of the Covenant to be seen. This vision alludes to the availability, through the reigning of the kingdom of Christ, for people to see into the Holy of Holies. Amid this vision a great portent appears in heaven, “a woman clothed with the sun.” There is no reason to perceive this as a separate vision the unity of the vision throughout the whole book is evident through the liturgical framework presented in the previous chapter, which is maintained via the image of the throne and its dominion throughout the book of Revelation.

The majority of the commentators and their interpretations regarding this woman present her as the people of God (“the Church”), or the mother of Jesus Christ, Mary. Agreeing with this line of interpretation leads us to consider this image as a Christian reading of key texts from the Old Testament through a Christological lens. First, the clothing with the sun and the stars and having the moon under her feet emphasizes the light surrounding this woman. As I will show in the next chapter, the garment of light is the garment Adam and Eve wore in paradise. In this perspective, this woman is the new Eve, the Church and the Theotokos. Second, the image of the sun, moon, and stars is “drawn from Joseph’s dream in Genesis 37:7-10, where they represent his father, mother, and brothers, the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel.”²²⁷ This interpretation supports that the woman symbolizes Israel who in the Old Testament used to be personified as a woman, daughter of Zion²²⁸ in Isa 62:11, as a mother in Ps 87 and Isa 66:8-11, and as the bride of the Lord Isa 54:5 and 62:4-5. N.T. Wright comments on this imagery linking the mission of the woman to the cosmic imagery in it. “She represents the entire story of God’s people, chosen to carry forward his plans for the nations and indeed for the whole creation. That is why the sun, moon, and stars form her robe, her footstool and her crown.”²²⁹

This cosmic clothing of the woman in Revelation 12 is echoed in Revelation 21:9-11, where the city of Jerusalem comes down from heaven “having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.” Therefore, the woman in

²²⁷ Williamson, Peter S., *Revelation (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture)*. United States: Baker Publishing Group, 2015, 206.

²²⁸ Zion is the hill of Jerusalem where the temple and the palace stood. It was used biblically to refer to Jerusalem or to the whole people of Israel.

²²⁹ N.T. Wright, *Revelation for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 108.

Revelation 12 clothed with light is an anticipation of the glory of God that will clothe all of God's people in the new Jerusalem (i.e., the Church). The imagery of the Woman Clothed with the Sun was received in early Christian exegesis as representing the Church, which performs the Old Testament writings. Hippolytus states in his "Treatise on Christ and Anti-Christ"²³⁰ that the woman in Revelation 12 manifests the Church in heavenly glory endued by the Word of God, whose brightness is like the sun, and the stars are the Apostles.

[B]y the "woman then clothed with the sun," he meant most manifestly the Church, endued with the Father's word, whose brightness is above the sun. And by the "moon under her feet" he referred to her being adorned, like the moon, with heavenly glory. And the words, "upon her head a crown of twelve stars," refer to the twelve apostles by whom the Church was founded. And those, "she, being with child, cries, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered," mean that the Church will not cease to bear from her heart the Word that is persecuted by the unbelieving in the world. "And she brought forth," he says, "a man-child, who is to rule all the nations;" by which is meant that the Church, always bringing forth Christ, the perfect man-child of God, who is declared to be God and man, becomes the instructor of all the nations. And the words, "her child was caught up unto God and to His throne," signify that he who is always born of her is a heavenly king, and not an earthly; even as David also declared of old when he said, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." "And the dragon," he says, "saw and persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child. And to the woman were given two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." That refers to the one thousand two hundred and threescore days (the half of the week) during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church, which flees from city to city, and seeks concealment in the wilderness among the mountains, possessed of no other defense than the two wings of the great eagle, that is to say, the faith of Jesus Christ, who, in stretching forth His holy hands on the holy tree, unfolded two wings, the right and the left, and called to Him all who believed upon Him, and covered them as a hen her chickens. For by the mouth of Malachi also He speaks thus: "And unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings."

²³⁰ Hippolytus, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 61:
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/hippolytus-christ.html>.

The imagery of the Woman Clothed with the Sun in Revelation 12 has a reception history that takes on many levels of exegesis because of the unique clothing metaphor in this vision. The corresponding text of Revelation 12 in Rev 21:9-11, along with the context of Revelation 12 and the liturgical setting of the ending verses of Revelation 11, affirm the liturgical setting of this imagery. The Holy City and the precious stone of jasper that also exists in the Throne room we read about in Revelation 4; the fleeing of the woman to the wilderness is an image to the Church fleeing to the wilderness and in history being rejected and fought by the “dragon,” these all reflect the Church in liturgical movement. This means that the Church’s practice of liturgies is in a perpetual exodus movement that leads to the Kingdom of God.

6. Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, we tried to emphasize the functionality of the clothing metaphor in the Bible along with Jewish apocalyptic literature through selected examples. The clothing metaphor is a complex one, as it provides the readers with the identity of the wearers, their functions, their roles, and even their status in the Resurrection. Clothing imagery was also ascribed to God to express His glory and majesty along with His dominion over Creation. The same imagery helps in the separation of the holy from the unholy, especially in the Second Temple Judaism literature. The clothing metaphor can also bridge the world above and the world below. This is evident in the garments ascribed to priests and prophets in the Old Testament.

A special focus and detailed study were given to three important imageries in the Book of Revelation: the clothing metaphor of the “One Like a Son of Man” in Rev 1:13,

the imagery of the multitude who whitened their robes by washing them in the blood of the Lamb in Revelation 7, and finally, the metaphor of the Woman Clothed with the Sun in Revelation 12. In Rev 1:13 we tracked the use of the word ποδήρης in the biblical world and in other apocalyptic and Jewish literature to prove its relation to the priest, or more accurately, to the high priest's inner vestment. Applying this word to describe the garment that the "One Like the Son of Man," Jesus Christ, was wearing in the vision of Rev 1:12-19 supports the liturgical frame and content of the vision, and manifests the early Christian reception of Christ as the High Priest.

Rev 7:14 uses the metaphor of whitening the robes with the blood of the Lamb. This rich imagery has liturgical dimensions, as we proved. The image of white robes whitened by washing them in the blood of the Lamb has a liturgical function. It refers to those who participated in the death of Christ and His Resurrection through the Baptismal font, through which they received the forgiveness of their sins. After their Baptism they steadfastly stood faithful to the testimony of Jesus Christ, either by practicing their faith or by giving their lives and shedding their own blood for the sake of their belief. This reading corresponds to the parallel of Rev 7:14 found in Rev 22:14 that reads, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates." Those who are baptized and after their Baptism hold on to the testimony of Jesus Christ, some of them have lost their lives for the Word of God, will be the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem.

The last clothing metaphor researched was the Woman Clothed with the Sun in Rev 12:1. The exegetes over the years have studied this astounding imagery and elaborated on the multi-use functionality of this imagery. Some saw in it the New Israel,

others state that this imagery is an early reception of Mary the Theotokos. Using the metaphors used to describe the clothing and the surrounding, along with the early Christian text from Hippolytus, and the link between this vision and the vision of the Holy City in Revelation 21, this study showed that the exegesis that fits the liturgical dimension of Revelation is that the Woman represents the Church living liturgically in the world. These selected key imageries will help in paving the way toward the research and the study presented in Chapter 5, which will focus on the performative exegesis of three major rites in the Orthodox Church, expanding on the findings presented here in Chapter 4.

It seems fitting to end this chapter with a quote from Erik Peterson's article "A Theology of Dress," appreciating the role of the grace of God in clothing the nakedness of humans:

This "non-nakedness" of the body, along with its unclothedness, is explained by the fact that supernatural grace covered the human person like a garment. Man did not simply stand in the light of the divine glory; he was actually clothed with it. But through sin man lost this divine glory: naked in the sense of the purely physical, stripped down to what is merely functional; a body lacking nobility, now that the divine glory which had enveloped and ultimately dignified it was no more.²³¹

²³¹ Erik Peterson, "A Theology of Dress," 561.

Chapter Five: Heavenly Clothing Liturgically Worn

1. Introduction

The classic Augustinian definition of “mystery” as when “one thing is seen, another understood,”²³² is proper and applicable within the frame of the liturgical theology of the rituals in the Eucharistic celebration. In the Orthodox liturgical theology, the ritualistic acts conducted in the rites do not stop at the level of performing, but rather, they intend, with the other liturgical elements, to “raise the spiritual consciousness of the worshipper...to a deeper comprehension of the meaning behind those acts.”²³³ The visible human acts conducted through the rituals are intended to convey the divine presence that characterizes the rite as a mystery, which in turn leads the worshiper more deeply into the experience of the divine. Within this liturgical mystagogy,²³⁴ the mystery of Christ is revealed through liturgical rites that unveil the mysteries of both the Incarnation and Holy Scripture performed as liturgical rite.

In the introduction to his book, *Economia & Eschatology: Liturgical Mystagogy in the Byzantine Rite*, Muksuris presents the three purposes of the liturgical sign, as introduced in Robert Taft’s study “*The Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm*” and A. Verheul’s book “*Introduction to the Liturgy: Toward a Theology of Worship*.” Verheul’s argument is that

²³² Augustine of Hippo, *Homily 272.16*; PL 38.1247. The same understating is offered in Ambrose of Milan who defines allegory as used in the exegesis of Scripture in the identical way (Ambrose, *De Abraham 1. 4. 28*; PL 14. 432).

²³³ Stelyios S. Muksuris, *Economia and Eschatology: Liturgical Mystagogy in the Byzantine Prothesis Rite*, (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2013), XV.

²³⁴ According to Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium the term *μυσταγωγία* “mystagogy” does not refer to the mystery itself, but rather to the mechanism that facilitates the grasping of the mystical experience. In the Byzantine East the term refers to the “commentaries...interpretations of liturgical rites that apply to liturgy the multilevel patristic method of scriptural exegesis.” *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Vol. 2. Ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan (New York, 1991), 1431.

“the person who stands behind the sign, who made it a sign, comes to meet the person who approaches it as sign,”²³⁵ which reveals the two first purposes of the liturgical sign according to Muksuris. The first involves the “initial revelation of the invisible and divine via the medium of the visible and material.”²³⁶ The second purpose is for the worshipper to enter into union with the mystery. Although the worshipper enters into this union, the mystery will be hindered from being fully known, and in that, this partial revelation “helps awaken in man an irresistible yearning for a deeper intelligence and union.”²³⁷ The third purpose of the liturgical sign serves “to entice man to a fuller contact with God, precisely because of its incompleteness.”²³⁸ This function is precisely eschatological since it involves a partial participation and experiencing of the kingdom to come, which in turn make the performance exegesis of the liturgy a strengthening factor in bringing the “not yet” kingdom to be “here.” In this way, the liturgical rites have a scriptural function in their very essence.

The liturgical performance is not intended for a mere remembrance of a historical event or a reenactment of it, but rather it actualizes the event and makes it effectual in the life of the worshippers, in what is called *anamnesis*. Robert Taft summarizes the anamnestic meaning as follows:

Thereby, the supper of the Lord has become the messianic banquet of the kingdom, and our earthly ritual a participation in this heavenly worship...By this worship we confess our faith in the saving death and resurrection of the Lord. It is indeed a memorial of all Christ did for us, not in the sense of a ritual reenactment of the past event in its several historical phases, but as an anamnesis of the total mystery that is Christ in

²³⁵ A. Verheul, *Introduction to the Liturgy: Toward a Theology of Worship* (London, 1968), 105.

²³⁶ Muksuris, *Economia and Eschatology*, XVI.

²³⁷ Muksuris, *Economia and Eschatology*, XVI.

²³⁸ Muksuris, *Economia and Eschatology*, XVII.

its present efficacy, the eternal intercession before the throne of God of Christ our high priest. Its force is rooted in our Trinitarian faith. Its efficacy is the work of the Holy Spirit, sent by the will of the Father, through the hands of the priest, to bring us Christ as He did in the incarnation.²³⁹

Three rites practiced in the Orthodox Church will be under the scope of this chapter. The Proskomide rite, Baptismal rite, and the vesting of the clergy rite. In the Proskomide rite section an introduction and explanation of the rite will be provided to show how it is done and the element and the prayers involved. Along with that, the Christological and eschatological dimensions will be presented too. The study then will focus on the prayer that accompanies the extracting of the piece of the bread that resembles the Theotokos. The study shows how the prayer jointly with the liturgical praxis in this rite reflect the early Christian reception of the metaphor of clothing used in here.

The study moves then to the rite of Baptism as practiced in the Orthodox Church. This section argues that the use of the garment image in the Byzantine Baptismal praxis is a performative exegesis and an incubator of multi-layered biblical and intertestamental tradition. This intrinsic feature situates the Baptismal liturgy in an authentic and well-rooted role in the process of contextualizing the Christian identity in its biblical and apocalyptic frame. In the following, an analysis of the parallel between the Baptismal garment tradition and the Exodus priests' garments will be presented, then a survey of the apocalyptic and intertestamental garment of glory will be given to clarify the theological application of the Baptismal service. In searching for the performativity of the rite, the writings of Pseudo-Macarius and Ephrem the Syrian will show the early Christian

²³⁹ Robert F. Taft, "The Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm," in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34-35 (Washington, D.C., 1980-1981), vol. 58. Reprinted Robert F. Taft, *Liturgy in Byzantium and Beyond* (Brookfield, 1995).

reception of these traditions and their embodiment in the praxis of the Baptismal rite is deeply rooted in the biblical exegesis. A synthesis will show how the Eastern Baptismal praxis incubates the traditions of the garment of glory, and how the praxis itself was used in incorporating the garment themes into the writing of the Book of Revelation.

The last section studies the clergy vestments with the special focus on the inner white garment (Sticharion). The study considers this rite in relation to the white robes in the Book of Revelation and presenting how the performance of the prayer of putting on the inner garment provides a faithful example of the Christian reception of Isaiah 61. The study unveils some implicit themes that relates to the priesthood which is indirectly integrated with the prayers of vesting. Among the themes discussed is the priesthood as martyrdom, the vestment as a transition to Heavenly Jerusalem and the vesting as human kenosis.

2. The Proskomide Service: The Queen Adorned with Gold

The Proskomide rite, also known as the Prothesis rite, is a private ceremony elaborated through the centuries, and is designated to prepare the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine prior the beginning of the Eucharist. This service is “a sort of ‘fore-mass’,”²⁴⁰ to use Taft’s own description. The history of the service indicates a gradual development from a very simple preparation and transfer of the gifts prior to the beginning of the Eucharist, to what is known now as a complex series of symbolic actions, biblical recitations, commemorations, and prayers.²⁴¹ This service connotes

²⁴⁰ Robert F. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Pre-Anaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, (Rome, 1978), 257.

²⁴¹ Muksuris, *Economia and Eschatology*, XX.

Christ's self-sacrifice through the functionality of its component, and it signifies an eschatological reality of the Church, and affirms the role of the liturgical performance in presenting the community understanding of the biblical narrative of the salvific act of Christ.

Muksuris in his book's introduction presents a quick review of the theses of the "Diataxis of Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos," St. Nicholas Cabasilas's "Commentary on the Divine Liturgy," and "On the Sacred Liturgy" by St. Symeon of Thessalonike, all of which are fourteenth-century treatises that include discussions of the nature of the Proskomide rite. Muksuris claims that although the rite has the *economia* of salvation as a dominant theme, which is in turn fulfilled through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, the notion of sacrifice "does not refer solely to the events surrounding Christ's final days on earth, but properly includes His entire life as a sacrificial offering to God the Father."²⁴² The Proskomide rituals do not just relate to the sacrifice of the Cross, but also to the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, in that the rite shows the Incarnation as intimately connected to Christ's Passion. Cabasilas supports this argument in his "Commentary on the Divine Liturgy," where he writes: "...it [the bread of the prothesis] has become as offering, since it represents our Lord during first phase of His life on earth, when he became an oblation."²⁴³ In the same manner one can argue that the incarnational aspect is also supported by the place the Mother of God (the "Theotokos"), takes in the Proskomide with a designated prayer, incision, and special piece of bread, along with the special place on the diskos on the right hand of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Symeon of Thessalonike

²⁴² Muksuris, *Economia and Eschatology*, XX.

²⁴³ Nicholas Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, trans. J.M. Hussey and P.A McNulty (London, 1960), 34.

associates the rite with the Nativity without denying the centrality of the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross when he writes, “The Prothesis also represents both the cave and the manger.”²⁴⁴

Another preeminent theme of this rite according to Muksuris is that of “the eschatological reality that the Lord’s self-sacrifice has established the church and the world.”²⁴⁵ All salvific events of the divine economy, as they build on previous events, also anticipate the advent of the eternal, which originates in history but at the same time goes beyond time. This is called the *Eschaton* or the Day of the Lord. This *Eschaton* reflects two realities: first, it is imminent, and second, it is waiting to be fulfilled in the future. For the early Christians, this reality has already happened in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, which is the reason why the early Church believed that its days were the final days, and the second coming for them was imminent. This eschatological dimension is present in the rituals associated with the rite and with its components. In reference to the point above, Muksuris translates a paragraph from Symeon of Thessaloniki’s “On the Sacred Liturgy”:

But let us understand how also through this divine symbol and through the work of the holy Proskomide we see Jesus himself and his Church all as one, in the middle him the true light, [and the Church] having gained eternal life, illumined by him and sustained. For he, through the bread, is in the middle; his Mother, through the [triangular bread] particle, is to [his] right; the saints and angels [smaller triangular particles] are on [his] left; and below is the pious gathering of all who have believed in him [small particles]. And this is the great mystery: God among men and God in the midst of gods, made divine from him who is truly God by nature, who was incarnate for them. And this is the future kingdom and the polity of eternal life: God with us, seen and communion.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Muksuris, *Economia and Eschatology*, XXI.

²⁴⁵ Muksuris, *Economia and Eschatology*, XXI.

²⁴⁶ As translated from Symeon of Thessalonike, *On the Sacred Liturgy* 94; PG 155.285AB by Muksuris, *Economia and Eschatology*, XXII-XXIII. The brackets were added by the translator in order to clarify the meaning.

It is plausible for one to conceive of Christ's sacrifice as performed in the rite of the Proskomide as ushering in the eschatological realm as the Lamb of God surrounded by His Church and bringing history to its fulfillment, which is here-but-not-yet.

In this distinctive rite the sacrificial Lamb of God is extracted from the offering bread and marked with the Cross, the sign of His Passion. This piece of bread goes through a series of incisions and piercings. The Lamb is then transferred to a circular paten (called the *diskos*), to be then encircled by the Church as symbolized by particles of bread. These particles represent the Mother of God, the saints, the hierarchs, and the living and the reposed among the faithful. "Christ's self-sacrifice, depicted through the physical marking on the Lamb, heralds the inauguration of His Kingdom: a reality in which time and eternity, earth and heaven...visualized in the gifts of bread and wine ritually prepared during the prothesis rite."²⁴⁷ The whole symbolism of the service at its completion consists of the Lamb in the center²⁴⁸ of the circular *diskos*, surrounded by the Theotokos, the saints, the living and the departed, reflecting the earthly and the heavenly realm, recalling Rev 5:1-14. The *diskos* is round because it symbolizes heaven and has in its center the Master of heaven. The piercings and the extractions of the other particles taken from the oblation bread are accompanied by prayers that quote the Old Testament prophecies, Psalms, and other authentic prayers used to accompany the process of preparing the Proskomide. The piercings and extractions are followed with a veiling ritual of both the *diskos* and the chalice separately, and then of both at once with special

²⁴⁷ Muksuris, *Economia and Eschatology*, XXII.

²⁴⁸ See Figure 3, which clarifies the Proskomide prepared with all the bread pieces the text mentions.

cloths. These veiling rituals are in turn accompanied by verses from the Psalms and other authentic prayers.

The triangular bread particle that represents the Theotokos is associated with a verse from Psalm 44 (45): “The queen stood at your right hand, clothed and adorned in garment of pure gold.” In order to unpack this liturgical performance, we will briefly examine the Old Testament context of this particular verse of Psalm 44, its patristic exegesis, its liturgical exegesis, and its relation to the Mother of God.



Figure 3: The Preparation of the Proskomide with the main Bread pieces described in the text above. The square piece is the Lamb, the triangular piece to its right is the piece represents the Theotokos, the 9 triangles on the left represent the ranks of the saints. Three triangles below it represents the hierarchs of the said church. The two group of breadcrumbs represent the living and dead members of the church.

1. The Queen in Psalm 44

The Byzantine hymnography has given to the Mother of God a special role in the process of re-reading and re-writing the Scripture liturgically. Many imageries in the Old Testament texts have been associated with the Theotokos and her role in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ the Son of God. In the Byzantine rite there are several feasts where the Theotokos is celebrated with Jesus Christ, or feasts that commemorate events in the life of the Mother of God; all these have their own hymnographic compositions. These feasts are the Nativity of the Theotokos, the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple, the

Annunciation, the Dormition of the Theotokos, and the Protection of the Theotokos. Paul Ladouceur, in his article “Old Testament Prefigurations of the Mother of God,”²⁴⁹ lists two tables that show the imageries from the Old Testament that the Byzantine hymnographers associated with the Theotokos such as the Temple, the Tabernacle, the Chalice, the Censor, the Ladder of Jacob, the burning Bush, the Queen, the Mountain, the Gate of the Lord, the Ark and the Chariot and many more. Ladouceur then offers a patristic interpretation of some of these images. He also offers a patristic interpretation of the scriptural readings associated with the feasts and how the Byzantine hymnographers took these interpretations a step further by allegorically linking the Old Testament imageries to the Theotokos, so that they became Prefigurations of the Mother of God.

In this context, Psalm 44 carries a distinctive metaphorical language that evokes the glory and the beauty of the king and his queen. The Psalm offers a marriage hymn as it recounts the celebration of a kingly wedding. This Psalm has been used by the hymnographers in the Byzantine rites that honor the Theotokos, as well as in verses and antiphons used in Orthros, Vespers, and the Proskomide, where the names mentioned in this psalm such as “queen,” “Sovereign,” and “king’s daughter” were used as titles of the Theotokos. The hymnographic exegesis that focuses on the figure of the Theotokos was not the known in the first three centuries. However, literal or allegorical exegesis of the scriptural text was widespread in the Fathers’ interpretations. The major reason for the increased focus on the Theotokos in the hymnographic performative exegesis can be attributed to the Third Ecumenical Council (Ephesus, 431 AD) where the Nestorian heresy regarding the naming of the Mother of God was discussed and corrected.

²⁴⁹ Paul Ladouceur, “Old Testament Prefigurations of the Mother of God,” *SVTQ* 50 (2006): 5-57.

According to Ladouceur's reading of the patristic exegesis of Psalm 44, the Fathers often make "a connection between the king and the queen of psalm 44 and the lover and the beloved of the Song of Songs."²⁵⁰ For example, Origen refers to this psalm in his Commentaries on the Song of Songs, which for him was composed in the style of a drama, with the principal characters of the bride, the bridegroom, the friends of the bride, the young girls and the daughters of Jerusalem, and the guards of the city. Typologically speaking, the bridegroom is Christ, the Church is the bride, and the overarching image is the well-known type of the divine marriage between God and His people. On the other hand, Origen identifies the King in Psalm 44 with Christ and the Queen with the Church, while on the other hand his allegorical school sees the bride as the faithful soul, and the bridegroom as Christ. This is "[a] meaning which had barely been touched on before him, and which he elaborated considerably, creating the theme of the mystical marriage."²⁵¹

Origen puts together some of the parallels between the Psalm 44 and the Song of Songs as follows:

1. The fragrance of the bridegroom (Song of Songs 1:3) and the oil of gladness in Psalm 44:8 both show the Holy Spirit, which descended on Jesus Christ in the Theophany.
2. The Bride is led into the king's chamber in Songs 1:4 and Ps 44:10. The bride became a queen as she was brought to the king, and as she became the queen it is said "[T]he queen stood by your right hand, adorned in cloth-of-gold raiment richly embroidered."

²⁵⁰ Ladouceur, "Old Testament Prefigurations," 27.

²⁵¹ Ladouceur, "Old Testament Prefigurations," 27. There are two texts of Origen on the Song of Songs, the first is part of his Commentary on the Song of Songs and the other is the Two Homilies. (*The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies*, Translated by R. P. Lawson, Ancient Christian Writers. 26).

3. The bridegroom is the king, and he is a bridegroom because he has a bride who reigns with him as the psalm mentions.
4. The queen in the Psalm also symbolizes the human soul: “[T]rue beauty lies in the Savior, and also through his bounty and mercy it is spread through all souls.”²⁵²

In no place of his exegesis on the Song of Songs or the psalm does Origen make any connection to the Theotokos. This trend of exegesis continued in the interpretations of the Fathers after Origen. Methodius of Olympus in his *Symposium* represents the Queen in Psalm 44 as the Church and the golden robe she puts on as the Christian virtues:

And in the forty-fourth Psalm it is the Queen who, taking precedence over many, takes her place on the right hand of God, who is clad in the golden raiment of virtue, whose beauty the King desired, is, as I have said, that blessed and immaculate flesh which the Word brought to heaven and placed on the right hand of the Father, ornate in a golden gown, that is, with the pursuits of immortality, which he called by way of allegory, golden borders. For here is a garment skillfully embroidered and woven of all kinds of virtuous acts, such as chastity, prudence, faith, love, patience, and all other good qualities; and these...clothe man in a raiment of gold.²⁵³

Another example from the Fathers who followed Origen’s line of exegesis on The Song of Songs is Gregory of Nyssa, in his *Commentary of the Song of Songs*. Gregory makes a connection between the Song of Songs and Psalm 44, where he focuses on the beauty of the beloved/bride as the beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the king. For Gregory, the soul that is formed by the divine beauty (which is characterized by truth, righteousness, and meekness) becomes like Jerusalem adorned with the king’s beauty.²⁵⁴

²⁵² Ladouceur, “Old Testament Prefigurations,” 29.
²⁵³ Methodius of Olympus, *Symposium* 8, Ancient Christian Writings, 103-104.
²⁵⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. Trans. MacCambley, Casimir, United States: Hellenic College Press, 1987.

Basil the Great followed the same line of interpreting the queen as the Church, because the Church is the body of the Lord, and the queen can be the soul of the believer and therefore the gold robe is the teachings of the Church. John Chrysostom, on the other hand, in his sermon on Psalm 44 gives it a typological interpretation where the king represents God, and from verse 44:3 onwards the person addressed is Christ Who is anointed with the oil of gladness. The queen for Chrysostom is the Church, which receives its magnificent attire from Christ, and the gold of her robe is her inner clothing: grace, faith, and virtues.²⁵⁵

It is evident that the Fathers of the first centuries did not link the Theotokos to their interpretations of Psalm 44, but the Byzantine hymnography did take this. The psalm is performed in this way during many feasts' days, for example, this hymn from the Katavasis of the Entrance of the Theotokos: "I shall open my mouth and the Spirit will inspire it, and I shall utter words of my son to the Queen and Mother..."²⁵⁶

Paul Ladouceur provides his own interpretation of Ps 44:10 ("The queen stood at your right hand, adorned in cloth-of-gold raiment richly embroidered") in what he calls the "Marian exegesis"²⁵⁷. Ladouceur's starting point is that God is the king, as in the psalms which read "[T]he Lord is king forever, and unto ages of ages" (Ps 9:37), and "Who is the King of Glory? He is the Lord, strong and powerful" (Ps 43:5). Along with the Old Testament text, the New Testament text supports the royalty of God and Jesus Christ. When Pilate asked Jesus if He is a king Jesus answered him, "You are right in

²⁵⁵ St. John Chrysostom *Commentary on the Psalms*. United States: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998, 231-357.

²⁵⁶ Orthros of the Entrance of the Theotokos to the Temple; as well as being the katavasis of most ordinary Sundays.

²⁵⁷ Ladouceur, "Old Testament Prefigurations," 49.

saying I am a king” (John 18:37). Therefore, Ladouceur states that “[T]he Queen is the Bride of the King, and so the Virgin Mary became the Bride of God by the action of the Holy Spirit...The Virgin Mary freely accepts her role as the Bride of the King; she gives her express consent to the invitation to become the Bride of the King.”²⁵⁸

On a different level of exegesis, Ladouceur turns to the liturgical performance, without calling it liturgical performative exegesis, to show that the liturgical understanding of the Theotokos is that she is the queen. He refers to the iconographic perception of the Theotokos as the “Mother of God Enthroned” (see Figure 4). The Theotokos in this icon sits on a throne as the Mother of God enthroned at the right hand of Christ, her son, and her God. Orthodox churches contain what is called an iconostasis, which is a screen adorned with icons, which serves to separate the altar from the nave. It is typical in all the Orthodox churches to see the icon of Christ to the right of the Royal Doors of the iconostasis (when looking toward the altar), and an icon of the Theotokos to the left of the doors. However, it is important to note that in relation to the icon of Christ, the icon of the Theotokos is to His right (“The queen stood at your right hand”). This liturgical performance that incorporates the reading of the Theotokos into Ps 44:10 is also evident in the Proskomide. The first piece of bread, the triangular piece that is taken right after extracting the Lamb, is the piece of the Mother of God, the Theotokos, and the verse associated with this liturgical movement of extracting the piece of bread and placing it at the right hand of the Lamb is Ps 44:10.

²⁵⁸ Ladouceur, “Old Testament Prefigurations,” 49-50.



Figure 4: The Mother of God Enthroned²⁵⁹

Before discussing the gold vestment of Ps 44:10, it is essential to ask whether there is a biblical-historical linkage to support such a liturgical reading of the Theotokos as being on the right hand of the king and to be called the queen. Stephen De Young’s recent book, *Religion of the Apostles: Orthodox Christianity in the First Century*, touches upon the historical aspect of the liturgical reading of the Theotokos as a queen on the right hand of Christ.²⁶⁰ His observation is patristic, while at the same time taking a historical/eschatological approach. Below, I will present his approach, which supports the performativity of the psalm reading in the service of Proskomide.

DeYoung argues that “the veneration of the Theotokos as experienced within the church has existed from the beginnings of faith, being grounded firmly in the Scriptures

²⁵⁹ Icon of Panagia Pantanassa of Mount Athos Ancient icon of Panagia Pantanassa of Mystras Panagia Pantanassa (Most-Holy Queen of All) is a miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary from the holy and great Monastery of Vatopedi, Mount Athos, Greece.

²⁶⁰ Stephen DeYoung, *Religion of the Apostles: Orthodox Christianity in the First Century*. United States: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2021. Kindle edition location 3133-3228.

and in the religion of the Second Temple period and its anticipation regarding the mother of the Messiah.”²⁶¹ The Old Covenant understanding of earthly authority was that it is a replica of the divine council through which God exercised His rulership over Creation. The earliest institution of the Torah was seventy elders around the one appointed to judge Israel, and the number seventy comes from the divine council in Deut 32:8. With the rise of the kingship in Israel, the understanding of the king’s council as a replica of the divine council continued. With King David, for example, the council was formed by elders and David was the one to administer and rule. “The king, surrounded by his royal council, was not only an image and earthly reflection of God’s heavenly rule but was a prophecy of a day when the earthly and the heavenly rule would be united as one in the Messiah,”²⁶² since kings were judges based on how well they represented the righteous rule of God on earth. The eschatological expectation of the messianic king from the Davidic line grew in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Typically, the queen is considered to be the wife of the king governing the nation. This assumption comes from the medieval paradigm of monarchy, not from the biblical paradigm of the monarchy. This medieval paradigm came to emphasize monogamy, which was not the case in the Old Testament narratives of kings. In 1 and 2 Kings along with 1 and 2 Chronicles we read that polygamy was widely practiced by the nobility and kings. Although the Torah forbids the kings from acquiring many wives (Deut 17:17), nonetheless, polygamy was common among the kings. This is the reason why “queen mother”²⁶³ was the term used in Judah’s monarchy, for the king could have many wives

²⁶¹ DeYoung, *Religion*, Location 3149

²⁶² DeYoung, *Religion*, Location 3155

²⁶³ DeYoung, *Religion*, Location 3171.

but he could only have one mother. This institution is unique to the Davidic monarchy since it appears neither in the Northern Kingdom of Israel nor in other equally polygamous monarchies of the ancient world.

The founding of the “queen mother” institution is described in 1 Kings 2:19, where we read about Solomon placing a second throne to the right of his own throne for his mother, Bathsheba, to sit beside him as queen. The right-hand place in scriptural language has always signified power, boldness, and equality to the kingly throne. This was further developed in the New Testament through the idea of Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father. By situating his mother on his right hand, Solomon established her as his foremost advisor. From Solomon’s reign on, once a king from the Davidic line is announced, his mother’s name is also announced, as we read in 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles.

In Psalm 44, the praise moves easily from the king to God, which serves as a literary tool to show the eschatological messianic king. Within this imagery we read the verse about the queen on the right hand. The prophecy of this psalm alludes to Jesus Christ, the Messiah Who inaugurated the Messianic Age, which the New Testament writers tried hard to correct the popular understanding of in relation to the Messiah, particularly the idea of Him becoming a political leader. DeYoung states that “the Scriptures of the New Testament reinforce these expectations by highlighting the importance of the Theotokos not only in the ministry of Christ but also, as described in the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.”²⁶⁴ DeYoung concludes that this understanding has led the Christian faith from the beginning to give special role to the

²⁶⁴ DeYoung, *Religion*, Location 3211

Theotokos. One of the proofs of the early reception of the role of the Theotokos in the early Christian community that DeYoung quotes is from Celsus, a second-century pagan philosopher who penned a thorough refutation of Christianity. Part of Celsus's work *The True Word* aims at disparaging the understanding of the Theotokos as queen and mother, where he argues that Mary was not worthy to be the mother of the king.²⁶⁵

Both DeYoung and Ladouceur's studies lead us to see how early Christian worship perceived the Scripture, the Saints, and in our case study here the Theotokos. Their studies also show how early Christian worship provided a performative reading that includes the way they performed exegesis on the Scriptures and the way they understood the role of the Theotokos in their faith.

2. "Adorned with Cloth of Gold Raiment Richly Embroidered"

In all cultures, gold has been considered one of the most precious metals that is fitting to kings and royalty. One of the Magi's gifts to Christ was gold (Mat 1:11), which indicated Christ's kingship, as most of the interpretations and hymnography suggest. Gold also has been and is still used in the divine services and the places of worship. This takes after Solomon's temple that was covered with gold (1 Kings 6:20-21) and contained liturgical objects of gold, including some that were built according to God's command to Moses, such as the Cherubim above the Ark of the Covenant.

Gold is equally fitting for royal vestments and ornaments of the king and queen. In Psalm 44 the gold cloth befits the queen, but within the performative exegesis presented above, gold can also be the symbol of spiritual reality. "[T]he gold of the robes

²⁶⁵ DeYoung, *Religion*, Location 3266 as DeYoung quoted it from Origen *Contra Celsum* I.28, 39.

of the Mother of God is the external reflection of her interior perfection and her union (*theosis*) with God.”²⁶⁶ This statement can also be supported from the perspective of Orthodox iconography, where we always see halos around the head of Christ, the Theotokos, and the saints: these halos are usually gold to signify the divine light.

Gold in the Book of Revelation symbolizes royalty, power, and worship in both the divine realm and the realm of evil. Out of ten occurrences of gold in Revelation, two of the most interesting ones can be linked to this performative reading of the Theotokos in the hymnology of the Byzantine rite. In Rev 21:18, 21 we read a detailed description about the architectural structure of the New Jerusalem, the Holy City of the King, where gold is mentioned. According to Rev 21:18, 21, “the city was pure gold” and “the street of the city was pure gold.” The New Jerusalem is referred to as the bride of the Lamb (Rev 21:9). Orthodox worship has always understood this as an allusion to the Church of the New Testament. The Church and the Theotokos are also identified with each other in the hymnology, based on the metaphor that the Church and Virgin Mary both bring Christ to the world. The Church is understood to be the New Jerusalem and the city of the king, and hymnology gave the Theotokos the same description. The Canon of the Akathist of the Theotokos reads: “Strengthened by thy might, faithfully we cry unto thee: rejoice, City of the King of All, great in glory and repute” (Ode 5 of the Canon of the Akathist). Therefore, the imagery of the Theotokos as the city of the King that is clothed with gold can be a performative exegesis of the New Jerusalem with its gold walls and streets, as depicted in the Book of Revelation.

²⁶⁶ Ladouceur, “Old Testament Prefigurations of the Mother of God,” 51.

With this reading linking the gold in the vestment of the queen in Psalm 44 to the Theotokos in the worship setting, along with the image of the New Jerusalem in Revelation and its reception in Orthodox worship, one can see an eschatological vision of the Theotokos which the Church, through worship, celebrates and manifests in recognition of the place of the Theotokos in the Kingdom of God.

3. The Baptismal Rite: A Womb of Multi-Layered Tradition and a Rewritten Bible

The Baptismal rite in the Orthodox tradition combines three rites: the preparation for Baptism, the Baptism itself and the sacrament of the Holy Spirit. Through these three rich-in-theology services, both the garment theme and clothing metaphor seem to be dominant. The first service begins with the “un-vesting” of the catechumen before Baptism, which in turn alludes to the rejection of “old man” and the “old life.” This is followed by the exorcism prayers, which entreat God to make the soon-to-be-baptized “*a child of light, and heir of Thy Kingdom; that having lived in accordance with Thy commandments, and preserved inviolate the Seal, and kept his/her garment undefiled, he/she may receive the blessedness of the Saints.*” Moreover, right before the second rite (Baptism itself) starts, the last prayer of preparation implies “garment” implicitly as it entreats God to “*put off from him/her the old man.*” The pervasiveness of the garment theme is even more apparent in the two remaining rites.

The act of Baptism itself within this rite anticipates the events that are going to take place in the second ritual, as well as in the life of the person to be baptized. From the very beginning of this second rite the community prays that “*he/she may preserve his/her Baptismal garment [that he/she does not receive it yet] and the earnest of the Spirit pure*

and undefiled unto the dread day of Christ.” Further, and more interestingly, the community prays again “*that this water may be to him/her a laver of regeneration, unto remission of sins, and a garment of incorruption.*” Immediately after this, the priest affirms the prayer in the sanctification of the Baptismal water, in which he calls the water as “*garment of incorruption.*” This garment in this specific prayer seems to be the new man who is renewed after the image of the Creator. Immediately after the triple immersion, the person who was baptized is vested in a white garment (usually white), accompanied with a prayer where the priest calls this garment “*the garment of righteousness,*” and “*the robe of light.*” This follows the example of Christ Who “clothed Himself with the light as with a garment.” The crowning of the Baptismal liturgy is completed with the receiving of the Holy Mysteries, and the celebration procession in which the community sings: “*as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ, Alleluia,*” in a clear signal that the garment is now Christ Himself. Therefore, the vesting of the robe of light and the garment of incorruption juxtaposes the un-vesting of the person in the beginning of the service, and on the other hand, this very garment seals the Baptism itself. This explicit and frequent occurrence of the “garment” make us wonder whether we are dealing with an “external symbolism”²⁶⁷ as Schmemmann declares, or whether the efficacy of the garment symbol invites us to rethink the nature and the roots of such a usage in the Baptismal liturgy.

This section argues that the use of the garment image in the Byzantine Baptismal praxis is a performative exegesis and an incubator of multi-layered biblical and intertestamental tradition. This intrinsic feature situates the Baptismal liturgy in an

²⁶⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water & The Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism*, (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974), 71.

authentic and well-rooted role in the process of contextualizing the Christian identity in its biblical and apocalyptic frame. In the following, an analysis of the parallel between the Baptismal garment tradition and the Exodus priests' garments will be presented, then a survey of the apocalyptic and intertestamental garment of glory will be given to clarify the theological application of the Baptismal service. In searching for the performativity of the rite, the writings of Pseudo-Macarius and Ephrem the Syrian will show the early Christian reception of these traditions and their embodiment in the praxis of the Baptismal rite is deeply rooted in the biblical exegesis. A synthesis will show how the Eastern Baptismal praxis incubates the traditions of the garment of glory.

1. Baptismal Praxis and the Garments of the Priests in Exodus

Exodus 28 is the second place in the Old Testament where we read about manufacturing of garments. The first one is found in Gen 3:21 when God made garments of skin²⁶⁸ for Adam and Eve. Nevertheless, Exodus 28 has a very special role for garments, not just as a tool and means to ordain the high priest, but also in that God Himself commanded Moses to make Aaron a garment “for his glory and beauty” (MT), or “for honor and glory” (LXX). According to Michael Morales, the two incidents are related semantically, because “the investiture of the priests utilizes the same verb form (לָבַשׁ) and clothing term, “tunics” (כַּתְּנֹתַי), as when God clothed Adam and his wife (Gen 3.21//Exod 28.41).”²⁶⁹ Therefore God, as a kind of source and maker of these garments,

²⁶⁸ While the LXX reads “garments of skin,” the MT text reads “coats of skin.” cf. http://www.ecmarsh.com/lxx-kjv/genesis/gen_003.htm.

²⁶⁹ L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus*, Biblical Tools and Studies, Vol. 15, (Louvain: Peeters, 2012), 233.

leads us to the intrinsic functionality of the vestments and their holders: Adam, Eve and the priests of the Old Testament²⁷⁰. First, the priest in the Tabernacle had to be perfect as a man in order for him to represent “the restored creation as pertaining to humanity.”²⁷¹ Morales starts from this point in order to show the role of the high priest as a symbol of Adam in what he calls the “gate liturgy.”²⁷² The first perception is that the priest was believed to be the second Adam²⁷³, in a functional way: “[t]he Adamic identity of Aaron is fundamental to the theology of P,²⁷⁴ with the priest/new Adam doing what Adam failed to do in the temple-as-restored-Eden, so that, according to the cultic worldview, the God-intended humanity of Genesis 1 is thus recapitulated, in Israel’s priesthood in the temple-as-microcosm.”²⁷⁵

The command to Moses to make garments “for honor and for glory” seems to be understood within this context. “The honor” is that the priest is the new Adam, who performs a priestly service, that in the first place Adam failed to accomplish. Through it, the priest attains glory. The vestment or garment is a “separation symbol from the profane” which enables the priest to enter this realm of priestly service. “Thus the priest in the representation or *drama* of the cultus, dressed in such glorious raiment, portrayed humanity in its newly created purity, no longer separated from the divine Presence

²⁷⁰ Hereafter, “Old Testament” will be abbreviated as OT.

²⁷¹ Morales, *The Tabernacle*, 258.

²⁷² Morales, *The Tabernacle*, 258-270.

²⁷³ Morales, *The Tabernacle*, 258.

²⁷⁴ P is from Priestly Narrative and interpretation of the Pentateuch. Where creating the cosmos and building the tabernacle are literarily linked, the latter being a microcosmos of the former. The creation of cosmos understood as precondition for worship and the building of the tabernacle. cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Structure and Meaning in the Sinai-Horeb Narrative (Exodus 19-34),” in E. E. Carpenter, ed., *A Biblical Itinerary: In Search of Method, Form, and Content: Essays in Honor of George W. Coats* (JSOTSup 240; Sheffield: Sheffield Academics Press, 1997) 109-25.

²⁷⁵ Morales, *The Tabernacle*, 259.

through the rebellion and expulsion recounted in Genesis 3, but able—as the pre-eminent “holy” Person—to ascend the mount, to enter the holy of holies.”²⁷⁶ The garment is the covenant that the priest makes with the temple and the Lord of the temple, and without it the priest will be unable, and prohibited under the Law, to perform any priestly function.²⁷⁷

On the other hand, it is fitting to point out the triad of nakedness/washing/vesting. Exod 29:4-9 contains God’s command to Moses that Aaron and his sons be washed with water, anointed, and then clothed with vestments at the *door of the tent of meeting*.

Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the tent of meeting and wash them with water. Take the garments and dress Aaron with the tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod itself and the breastpiece. Fasten the ephod on him by its skillfully woven waistband. Put the turban on his head and attach the sacred emblem to the turban. Take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it on his head. Bring his sons and dress them in tunics and fasten caps on them. Then tie sashes on Aaron and his sons. The priesthood is theirs by a lasting ordinance. Then you shall ordain Aaron and his sons. (Exod 29:4-9, NRSV)

The ordination rituals take place at the door of the Tabernacle and within its first section.

The ritual consisted of putting off the priests’ earthly clothing, followed by washing with

²⁷⁶ Morales, *The Tabernacle*, 259-60.

²⁷⁷ Philo in his *On The Life of Moses II*, discusses in long the matter of the priestly garments. He provides a cosmological perspective of the vestment as he mentions that the representation of the vest is the world itself and in parts it is a representation of the parts of the world. Earth, air water and the four seasons and changes. “Being equipped in this way, is properly prepared for the performance of all sacred ceremonies, that, whenever he enters the temple to offer up the prayers and sacrifices in use among his nation, all the world may likewise enter in with him, by means of the imitations of it which he bears about him, the garment reaching to his feet, being the imitation of the air, the pomegranate of the water, the flowery hem of the earth, and the scarlet dye of his robe being the emblem of fire; also, the mantle over his shoulders being a representation of heaven itself; the two hemispheres being further indicated by the round emeralds on the shoulder-blades, on each of which were engraved six characters equivalent to six signs of the zodiac; the twelve stones arranged on the breast in four rows of three stones each, namely the logeum, being also an emblem of that reason which holds together and regulates the universe.” cf. <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book25.html>. Also, a good observation is that the vestments made from the same materials that the Tabernacle made of. cf. Gary Anderson, “To See Where God Dwells: The Tabernacle, the Temple, and the Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition,” *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2008): 13-45.

water, and then vesting with the garments for honor and glory along with the sanctification with oil. The Baptismal praxis seems to be very familiar with this passage, to the point of appearing to make its rituals rooted in the ordination rituals of the Old Testament. Putting off the “*old man*” is in parallel with putting off Aaron’s earthly garment; the washing with water is in harmony with the immersion in water in the Baptism; and finally, the white Baptismal robe represents the putting on of the priestly vestments.

Another point to highlight here is the place where both rituals are performed. The early Baptismal practice used to be performed outside the church gate, in what we call the Baptismal house, βαπτιστήριον. Only after the Baptism and the putting on of the white garment can the baptized person enter through the church door. This custom is still followed in modified form in the Eastern Orthodox Church, where Baptism takes place in the narthex, which is a sort of interior porch located before the nave. Further, the Baptismal praxis actualizes the image of the functional priesthood and the gate liturgy. Firstly, in status of wearing a garment. Secondly, it has a functional application in that only baptized Christians-the vested royal priests- can participate in the Eucharist and other ecclesiastical sacraments. Schmemmann claims that the Orthodox tradition understands Baptism as an ordination of the laity into the Church, and as a revealing of the royal priesthood of human beings.²⁷⁸ One can say at this first stage of our examination that the Baptismal praxis has rewritten the Exodus narrative of the priestly ordination in order to affirm the roots of Baptism, not only within the New Testament, but also within the Old Testament.

²⁷⁸ Schmemmann, *Of Water*, 75.

2. Post-Biblical Reading of the Garment of Glory

The imagery of God vested or wrapped with a garment of light is influential in Scripture and intertestamental literature. In Ps 104:2 we read: “Who [God] cover yourself with light as with a garment.” This imagery initiates the theme of the heavenly garment that is used heavily in post-biblical and apocalyptic literature. Moreover, putting on the garment was later related to the tradition of the ascension of the righteous through a heavenly journey, which includes the vision of the Glory (*Kabod*) upon the Throne (*Merkabah*), and a stage of transformation of the righteous into angelic beings through an act of crowning, putting on a garment, or physical transformation.

One of the clearest examples is the account of Enoch’s transformation into Metatron in 3 Enoch 7-15. 3 Enoch is a Hebrew text purports to be an account of Rabbi Ishmael describing his journey to heaven where he saw God’s throne and chariot. The original title appears to be The Book of the Palaces. Moreover, it is considered part of the Merkabah tradition as the theme of ascension into heaven is the major theme of the book. The date of this book has been a debate theme among scholars, especially that this book was not a main interest until late on in the twentieth century. According to Charlesworth, “a date for its [the book of 3Enoch] redaction in the fifth or the sixth century cannot be far from truth.”²⁷⁹ 3 Enoch draws on Palestinian apocalyptic traditions about Enoch. At the same time, according to Charlesworth²⁸⁰, there are parallels between 3 Enoch and texts from Babylonia.

²⁷⁹ For a survey of the academic debate and theories about the date of 3 Enoch c.f. Charlesworth, *OTP I*, 225-229.

²⁸⁰ Charlesworth, *OTP I*, 229.

R. Ishmael said: Metatron, Prince of the Divine Presence, said to me: Out of the love which he had for me, more than for all the denizens of the heights, the Holy One, blessed be he, fashioned for me a majestic robe, in which all the kinds of luminaries were set, and he clothed me in it. Ha fashioned for me a glorious cloak in which brightness, brilliance, splendor, and luster of every kind were fixed, and he wrapped me in it. Ha fashioned me a kingly crown in which 49 refulgent stones were placed, each like the sun's orb, and its brilliance shone into the four quarters of the world.²⁸¹

Particular attention is due here to the frequency of the clothing expressions such as “fashioned,” “clothed,” and “wrapped,” which are used later in the interpretations and in performing the text through the rituals. This clothing with a garment is not just a symbol of honor, rather it alludes to functionality and identity. In the case of Enoch-Metatron, the transformation was followed with an assignment: “When the Holy One, blessed be He, took me to serve the Throne of Glory, the wheels of the Merkabah.” Also, in 3 En 16:1 we read:

At first I sat upon a great throne at the door of the seventh palace, and I judged all the denizens of the heights on the authority of the Holy One, blessed be he, I assigned greatness, royalty, rank, sovereignty, glory, praise, diadem, crown, and honor to all the princes of kingdoms.²⁸²

Serving the Throne of Glory is an indication of a liturgical function, in addition to the judging function performed through the same power of God. Metatron, or the transformed Enoch, is acting like God in view of his vesting or transformation.

This glorification of the righteous reflects the primordial glory in the figure of Adam.

Golitzin appeals to the Qumran community in his research on the glory of Adam and its relation to the Christian ascetic literature.²⁸³ He quotes the Community Rule IV, 22-23

²⁸¹ 3 En 12:1-4 Charlesworth, *OTP I*, 265.

²⁸² Charlesworth, *OTP I*, 268.

²⁸³ Alexander Golitzin, “Recovering the “Glory of Adam”: “Divine Light” Traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Ascetical Literature of Fourth-Century Syro-Mesopotamia” in *The Dead Sea*

where the phrase “all the glory of Adam” is explicitly mentioned: “[H]e [God] will instruct the upright with knowledge of the Most High...For those God has chosen for an everlasting covenant, and to them shall belong all the Glory of Adam.”²⁸⁴ This protological glory is found in the Word of the Luminaries 4Q504 as an intrinsic element in the creation of Adam that enables him to govern and to be in Paradise: “[Adam,] our [fat]her, you fashioned in the image of [your] glory...You made [him] govern [...] [...] and so that he would walk in a glorious land... [...] [...] he kept.”²⁸⁵ The image of the glory of God was bestowed or breathed into Adam, and this bestowal was a point around which the interpretations developed. Not only the passage of Gen 1:26 regarding the image and likeness is at stake here, but also Gen 3:21 where “the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them.” Andrei Orlov posits that “the Targumic traditions, both Palestinian and Babylonian, read, instead of garments of skin, garment of glory.”²⁸⁶ This theme was elaborated in the later Christian literature and rabbinic lore, which in turn did not keep the theme as Adam’s unalienable property. Adam lost his garment of glory in the Fall and the restoration of this garment became an anticipated event that developed later to be eschatological.

The first restoration of the luminous garment of Adam was with Moses, according to the Jewish and Samaritan sources²⁸⁷. “The Samaritan texts insist that when Moses ascended to Mount Sinai, he received the image of God which Adam cast off in the

Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity, ed. James R. Davila (Leiden /Boston: Brill, 2003) page numbers.

²⁸⁴ Golitzin, *Recovering*, 279.

²⁸⁵ As quoted by Andrei Orlov, “Vested with Adam's Glory: Moses as the Luminous Counterpart of Adam in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Macarian Homilies,” *Xristianskij Vostok* 4, no.10 (2002): 498.

²⁸⁶ Orlov, “Vested with Adam's Glory,” 501.

²⁸⁷ Orlov, “Vested with Adam's Glory,” 501.

Garden of Eden.”²⁸⁸ This image or form that Moses received was thought in later interpretations as the cause of his luminous face, as we read in *Memar Marqa*: “He [Moses] was vested with the form which Adam cast off in the Garden of Eden; and his face shone up to the day of his death.”²⁸⁹ Later on, and with the Christian early reception, Christ will become the complete restoration of the glory of Adam and through Him [Christ] the restoration of the garment of glory to all human kind will be granted.²⁹⁰ The later development of the theme that “the righteous will recover the glory of Adam” is in accord with the themes of vesting with robes, crowning, and even enthronement. This is proven in the apocalyptic literature, the Syriac Fathers, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Even in later rabbinic literature, this theme was dominant, especially with the focus on the theme that the glory taken from Adam was restored to Moses at Sinai. Morray-Jones finds that the themes of enthronement, crowning, and vesting with garment or robe were always associated with the “Name”, the Glory, or the *kabod*. He states that “the righteous man is, like the Samaritan Moses, Metatron and Christ, a creative agent”²⁹¹ and this is because the idea of the righteous one was always embodied in the apocalyptic narratives of the divine Name or Image. This distinctive point was used heavily by the rabbis to affirm that the world was created for Abraham, Moses, and Israel.²⁹²

3. *Christian Reception of the Theme of the Recovered Glory*

a. *Pseudo-Macarius*

²⁸⁸ Orlov, “Vested with Adam's Glory,” 501.

²⁸⁹ As quoted in Orlov, “Vested with Adam's Glory,” 502.

²⁹⁰ C. R. A Morray-Jones in the article “Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition,” *JJS* 43 (1992): 1-31, discusses this claim especially in the gnostic perspective and other traditions. Refer specially to pages 12-13.

²⁹¹ Morray-Jones, “Transformational Mysticism,” 19.

²⁹² Morray-Jones, “Transformational Mysticism,” 20.

The Homilies ascribed to Macarius of Egypt indicate the author's very profound knowledge of the above-mentioned tradition about the glory of Adam and Moses. One of the most important themes in his homilies is the glory of the body, which "does not belong to the End but is foreshadowed at various moments throughout salvation history."²⁹³ The homilies argue that before the Fall, the bodies of both Adam and Eve shone with light in Paradise; that they were "covered with God's glory in place of clothing."²⁹⁴ Falling from Paradise led to the taking away of the robe of glory, and the acknowledgment of nakedness.

The first step, according to Macarius, in the restoration of this robe of glory was with Moses, as when Moses descended from Mount Sinai with a luminous face. The final restoration of our bodily glory was briefly anticipated when Moses's face shone so brightly that he had to cover it with a veil. "He went up as a mere man; he descended carrying God with him... The Word of God was his food and he had a glory shining on his countenance."²⁹⁵ Moses was not at all the end and the summit of the restoration of Adam's glory, Macarius continues: "[A]ll this, which happened to him [Moses] was a figure of something else. For the glory now shines splendidly from within the hearts of Christians."²⁹⁶ The eschatological glory, therefore, comes from Christ's transfiguration, "as the body of the Lord was glorified [at the Transfiguration] so also the bodies of the saints are glorified and shine like lightning."²⁹⁷

²⁹³ *Pseudo-Macarius: the Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, trans. George A. Maloney, S.J. (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), XIV.

²⁹⁴ Pseudo-Macarius, *Homily 12.8 (Fifty Spiritual Homilies)*, 100).

²⁹⁵ Pseudo-Macarius, *Homily 12.14 (Fifty Spiritual Homilies)*, 102).

²⁹⁶ Pseudo-Macarius, *Homily 12.14 (Fifty Spiritual Homilies)*, 102).

²⁹⁷ Pseudo-Macarius, *Homily 15. 38 (Fifty Spiritual Homilies)*, 122).

Regarding Adam's garments, Macarius seems very close to the Qumran passage mentioned above, 4Q504. Adam was fashioned in the image of God's glory. Orlov has surveyed the parallel between The Word of Luminaries in 4Q504 and Macarius's homilies regarding Adam's image. The first parallel he mentions is "linking Adam's glory with his capacity to exercise power over created order by giving names to various things."²⁹⁸ The other parallel is in that the image prescribed to Adam is described as "the full heavenly inheritance."²⁹⁹ Homily 2.12 indicates that the inheritance is linked to the fruitful vineyard, which is a service field, a ministry. Orlov made an implicit indication of the exchangeability of the vineyard and priesthood when he refers to the linkage of vineyard to 4Q171 where the inheritance of Adam is linked to the Temple. Therefore, the idea of restoring the glory lost by Adam is not functional as such, as a mere concept, but rather, the restoration is identified by the idea of ministry or priesthood in its royal aspect. The full restoration though will be with Christ taking the body of first Adam and making the Christians a holy nation and royal priesthood.

The question though, as this tradition of reading the glory of Adam continues in Macarius, is how Christians obtain this glory through Christ. The answer lies in Macarius's reading of the Baptismal praxis as an embodiment of the whole process of the recovery of Adam's glory. Baptism for Macarius is the action where the power of the Holy Spirit manifests, and the Holy Spirit "gives birth to Christians in the divinizing process that makes them truly children of God."³⁰⁰ Moreover, in Hom 47:1, Macarius mentions that Christians now receive the glory of light in their souls, as their Baptism is

²⁹⁸ Orlov, "Vested with Adam's Glory," 505.

²⁹⁹ Orlov, "Vested with Adam's Glory," 505.

³⁰⁰ Pseudo-Macarius, *Homily 30.2 (Fifty Spiritual Homilies)*, 190).

not like the Jews' as a mere sanctification of the flesh, but rather it is a "Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Fire."

Golitzin summarizes Macarius's thoughts about the recovery of Adam's glory as a process of becoming a great world sufficient to hold God:

In Christ, the glory is recovered. He sends to the faithful the "image of ineffable light," the "deiform and living image," such that the believer's soul becomes what Adam was intended to be: the "great world" sufficient to hold God himself in the form of the "image of the ineffable light of his divinity." Thus here, we find the recovery of protological glory and the fellowship with the heavenly powers as at present reality and eschatological hope.³⁰¹

Golitzin affirms that Macarius makes it clear that "the vesture of [the] light of glory" signals Christ. This vestment is given to the believer's soul by the Father, which recalls the famous Baptismal Hymn, "*As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*"

b. Ephrem the Syrian

The robe of glory is a major topic in the hymns of Ephrem the Syrian and his commentaries. His writings in this regard are in line with the biblical and Jewish literature theme of the glory of Adam in Paradise and the losing of it in the Fall. What is distinctive in Ephrem's analysis of Adam's glory is the functionality of Adam wrapped with the robe of glory on one hand, and the recovery of this glory by clothing with Christ in Baptism on the other.

In Ephrem's *Hymns of Paradise*, we read in Hymn III how Ephrem presents Paradise in parallel with the Temple or Tabernacle architecture. The Tree of Knowledge

³⁰¹ Golitzin, "Recovering," 281.

plays the same role as the curtain of the Holy of Holies, and therefore, Adam and Eve in eating from the Tree tried to enter the place which was not allowed for them to enter. The theme of the Temple is very clear:

The Tree was to him [Adam]//Like a gate;//Its fruit was the veil//Covering the hidden Tabernacle.//Adam snatched the fruit,//Casting aside the commandment//When he beheld that glory within, shining forth with its ray,//He fled outside;//He ran off and took refuge//Among the modest fig tree.³⁰²

More explicitly, Ephrem mentions the role of Adam in Paradise as a priest vested with the service robe, offering incense and keeping God's commandments. Adam's fault is in his urge to enter the Holy of Holies³⁰³ (i.e., eat from the Tree of Knowledge). Therefore, his Fall resulted in him being put outside of the Garden, stripped of his robe of glory.

Par. III:16 records the idea that the priestly service assigned to Adam was a training intended to prove his good and acceptable ministry, before God permits him to enter the Holy of Holies. This, of course, did not happen because of the Fall.

God did not permit//Adam to enter//That innermost Tabernacle;//This was withheld,//So that first he might prove pleasing//In his service of that outer Tabernacle;//Like a priest//With fragrant incense,//Adam's keeping of the commandment//Was to be his censer//Then he might enter before the Hidden One//Into that hidden Tabernacle.³⁰⁴

The other distinctive theme in Ephrem is his understanding of the recovery of Adam's glory. The restoration of Adam's glory and priestly function happened through the Incarnation of Christ, His Baptism, and the Christian Baptism. In one of Ephrem's Nativity hymns, he puts Adam's loss of glory and Christ's restoration of that glory in

³⁰² Saint Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise*, trans. Sebastian Brock, (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 95.

³⁰³ Ephraim, *Par.* IV. 2.

³⁰⁴ Ephraim, *Par.* III. 16.

juxtaposition. In this juxtaposition, Ephrem shows the manner in which Christ and His Baptism have restored the glory lost by Adam. *Nativity Hymn 23.13* reads the following:

All these changes did the Merciful One make//stripping off glory and putting on a body//for He had devised a way to reclothe Adam//in that glory which Adam had stripped off//Christ was wrapped in swaddling clothes//corresponding to Adam's leaves//Christ put on clothes, instead of Adam's skins//He was baptized for Adam's sin//His body was embalmed for Adam's death//He rose and raised up Adam in his glory//Blessed is He who descended, put Adam on and ascended.³⁰⁵

This text is rich with a profound understanding of the Baptism of Christ, the stripping off the garment of Adam as the old man, and the sharing of Christ's death and resurrection in Baptism in order to obtain the glory lost by Adam. These elements enable us to say that the restoration of Adam's garment of glory came with the Incarnation and is granted to Christians through Baptism. This reception of Baptism in Ephrem's writings is signified in his concept of the robe of glory. Sebastian Brock states that the clothing imagery in Ephrem provides "his readers with a splendidly cohesive picture of the entire range of salvation history, from Creation to the Fall, through Incarnation, to the Sacraments, or Mysteries, of Baptism and the Eucharist..."³⁰⁶

Ephrem connects the Jewish and Christian traditions regarding the perception of the garment of light or the robe of glory. This is most clear in his commentary on Genesis, where he mentions that Adam and Eve were clothed with glory, which made them unashamed of their nakedness.³⁰⁷ As mentioned above, the restoration of the robe of glory came with the Incarnation of Christ, and the "entire purpose of the Incarnation is to

³⁰⁵ As quoted in Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: the Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian*, (Michigan: Cistercian Publication, 1985), 85.

³⁰⁶ Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 86.

³⁰⁷ Saint Ephrem, *Hymns*, Gen 2:14, 206.

re clothe Adam, that is humanity, in this lost ‘robe of glory.’”³⁰⁸ This is explicit in Virginité Hymns 16.9: “Christ came to find Adam who had gone astray, He came to return him to Eden in the garment of light.”³⁰⁹

Ephrem answers the question of how Christians can restore the glory of Adam, affirming that the restoration of the glory for Christians comes through Baptism. Brock explains the methodology that Ephrem used in presenting this theme by linking “Christ’s Baptism in the womb of the Jordan” to “His conception in Mary’s womb.” Both the Jordan and Mary were clothed with light because of Christ’s presence in them: “[T]he brightness which Moses put on//was wrapped on him from without//whereas the river in which Christ was baptized//was clothed in light from within//so too did Mary’s body, in which He resided, gleam from within.”³¹⁰

Therefore, Ephrem is a faithful heir of the tradition of the lost glory of Adam, the mediating restoration by Moses, and the fulfillment of the recovery of the robe of glory by Christ. Ephrem had, in addition to his Jewish-Christian inheritance, a theological reading of the Christian Baptismal praxis that shows the rite to be a performative reading of the theophanic visions in the Scriptures and intertestamental texts. Christians are to be baptized in water that has the blessing of Jordan: “*That there may be sent down in it [the Baptismal water] the grace of redemption, the blessing of Jordan...*”³¹¹ The blessing of Jordan, according to Ephrem though, is understood as the light that the Jordan was clothed with through Christ’s Baptism in it.

³⁰⁸ Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 87.

³⁰⁹ Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 87.

³¹⁰ Church 36:3-6 as quoted in Brock, *Luminous*, 92.

³¹¹ From the service of Baptism.

It seems that the process of re-obtaining the robe of glory for Christians is rooted in Baptism, where Christians receive the lost robe of Adam. This robe, for Ephrem, is the “robe of the Spirit.” Brock mentions a text from Ephraim’s *Discourse on Our Lord* (55) where this idea is spoken explicitly:

John whitened the stains of sins with ordinary water, so that bodies might be rendered suitable for the robe of the Spirit that is given through our Lord. Because the Spirit was with the Son, the Son came to John in order to receive Baptism from him, so that he might mix with the visible water the spirit who cannot be seen, so that those whose bodies perceive the wetness of the water might perceive in their minds the gift of the Spirit.³¹²

Therefore, through immersion in the water of Baptism, the believer becomes ready to receive the garment of the Spirit. Or, in other words, the believer receives his garment from the water of Baptism where Christ placed the robe of glory, ready for the believer to wear. Brock also brings up an example from a writer of a period after Ephrem, specifically Jacob of Serugh, who expresses the idea of the robe of glory placed in the water of Baptism when he said: “Christ came to Baptism, He went down and placed in the Baptismal water the robe of glory, to be there for Adam, who had lost it.”³¹³ The Epiphany Hymns ascribed to Ephrem (but which are probably of a later period, according to Brock) read: “In the Baptism did Adam find//that glory which had been his among the trees of paradise//he went down and took it from the water//put it on, went up and was held in honour in it.”³¹⁴

This idea of putting on the robe is developed even long before this period. With St. Paul for example, the clothing imagery resembles putting on Christ in Baptism, the

³¹² *Discourse of the Lord* 55, as quoted in Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 92-93.

³¹³ Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 93.

³¹⁴ As quoted in Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 94.

theme that Ephrem reflects in the Nativity Hymns 22:39 saying: “Our body was Your clothing [which is the Incarnation], Your Spirit was our robe [in Baptism].”³¹⁵

4. Baptism as a Rite of Multi-Layered Tradition

a. Baptism and the Traditions

After surveying the reception history of the garment of glory through biblical Judaism, intertestamental literature, and the Christian era, it seems suitable to argue that the Baptismal rite enriches the Christian reception of the lost garment of glory and its restoration. Below, an example will be provided of how the Baptismal rite helped in writing and developing the theology of the Book of Revelation. The Baptismal praxis focuses heavily on the clothing, baptizing, and anointing in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (the Trinitarian God). Three events occur in the Baptismal rite that particularly mention performing an action in the Name of the Lord:

1. During the threefold immersion in the Baptismal water, the priest says,
“The servant of God, is baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
2. The above will be followed immediately with the clothing of the garment of righteousness: *“The servant of God is clothed with the garment of righteousness, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*

³¹⁵ Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 94.

3. Immediately after the Chrismation, the priest says: “*Thou art justified, thou art illumined, thou art sanctified, thou art washed in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*”

It seems tempting to relate the above to the idea of putting on the “Name,” and the idea that Christianity developed the rite of Baptism as “clothing” with the Name, despite the fact that to baptize in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is a direct commandment of Christ to His disciples in Mat 28:19. Relatedly, it seems that the first clothing in the Baptismal rite is in the immersion in the water, where the water has received the Name of the Lord. This idea is supported biblically in Ps 29:3 (“The voice of the Lord is upon the waters”), and from the service of the sanctification of the water right before the Baptism. In the former, the priest calls for God to be present in the water by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The water in this prayer is called the “garment of incorruption,” as we read: “*Master of all, show this water to be the water of redemption, the water of sanctification, the purification of flesh and spirit, the losing of bonds...the gift of adoption to sonship, the garment of incorruption.*” Therefore, the Name is transmitted from the water to the baptized, giving him/her the robe of glory. This idea can be found in Pauline texts, from its Jewish roots of Adam’s glory.³¹⁶ 2 Cor 3:18 reads: “And we all, beholding with unveiled faces the Glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another.” According to Morray-Jones, Paul does not mention “clothing with the Name,” but his understanding of Baptism “seems to be rooted in the same tradition of transformational mysticism: ‘you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in

³¹⁶ Morray-Jones, “Transformational Mysticism,” 1-31.

knowledge after the image of Creator' (Col 3:9)."³¹⁷ Therefore, the Baptismal rite seems to be a womb in which the biblical, intertestamental, and mystical traditions were fertilized with the ascetic and spiritual experience of the body of the Church through the Patristic era, such as those of the Ps-Macarian homilies, Ephrem of Nisibis, and many more.

The garment that the baptized person wears is the garment that Christ Himself gives in His own Baptism: the garment of light is the garment that God wrapped Himself with, as mentioned above. To expand on this point further, one can say that this garment of light is the sign that Baptism is the new creation of Christians. The prayer that says: "*Vouchsafe unto me a robe of light, O thou Who clothest Thyself with light as with a garment,*" alludes to Psalm 104, the "psalm of creation." Morray-Jones in his seminal article "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition" surveys the rabbinic tradition along with the *Hekhalot* writings in view of showing how the latter represent the development of the former in concept and theology. One of the themes related to this survey was the "Glory of God," which according to Morray was represented in different ways and always in relation to "Power," "Name," and "Word."³¹⁸ One of his sources is the Midrashim reading of Genesis, where he quotes the following: "R. Simeon b. R. Jehotzadek questioned R. Samuel bar Nachman: 'Since I have heard that you are a master of Aggadah—whence was the light created?' R. Samuel said: 'The Holy One, Blessed is He, wrapped Himself in it as in a garment [var.: wrapped Himself

³¹⁷ Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism," 28.

³¹⁸ Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism," 5.

in a white garment] and the splendor of His Glory shone forth from one end of the world to the other.’ He said this in whisper.”³¹⁹

Although this rabbinic lore comes from around the fifth century, the linkage with the Baptismal prayer of garment just mentioned above gives the sense that the Byzantine baptismal theology could be one of the effective elements of such tradition, within the process of the rabbis encountering Christianity. The same idea of “God wrapping Himself with light while He was creating the world” is used also in the Baptismal rite. The effectiveness of the Baptismal rite was not limited to the development of the transformation and mystical tradition, but also the theology of Baptism helped in producing and authoring some biblical texts, such as the Book of Revelation.

b. Baptismal Rite as a Source of Re-Writing the Bible

The Baptismal praxis also serves as a rich biblical and extra-biblical source in rewriting the Bible. I will limit myself to the idea of the garment in the Baptismal praxis as used in weaving the plot of the Book of Revelation. Charles A. Gieschen posits how Revelation testifies to early Baptismal praxis through two major themes: the Divine Name and the imagery of white garments. In his article,³²⁰ he differentiates between the use of white garments (ἱμάτια) and white robes (στολαί). The former in Revelation is “worn by the followers of the Lamb on earth,” while the latter is “worn by the saints in heaven.”³²¹ In harmony with the context of Revelation, the robes seem to be

³¹⁹ Morray-Jones, “Transformational Mysticism,” 6.

³²⁰ Charles A. Gieschen, and Mystical Experience in the Book of Revelation,” in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. April D. DeConick (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 341-354. Check and see is Paradise Now has been referred to in an earlier footnoted. If so, here you only need *Paradise Now* and page number.

³²¹ Gieschen, “Baptismal Praxis,” 349.

eschatological vestments of the *Parousia* to come, since the elders in Revelation 4 wear white “garments.” As mentioned above, the Baptismal praxis has a priestly nature, through the anointing with oil and the parallel triad of nakedness, washing, and vesting, which are shared between the priestly ordination in Exodus and the Baptismal praxis. “[B]aptism in Revelation, therefore, can be understood as the salvific event that purifies sinners to be ‘a kingdom and priests to our God, who shall reign on the earth.’ (Rev 5:10).”³²² The priestly vocation of the baptized, according to Revelation, appears in the participation in the heavenly liturgy, which enables him/her to go into “the chaotic world to be a faithful and uncompromising witness like Jesus...”³²³ (Rev 1:5; 3:14; 17:6). This in a way proves how the author of Revelation has read the Baptismal praxis as a rewritten bible in order to use it in writing a text which will later itself become biblical. This authenticity to the liturgical praxis as practiced by the Christian communities has played an essential role in canonizing some of the biblical texts, in reference to the degree of loyalty that the text shows to the interpretive/re-interpretive tradition.

In this analysis of the biblical and interpretative traditions of the garment of glory and their intrinsic linkage to the Orthodox Baptismal rite, the need to re-read these traditions focusing on their hymnological reception is essential in presenting a re-interpretation and performative exegesis of the sacred texts through the liturgical rites. The liturgical praxis, Baptism included, should be seen as a hermeneutical layer in the exegetical tradition, and in reading the biblical text within the practiced community. Because of its authenticity and originality in reflecting the community’s reading of the

³²² Gieschen, “Baptismal Praxis,” 351.

³²³ Gieschen, “Baptismal Praxis,” 353

sacred text, the liturgical praxis could be an essential part of the modern theories of exegesis and interpretation of the biblical text.

The Baptismal rite is a hymnological expression of exegetical methodology prompted by biblical, intertestamental, and apocalyptic reception of the history of salvation. This expression provides the hermeneutical efforts with a liturgical interpretative key, which opens a new horizon in focusing on the efficacy of the biblical texts and the related traditions.

Tracing the phenomena like the garment of glory, the glory of Adam, etc., provides a great deal of authentic help in digging into the theology of the biblical texts, their efficacy, and their receptions. On the other hand, it preserves the divinely inspired element in both the text and the interpretation. In the words of Bucur, “fundamental to the ‘Rewritten Bible’ is the claim of being divinely inspired, the result of ‘charismatic exegesis’, defined as ‘essentially, a hermeneutical ideology that provides divine legitimation for a particular understanding of a sacred text.’”³²⁴ Therefore, the consideration of the roots and the formula of the liturgical praxis, of Baptism for example, seems to be a distinctive and intrinsic part of the hermeneutical and exegetical texts. The main reason is still, on the one hand, the richness of these rites by what is integrated in them from interpretive traditions, and on the other hand, the experience of the community that has read the biblical texts, lived in a specific religious context, and made the interpretation of what it received from the divine text and life.

³²⁴ Bucur, “Exegesis and Intertextuality in Anastasius the Sinaite’s Homily *On the Transfiguration*,” in *StP* 68 (2013): 249-260, at 260.

4. The Vesting of the Clergy

1. Vesting of Garments

In the Orthodox Church, there is technically no rite of ordination for merely a “priest” (i.e., presbyter). In Orthodox ecclesiology, there is only one rank of the priesthood in its fullness, which is the episcopacy. The presbyters and deacons technically share in some aspects of the priesthood, but not in its fullness, which is only held by bishops. The ordination of these orders is called “laying on of the hands” (χειροθεσία) following the scriptural tradition of ordination such as Moses ordaining Joshua (Num 27:15–23) and the Apostles laying their hands on the chosen deacons (Acts 6:6). It is evident from the prayers of ordination of the three ranks that the Holy Spirit is the one Who ordains, not the bishop. The prayer of ordination reads: “*The Grace Divine, which always healeth that which is infirm and completeth that which is wanting, elevateth, through the laying-on of hands, (NAME), the most devout Deacon (NAME) to be a Priest [or subdeacon to be a deacon, or priest to be a bishop]. Wherefore, let us pray for him, that the Grace of the All-Holy Spirit may come upon him.*”³²⁵

During the ordination, after the laying of hands prayers are completed, the ordained will be given set of vestments to wear, and with each piece of garment there is a prayer composed of scriptural verses. While each rank’s set of vestments differs from the other, the three ranks of deacon, priest, and bishop have some vestment pieces in common. A brief introduction to the pieces of the vestments used in the three ranks will

³²⁵ The Text as used in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. <http://ww1.antiochian.org/1102195104>. *Italics* have been added to emphasize the point discussed above.

be helpful before examining the use of the clothing metaphor and its performative role in the vesting prayers of Orthodox clergy.

The first piece of vestment is called the *sticharion* (or alb), which is an inner garment, usually a white simple robe with a cross embroidered on the center of the back between the shoulder blades. It is worn as the undermost garment by bishops and priests and as an outer garment by deacons. When it is being put on by the clergyman, it is accompanied with a vesting prayer which recites Isa 61:10: “My soul rejoices in the Lord, for He hath clothed me with the garment of salvation, and with the robe of gladness hath He encompassed me. As a bridegroom He hath set a crown upon me, and as a bride hath He adorned me with ornament, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.”³²⁶

The second piece of vestment is of pair of cuffs, called *epimanikia* (singular, *epimanikion*), for the right hand and the left hand. The vesting prayer for the right-hand cuff recites Exod 15:6 (“The right hand of the Lord...”), and the prayer with the left-hand cuff the prayer recites Ps 118:73 (“Thy hands have made me and fashioned me...”). The cuffs are worn by the three ranks of deacon, priest, and bishop.

The third piece is called the *epitrachelion* (or stole). Of the three ranks of the priesthood, only priests and bishops wear it. The vesting prayer accompanying this piece uses a combination of verses from Ps 132:9 and Ps 17:32: “Blessed is God, Who poureth out His grace upon His priests, as oil of myrrh upon the head, which runneth down upon the beard, upon the beard of Aaron, which runneth down to the fringe of his raiment, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.”

³²⁶ Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, *The Antiochian Liturgikon: The Book of Divine Services for the Priest and Deacon*, 3rd ed.

The fourth piece, also worn only by priests and bishops, is called the epigonation, which is a diamond-shaped piece of stiffened cloth hung by a cord from the shoulder on the right side. Its vesting prayer with uses Ps 44:3-5: “Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Mighty One, in Thy Comeliness and Thy beauty, and proceed prosperously, and be king because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall guide Thee wondrously, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.” This piece of garment has a royal element that is linked to the sharp two-edged sword of the Son of Man in Rev 11:12.

The fifth piece of vestment, again worn only by priests and bishops, is the *zone* (pronounced “zoh-nee” See the problem? If you give all these names for vestments in Greek, you don’t need “zoo-nee”) or belt. This piece girds the priest and bishop in order to show their readiness for the Divine Service, and it is accompanied with a prayer from Ps 133:2: “Blessed is God, Who girdeth me with power and hath made my path blameless, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.”

The priest, in addition to the vestment pieces mentioned above, has a sixth piece of garment called the *phelonion* (or chasuble). The phelonion often signifies the crimson robe with which the soldiers clothed the Lord Jesus Christ to mock Him while He was in the Praetorium. The vesting prayer of this piece comes from Ps 132:9: “Thy priests, O Lord, shall be clothed with righteousness, and Thy holy ones shall rejoice with joy, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.” With the *phelonion*, the priest’s vestment set is completed.

The bishop, instead of the phelonion, has a kaftan-like garment called the *sakkos*, which uses the same vesting prayer as the phelonion, except with the substitution of

“high priest” for “priest.” The bishop wears another piece of vestment called the *omophorion* (equivalent to the *pallium* in the West). This piece signifies that the bishop is like Christ, Who puts on human nature and carries it with him to His Throne in heaven. After the omophorion, the bishop puts two necklaces around his neck: a Cross and the engolpion, which is an icon of the Mother of God or a saint or a feast in ornamented frame. After the Cross and the engolpion, the bishop puts the *mitre* (or crown) on his head while praying from Ps 20:3: “He has set upon thine head a crown of precious stones; thou didst ask life of Him, and He gave thee length of days.” On the front of the mitre is an icon of Christ with the Greek letter ‘O, Ω, and N, to read “He Who Is,” the term that the Septuagint Name of the Lord revealed to Moses at Exod 3:14. The High Priest of Israel also wore the “Name” on his forehead, engraved on gold seal (Exod 28:36).

2. *The Garment of Salvation*

The *Sticharion*, or the inner simple white garment contains interesting elements that relate major line of this present research. This garment is white, and it covers the whole body from the shoulders down to the toes and wearing it is accompanied with very interesting verse from Isaiah 61 that connotes rejoicing in the Lord, the garment of salvation, robe of gladness, the priest has become as bridegroom with a crown given by the Lord, and simultaneously, he has also become as a bride adorned with ornaments.

a. *The Color White*

In Second Temple Judaism, “the white or light garments connoted joy, purity, and social dignity.”³²⁷ The color white in the Book of Revelation reflects these aspects and

³²⁷ Aune, *Revelation*, 1-5, 293.

expands on the use of the white garment to include connotations of functionality and the liturgical role of the character described. The color white occurs 9 times³²⁸ in Revelation in relation to the clothing terms garment, robe, and linen. In Rev 4:4, while describing the heavenly Throne room, John describes the role of the 24 elders around the Throne using the image of their white garments “Round the Throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clad in *white* garments, with golden crowns upon their heads.” In the rest of Revelation chapter 4 along with Revelation chapter 5 the elders appear to function as priests offering praise, kneeling, and removing their crowns in a worshipping movement to God and the Slaughtered Lamb. In Rev 7:9, 14 the white robe is the sign of those who followed the Lamb and “come out of the great tribulation.” The robes are white in Rev 7:14 because the faithful “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” according to one of the 24 elders around the Throne.

The intrinsic importance of Rev 7:14 in relation to the clothing imagery calls for expanding research on the link between the vesting of the clergy and the white garments and robes in Revelation 7. Rev 7 depicts the action after the opening of the Sixth Seal and immediately before the opening of the Seventh Seal. However, before opening the Seventh Seal, two visions interrupt the revelation of present calamities and future judgement in an interlude that raises the hope of the readers of the book. Rev 7:9-17 is an anticipation of what “awaits the people who are faithful to God on the other side of the great tribulation.”³²⁹ The throne vision, which is quite frequent in Jewish apocalyptic

³²⁸ Aune, *Revelation, 1-5*, 293.

³²⁹ Peter S. Williamson, *Revelation*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), 137.

literature³³⁰, includes the eschatological heavenly worship of God, along with the eschatological promise to the righteous and the eschatological condemnation of the wicked. According to David Aune, what Revelation 7 presents is a “type scene” which is “a brief recurring narrative episode (primarily limited to apocalyptic contexts) that is constituted by a restricted constellation of motifs.”³³¹

The scene in Rev 7:9-17 depicts a reality similar to that referred to in Letter to the Hebrews 12:22-24:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, *the heavenly Jerusalem*, and to innumerable angels in *festal gathering*, and to *the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven*, and to a judge Who is God of all, and to the spirits *of just men made perfect*, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and *to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel*. (RSV)

This Pauline text has several indications of liturgical settings that are found in Revelation 7. The concentric arrangement of the Hebrews text with Mount Zion, with the heavenly Jerusalem as the center, is used in the Book of Revelation Throne room and its liturgical narrative. The festal gathering of the angels that the righteous are joining is a liturgical gathering, since the angels around the Throne in the apocalyptic vision are serving the Throne of God. The exhortation of this Hebrews text is liturgical, as Hebrews 12 ends with, “Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus *let us offer to God acceptable worship*, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb 12:28-29). The sign of the sprinkled blood in this text is also another motif in common with Rev 7:9-17. One other point worth noting is the “just men made perfect” motif, which can be linked to the prayer of ordaining a priest, bishop, or

³³⁰ 1 En 14:8-25; 4 Ezra 2, *Exagoge* 68-82.

³³¹ David Aune, *Revelation* 6-16, 436.

deacon, when the candidate kneels down by the holy altar: “*The Grace Divine*, which always healeth, that which is infirm, and completeth that *which is wanting*.” This “type scene” that is mentioned in Hebrews and also Revelation 7 has a liturgical function through the allusion to Mount Zion, a worship place. It also alludes to the process of belonging to the Kingdom of God and the heavenly Jerusalem through the blood of the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord. In some ways, it also alludes to a relocation.

Another “type scene” that Aune mentions in his commentary, which in turn relates to Rev 7:9-17, is from the Fourth Book of Ezra (4 Ezra 2:42-45):

I, Ezra, saw on Mount Zion a great Multitude, which I could not number, and they all were praising the Lord with songs. In their midst was a young man of great stature, taller than any of the others, and on the head of each of them he placed a crown, but he was more exalted than they. And I was held spellbound. Then I asked an angel, “Who are these, my Lord?” He answered and said to me, “These are they who have put off mortal clothing and have put on the immortal, and they have confessed the Name of God; now they are being crowned and receive palms.

This text has the same structure of Rev 7:4-17, which is also framed inside a liturgical function that uses a clothing metaphor to represent place of worship, subject of worship, and worshiper. The text of 4 Ezra assigns a great value to the clothing of those who serve the place of worship when it says that the great multitude “put off mortal clothing and have put on the immortal.”

This “type scene” is performed liturgically in the Byzantine rite of vesting clergy.

The main motifs in these scenes include:

1. Place of worship (Mount Zion, heavenly Jerusalem).
2. Innumerable angelic hosts in a festal and/or liturgical gathering.
3. The firstborn, young man of great stature, Jesus Christ.

4. Multitude of liturgically functional figures clothed in white robes, immortal clothing.

These motifs are performed liturgically in the rite of vesting, and they are intrinsic in understanding the function of the priesthood as celebrant of earthly liturgy that is the replica of the heavenly liturgy around the Throne of God (the “change in the place”) and joining the innumerable angelic hosts in giving praise to God. One of the clear examples that reflects this understanding of the vesting, relocating, and joining the angels comes for the hymnology of the Church. Specifically, we read in the Vespers of the Feast Day of the Prophet Zachariah the father of John the Baptist this hymn that relates priesthood to vesting on one hand, and vesting to joining angelic hosts on the other:

Clothed in the *divine robe and the priestly chrism*, thou didst serve God, *like an Angel*, O blessed one; and thou clearly didst receive signs and revelations from the Holy Spirit, while mediating as *a priest between Creator and creature worthily*. O lauded Zachariah, as we keep thine all-holy feast today, we both bless thee and glorify Christ the Savior in songs of praise.³³²

Veritably *clothed with the vestments of the priesthood* under the Law, thou didst *serve after the order of Aaron; and as thou stoodest in the Temple, thou didst manifestly behold an angel’s form*, O all-blessed one. Wherefore, as we all celebrate Thy translation as is due, we acclaim thee with songs, O Zachariah, who in deep old age broughtest forth the glorious John. Intercede for us with the merciful God, that we may be saved.³³³

b. The White Robes and the Blood of the Lamb

³³² From Vespers service of the feast of Prophet Zachariah, the text was quoted from the Antiochian Christian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America. Italicized portions of the text emphasize the clues that support the relationship between priestly vesting and joining the choir of angels. Retrieved from: <https://antiochianprodsa.blob.core.windows.net/servicetexts/Sep%2004%202021%20Bilingual%20VESP.pdf>

³³³ The Doxasticon of the Vespers service of Prophet Zachariah, as cited above.

Rev 7:14c reads: “They washed their robes and made them white by the blood of the Lamb.” The symbol of the blood occurs nineteen times throughout the Book of Revelation in different contexts that make this symbol very dynamic. K. C. Hanson refers to the blood in the Book of Revelation as “a dynamic symbol of life and death drawing the reader’s attention to issues of purity and pollution, deliverance and judgment, sacred and profane.”³³⁴

Purity, blood, and clothing are interrelated in the context of the Book of Revelation. In Rev 1:13-15 the description of the “One Like the Son of Man” mentions the long robe, golden belt, and hair as white as wool and snow. In Revelation 3:4, the people of Sardis had not defiled their clothing and “walk in white.” This verse has a cultural and prophetic background in showing “robes made white” by the blood of the Lamb. According to Hanson, this imagery of whitening the cloth in the blood, is employed “to describe both the elect and Christ.”³³⁵ The bride of Christ in Rev 19:8 is described as “clothed with fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” The New Jerusalem, furthermore, will include only those who have washed their robes (Rev 22:14). The ideology that the Book of Revelation is stating is that instead of the animal sacrificial blood, the Lamb’s blood accomplishes the redemption for all “and creates a new community in which all members are symbolically ‘priests.’”³³⁶ Upon this ideology, Hanson draws the conclusion that

The image of the “blood of the Lamb” also reverses the categorization of blood on garments as seen in Lev 6:27 [Whatever touches its flesh shall become holy; and when any of its blood is spattered on a garment, you shall wash the bespattered part in a holy place]. Instead of polluting, the

³³⁴ K. C. Hanson, “Blood and Purity in Leviticus and Revelation,” *Listening* 28 (1993): 215-30, at 215.

³³⁵ Hanson, “Blood and Purity,” 224.

³³⁶ Hanson, “Blood and Purity,” 226.

Lamb's blood becomes a metaphor of purification when the saints and "the Word of God" wash their robes in it...Rather than the used detergent that may splash the priest's vestments, in Revelation's description washing one's garments in blood becomes a symbol either of purification and belonging (7:14) or empowerment (19:13; see also 12:11).

This statement supports the performativity of vesting in a white Sticharion regardless of the color of the other pieces of the vestment. As soon as the clergyman dons the first piece, which is the white robe, he relocates himself to the Kingdom of God, and he now belongs to the Throne Room liturgy wearing his purity represented by his white Baptismal robe. It is well-known in the Byzantine rite and the Orthodox Church that the priest cannot approach the altar for the Eucharist without preparations that includes prayers, fasting, and abstaining from what can defile his purity either in word, deed, or thought. Furthermore, this white robe empowers the priest to take on the great task of joining the replica of the throne room and standing in front of the holy altar to lead the community in the climactic movement of thankfulness in the Divine Liturgy.

3. His Bride Has Prepared Herself

One last topic to discuss is the prayer that accompanies the wearing of the Sticharion. The prayer is constructed from Isa 61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." While the prayer follows the order of Isa 61:10, it has some modifications to serve the performativity of the prayer. Its reordering may also be to allude to another resource in constructing this prayer. The prayer while donning the Sticharion reads: "My soul rejoices in the Lord, for

He hath clothed me with the garment of salvation, and with the robe of gladness hath He encompassed me. As a bridegroom He hath set a crown upon me, and as a bride hath He adorned me with ornament.”

First, the prayer reads “my soul” without the “I” and “my whole being” found in Isaiah. Second, the prayer reads “the robe of gladness,” while Isaiah reads “the robe of righteousness.” Third, in the prayer all the acts referring to the bridegroom and the bride are acts given by God, while in Isaiah, the imagery of the bride and the bridegroom describe the outcome of God granting the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness. The imagery of the bridegroom and the bride cannot but lead us to the Book of Revelation, especially 19:7, 21:2, 21:18-21.

Jan Fekkes argues the interrelationship of the above three passages of Revelation which make up the bride construct in Revelation, and their dependence on Old Testament nuptial imagery, in particular Isa 61:10.³³⁷ While the order that the Sticharion vesting prayer presents is rooted in Isaiah, nonetheless, one can argue that it relates more to Rev 19:7-9 and the imagery of the bride/New Jerusalem, in order to serve the meaning of the vestment the priest is wearing, and to clarify its functionality in the context of the priesthood. Studying the interrelationship between Revelation 19:7-9 and Isaiah 61:10 constitutes a first step that will help clarify the liturgical performativity of the prayer while wearing the Sticharion. Rev 19:7-9 reads:

Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.” (RSV)

³³⁷ Jan Fekkes III, “His Bride Has Prepared Herself”: Revelation 19-21 and Isaian Nuptial Imagery,” *JBL*, 109 (1990): 269-287.

The eschatological marriage of the Lamb (Christ) to His bride (the people of God) is the motif of this call to rejoice. The people of God, i.e., the bride, made themselves ready. This bride was divinely granted a wedding garment, which parallels Isaiah 61:10 where the Lord has clothed the bride with the garments of salvation and robe of righteousness. This image of the bride is developed in Rev 21:2, 21:9-21, where the bride will be the New Jerusalem.

Fekkes notably claimed that Rev 19:7a, has its source in Isaiah 61:10a, which “offers a similar structure, diction and theme.”³³⁸ This introductory expression from Isaiah is followed by the praise, which includes the imagery of marriage and the clothing allegory. This also can be seen in Rev 21:2: “as a bride adorned for her husband.” This image of marriage in Revelation is a positive image that juxtaposes the imagery of the destruction of the fallen Babylon. According to Fekkes, “Only Isaiah employs marriage imagery in a consistently positive manner of the future relationship between Yahweh and His faithful; remnant symbolized by the personified Zion-Jerusalem.”³³⁹

Rev 19:8 (“To her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure, for the linen is the righteous deeds of the saints”) is conceptually similar to Isa 61:10, since both of the texts refer to the clothing of salvation and emphasize that the garment is a gift from God and not a reward. Moreover, both texts represent the clothing as symbol of spiritual quality: the robe in Rev 19:8 is righteous deeds and in Isaiah 61 it

³³⁸ Fekkes, “His Bride,” 271

³³⁹ Fekkes, “Bride”, 272. Although the identity of the speaker in Isaiah 61:10 is not apparent, that it is Zion-Jerusalem can easily be inferred from the surrounding context. The targum makes this clear by adding “Jerusalem has said” as an introductory to 61:10. R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66* (NCB, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 245.

is righteousness. Fekkes refers to the Hebrew word of righteousness צדקה in Isaiah, and the Greek word δικαίωμα for righteous deeds in Revelation, and states that the difference “involves only a small change of form since the Hebrew word צדקה in the plural means “righteous acts.”³⁴⁰ Therefore, if Isa 61:10 is the source of the Rev 19:8 clothing metaphor and interpretation, it would suggest that Rev 19:8 is part of the original development. The image of the wedding of the bride and the bridegroom finds its completion in Revelation 21, where the “bride is adorned for her husband,” and where the bride will be the New Jerusalem. In the chapters after Isaiah 61, we read about the Lord marrying His people and reestablishing Jerusalem (Isa 62:5). Therefore, Revelation 21 announces the fulfillment of these prophecies.

The Sticharion vesting prayer can be read and understood within the completion of the Isaiah prophecy read in Revelation 19-21. While the act of wearing this vestment can allude to the clergyman’s relocation into the Throne room and the Kingdom of God, as discussed above, the prayer accompanying this vesting alludes to an additional meaning. The clergyman himself becomes the bride of the Lamb, taking up his Baptismal witness and being adorned with his virtues, and crowned with the grace of God which in the first place ordained him to the priesthood. Furthermore, with this prayer and the act of wearing the Sticharion the priest becomes the New Jerusalem, the abode of God, the Holy City. The performativity of the prayer and the act of wearing the Sticharion uses the passive voice (“being adorned” and “being clothed”) to make the priest understand that he is not the bride and the New Jerusalem by the virtue of his power but by the grace of God.

³⁴⁰ Fekkes, “Bride,” 273

4. Vesting as Kenosis

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ as conceived as a kenosis of God, Who was “clothed in the body,” is fundamental theological concept, especially in the writings of the Syriac Fathers.³⁴¹ Jesus, being clothed in the body, assumes the same nature as human beings. It is in this way that He could redeem human race. Hannah Hunt Leeds in her article “‘Clothed in the Body’: the Garment of Flesh and the Garment of Glory in Syrian Religious Anthropology,”³⁴² present the notion of human kenosis as it is circulated in Syrian asceticism:

This kenotic encounter is, of course, not confined to the Syrian tradition; though it is a Syrian ascetical emphasis which insists on a complimentary human kenosis of self: the opening passages of the Book of Steps, for example, urge the penitent to ‘self-empty’ the heart. This cleansing must be followed by an ‘emptying’ of a more physical nature, in relinquishing possessions and worldly inheritance. John of Apamea insists spiritual progress requires human kenosis, which leads to purity and eventually luminosity.³⁴³

This understanding of human kenosis is implicitly implemented in the rite of vesting, making the vesting of a clergyman a movement of “kenosis”: the clergyman puts off his mortal clothing, earthly cares, and his own will, and puts on the white robe, the immortal clothing, and relocates his place to be in the heavenly Jerusalem, which in turn represent

³⁴¹ Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (London: Publisher, 2006), 69 and 311, where he cites a phrase from the Didascalia as “[betraying] how the phrase [clothed in the body] is virtually technical, equivalent to ‘the doctrine of the Incarnation.’” 2? Brock, *The Bride of Light, Hymns on Mary from the Syrian Churches* (Kerala, Publisher, 1994), 4. See note to v. 15 of An Epiphany Hymn on the Church as the Bride of Christ in Sebastian P. Brock, ‘An Epiphany Hymn of the Church as the Bride of Christ’, *The Harp* 2 (1989), 131-40, 135, where he makes the same point that ‘the earliest Syriac rendering of ‘He was incarnate’ in the Creed was ‘He clothed himself in the body.’ See also note 49 in Sebastian P. Brock, *Saint Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise* (New York, 1990), 66.

³⁴² Hannah Hunt, “‘Clothed in the Body’: The Garment of Flesh and the Garment of Glory in Syrian Religious Anthropology,” *StP* V54 (2012): 167-176.

³⁴³ Hunt, “Clothed in the Body,” 168.

the Baptismal white robe, the garment of light which will enable Adam to return to Eden.³⁴⁴

5. Summary and Findings

Despite the fact that Psalm 44 has received ample patristic interpretation due to the kingship theme and the presenting of the queen, the Byzantine hymnology and liturgical performances offer another level of exegesis to this Psalm through performing it in liturgical practices and hymnography. This was evident in our study of the Proskomide rite, especially in extracting the piece of bread associated with the Theotokos, the Mother of God. The patristic reception of theme of the queen on Psalm 44 is mostly allegorical. Christ, in these interpretations, was presented as the king, while the queen was referred to as the Church. Origen took this a little further in stating that the queen is the human soul. After Origen, the majority of interpretations preferred to link the queen to the Church as the people of God, while her garment was allegorically perceived as the Christian virtues that a person should acquire.

The Byzantine hymnography and rites took the interpretation of theme of the queen and her clothing a step further by presenting the Theotokos as the queen. Paul Ladouceur's study on Ps 44:10 provided a solid proof on how iconography and hymnography offered a new level of exegesis on this verse and theme. Another historical and biblical approach to the theme of the queen was presented through the study of Stephen De Young. De Young argues that the veneration of the Theotokos as experienced within the Church has existed from the beginnings of faith, being grounded firmly in the

³⁴⁴ 'Blessed are you... who came to find Adam when he was lost, and in the garment of light to return him to Eden', *Hymn of Virginity 16 (8)*, Hymns (1989), 331.

Scriptures and in the religion of the Second Temple period and its anticipation regarding the mother of the Messiah. Both arguments aided the study by manifesting the early Christological reception of the theme of the queen and her garment in Psalm 44. Taking into consideration the three approaches presented, besides showing the link between the Book of Revelation and the “gold raiment richly embroidered,” I linked the gold in the vestment of the queen in Psalm 44 to the Theotokos in the worship setting. Adding to this the image of the New Jerusalem in Revelation and its reception in Orthodox worship, I showed that the eschatological vision of the Theotokos which the Church, through worship, celebrates and manifests in recognition of the place of the Theotokos in the Kingdom of God, is ultimately presented and performed in the Proskomide rite.

The second part of this chapter offered analysis of the biblical interpretive traditions of the garment of glory and its relation to the Byzantine Baptismal rite. Special focus was given to the hymnology and performance and how they represent multiple layers of tradition and a method of reception of biblical, extra-biblical, and apocalyptic texts. The liturgical praxis in Baptism should be seen as a hermeneutical layer in the exegetical tradition, and as a reading the biblical text within the practiced community. Because of its authenticity and originality in reflecting the community’s reading of the sacred text, the liturgical praxis could be an essential part of the modern theories of exegesis and interpretation of the biblical text.

Tracing the phenomena like the garment of glory, the glory of Adam, etc., provides a great deal of authentic help in digging into the theology of the biblical texts, their efficacy, and their receptions. On the other hand, it preserves the divinely inspired element in both the text and the interpretation. Therefore, the consideration of the roots

and the formula of the liturgical praxis of Baptism seems to be a distinctive and intrinsic part of the hermeneutical and exegetical texts. The main reason is still, on the one hand, the richness of these rites by what is integrated in them from interpretive traditions, and on the other hand, the experience of the community that has read the biblical texts, lived in a specific religious context, and made the interpretation of what it received from the divine text and life.

The third section of the chapter provided a presentation of the clergy vestments in the Orthodox tradition with expanded study on the inner garment, the Sticharion and its prayer from Isa 61:10. Expanding on Chapter 3's focus on the clothing imagery in Revelation, the white robe was traced to its roots in Revelation 7. The "type scene" approach that is mentioned in Aune's interpretation of Revelation 7 was expanded to present Revelation 7 in relation to the Epistle to Hebrew 12:22-24, and 4 Ezra 2:42-45. The vesting prayer which we examined presents the main motifs of the type-scene, such as the place of worship, the angelic hosts and the liturgical gathering, and the immortal clothing. These motifs are performed liturgically in the rite of vesting, and they are intrinsic to understanding the function of the priesthood as celebrant of the earthly liturgy that is the replica of the heavenly liturgy around the Throne of God (the "change in the place") and joining the innumerable angelic hosts in giving praise to God. The vesting of clergy is not only symbolic; it is also functional in space and time. Presenting the imagery of whitening the robes by washing them with the blood of the Lamb, we found that as soon as the clergyman dons the first piece, which is the white robe, he relocates himself to the Kingdom of God, and he now belongs to the throne room liturgy wearing his purity represented by his white Baptismal robe. Furthermore, we saw how this white robe

empowers the priest to take on the great task of joining the replica of the throne room and standing in front of the holy altar to lead the community in the climactic move. The study of Jan Fekkes on the interrelationship of Rev 19:7, 21:2, and 21:18 was used to reach a conclusion that the Sticharion vesting prayer is rooted in Isaiah, while at the same time being related to Rev 19:7-9 and the imagery of the bride/New Jerusalem. The Sticharion vesting prayer can be read and understood within the completion of the Isaiah prophecy read in Revelation 19-21. While the act of wearing this vestment can allude to the clergyman's relocation into the throne room and the Kingdom of God, as discussed above, the prayer accompanying this vesting alludes to an additional meaning. The clergyman himself becomes the bride of the Lamb, taking up his Baptismal witness and being adorned with his virtues, and crowned with the grace of God, which in the first place ordained him to the priesthood.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

1. Summary of the Research

In this study I have attempted to examine how the hermeneutical and performative exegesis approaches to the biblical and apocalyptic texts can contribute to a better understanding of the liturgical actualization of the Scriptures, and its authentication to the early Christian Christological reception of the sacred texts. In particular, I have examined the clothing metaphor in the Book of Revelation as performed in the rites of the Proskomide, Baptism, and vesting of clergy.

In Chapter 1 of this study, I introduced the state of the question and the larger context of the clothing metaphor. I showed that the clothing metaphor is not just an imagery or symbol used within the text of the Book of Revelation, but rather, it implicitly and explicitly confers liturgical dimensions to the text.

In Chapter 2, I presented the definition of performative exegesis based on Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin's approach to words and sentences as not-just-description but rather doing-of-the-action was a cornerstone of the scholarly attempt to articulate how sacred texts in Second Temple Judaism attempt to be received. Sanders builds on Austin's approach and tries to crystalize a definition of "performatives" in contrast to other pragmatic language: "Performatives simultaneously say something and do something by talking about saying and talking about doing."³⁴⁵ Bucur took the performative exegesis definition a step further. He provided a more specific definition, stating that performative exegesis is "a ritual reading of the sacred text

³⁴⁵ Sanders, "Performative," 167.

in which the latter is used as a script to be performed and reenacted, so that the reader is united with the rhetorical 'I' of the sacred text, enters the world of the text, and experiences that which the text describes."³⁴⁶ In order to unveil the development of this definition, I presented three exegetical approaches of charismatic exegesis, rewritten Bible, and Kyriocentric visions.

The chapter then examines three cases of Christophanic performative exegesis: Abraham and the theophany at Mamre, the vision in Isaiah 6 and the glory of the Lord, and Daniel 7 and the Ancient of Days. The cases focused on showing the Christological and the Trinitarian approach of these texts. The reception of these texts Christologically was performed as writings, hymnography, art, iconography, and liturgical movement to situate the Scripture within a liturgical and Eucharistic frame, which in turn maintain a faithful Christian exegesis to the sacred text.

The last study case on the Ancient of Days was particularly focused on the icon of Pentecost at The Nativity of the Theotokos Antiochian Orthodox Church in Hunt Valley, MD. What is interesting and unique in this icon is that it contains an icon of the Jesus Christ as the Ancient of Days integrated into the depicted event of the descent of the tongues of fire at Pentecost. The study found that the depiction of the Ancient of Days as Jesus Christ is very faithful to the early Christian exegesis of Daniel 7. This subject matter appeared clearly in the liturgical text and hymnography presented above. On the other hand, depicting Jesus Christ as the Ancient of Days in the icon of Pentecost conveys an Incarnational truth, in that icons belongs to the Incarnation of the Word of God. Human beings are able to write icons only because Jesus Christ became Incarnate,

³⁴⁶ Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned*, 273.

and because of this the realm of God's Economy is a matter to be depicted in icons. Therefore, Jesus Christ the Ancient of Days in the icon of Pentecost conveys the truth that Jesus Christ sends the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, and that the icon in no way depicts the proceeding of the Holy Spirit from the Son.

In Chapter 3, I focused on the imagery of the throne in the Book of Revelation with all its components, trying to offer a liturgical exegesis approach to the Book of Revelation. The throne phenomenon was traced back to the Old Testament, Second Temple apocalyptic texts, and Qumran liturgical texts. I continued surveying the throne room imagery through the early Christian apocalyptic literature to show that the imagery of the throne has always been of a liturgical nature throughout the apocalyptic literature. I then offered an interpretation of the imagery of the throne in Revelation 4 and 5, focusing on presenting the implicit and explicit liturgical elements in this imagery. This liturgical interpretation of Revelation 4 and 5 is evidently a resemblance of the early Christian reception of apocalyptic texts, especially in the skillful way John the author of Revelation presented Jesus Christ as God and sharer of the Throne. I proposed that the liturgy as the primary key to solve the problem of exegesis and interpretation of the Book Revelation is supported by the image of the throne and its dominion throughout the book.

In Chapter 4, I surveyed the clothing imagery and its functionality in biblical and apocalyptic extrabiblical texts. The survey shows that the clothing metaphor with its complexity in shape, color, and the figure wearing it provides the readers with the identity of the wearers and their functionality. In some instances, it shows the eschatological destiny of the figure wearing it. Clothing imagery was also ascribed to God and His glory, showing His majesty and His role as a judge and a redeemer. The

same imagery appears to draw the distinction between the holy and the unholy, which was clear in Second Temple Judaism.

Having come to these conclusions, I proceeded in the chapter to study three clothing imageries in the Book of Revelation, in chapters 1, 7, and 13. In Revelation 1:13 I tracked the use of the word ποδήρη in the biblical world and in other apocalyptic and Jewish literature to prove its relation to the priest, or more accurately, to the high priest's inner vestment. Applying this word to describe the garment that the "One Like the Son of Man," Jesus Christ, was wearing in the vision of Revelation 1:12-19 supports the liturgical frame and content of the vision and manifests the early Christian reception of Christ as the High Priest. Revelation 7:14 uses the metaphor of whitening the robes with the blood of the Lamb. This rich imagery has liturgical dimensions as we proved. The image of white robes whitened by washing them in the blood of the Lamb has a liturgical function too. It refers to those who participated in the death of Christ and His Resurrection through the Baptismal font, through which they received the forgiveness of their sins. After their Baptism, they steadfastly stood faithful to their testimony to Jesus Christ, either by practicing their faith, or by giving their lives and shedding their own blood for the sake of their belief. I found that this reading corresponds to the parallel of Revelation 7:14 found in Revelation 22:14, which reads: "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates." Those who are Baptized and after their Baptism hold on to the testimony of Jesus Christ, some of whom have given their lives for the Word of God, will be the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem.

The last clothing metaphor I studied was the Woman Clothed with the Sun in Revelation 12:1. The exegetes over the years have studied this astounding imagery and discovered its multi-use ability. Some saw in it the New Israel; others state that this imagery is an early reception of Mary the Theotokos. Using the metaphors used to describe the clothing and its surroundings, along with the early Christian text from Hippolytus, and the link between this vision and the vision of the Holy City in Revelation 21, I claimed that the exegesis which fits the liturgical dimension of Revelation is that the Woman represents the Church living liturgically in the world.

Finally, in Chapter 5 of this study, I examined the clothing imagery and the liturgical praxis around it in three Byzantine rites: the Proskomide, Baptism, and the vesting of the clergy. In the Proskomide rite, I studied the use of Psalm 44 and theme of the queen adorned with gold in correspondence to the extracting of the piece of bread representing the Theotokos. I found that the Byzantine hymnography within the rite took the interpretation of theme of the queen and her clothing a step further than the patristic interpretation by presenting the Theotokos as the queen. I used Paul Ladouceur's study on Psalm 44:10 that provided solid proof of how iconography and hymnography offered a new level of exegesis on this verse and theme. I also used another historical and biblical approach to the theme of the queen, which was explored in the study of Stephen De Young. De Young argues that the veneration of the Theotokos as experienced within the Church has existed from the beginnings of the Faith, being firmly grounded in the Scriptures and in the religion of the Second Temple period, and its anticipation regarding the mother of the Messiah. Both arguments aided the study in manifesting the early Christological reception of the theme of the queen and her garment in Psalm 44.

Furthermore, I attempted to link the gold in the vestment of the queen in Psalm 44 to the Theotokos in the worship setting. It was put in connection with the image of the New Jerusalem in Revelation and its reception in Orthodox worship. This is to show that the eschatological vision of the Theotokos which the Church, manifests in recognition of the place of the Theotokos in the Kingdom of God, which was ultimately presented and performed in the Proskomide rite.

In surveying the rite of Baptism, I have given special focus to the hymnology and performance and how they represent multi-layered tradition and a method of reception of biblical, extra-biblical, and apocalyptic texts. I stated that the liturgical praxis in Baptism should be seen as a hermeneutical layer in the exegetical tradition, and as a reading of the biblical text within the practiced community. Because of its authenticity and originality in reflecting the community's reading of the sacred text, the liturgical praxis could be an essential part of the modern theories of exegesis and interpretation of the biblical text.

I tracked phenomena like the garment of glory, the glory of Adam, etc., and tried to present the authentic help these phenomena can provide to theology of the biblical texts, their efficacy, and their receptions. On the other hand, they preserve the divinely inspired element in both the text and the interpretation. Therefore, the consideration of the roots and the formula of the liturgical praxis of Baptism seems to be a distinctive and intrinsic part of the hermeneutical and exegetical texts. I found that the richness of these rites is made by what is integrated in them from interpretive traditions, and the experience of the community that has read the biblical texts while living in a specific religious context, and made the interpretation of what it received from the divine text and life.

I provided a presentation of the clergy vestments in the Orthodox tradition, with extended study on the inner garment, the Sticharion, and the prayer accompanying it from Isaiah 61:10. Expanding on Chapter 4's focus on the clothing imagery in Revelation, I traced the white robe to its roots in Revelation 7. The "type scene" approach that is mentioned in Aune's interpretation of Revelation 7 was expanded to present Revelation 7 in relation to the Epistle to the Heb 12:22-24 and 4 Ezra 2:42-45. The vesting prayer we examined presents main motifs of the "type scene," such as the place of worship, the angelic hosts and the liturgical gathering, and the immortal clothing. These motifs are performed liturgically in the rite of vesting, and they are intrinsic to understanding the function of the members of the priesthood as celebrant(s) of the earthly liturgy that is the replica of the heavenly liturgy around the Throne of God (the "change in the place"), and joining the innumerable angelic hosts in giving praise to God. The vesting of clergy is not merely symbolic, but rather it is functional in space and time. Presenting the imagery of whitening the robes by washing them with the blood of the Lamb, I found that as soon as the clergyman dons the first piece, which is the white robe, he relocates himself to the Kingdom of God, and now belongs to the Throne room liturgy wearing his purity represented by his white Baptismal robe. Furthermore, I showed how this white robe empowers the priest to take on the great task of joining the replica of the throne room and standing in front of the holy altar to lead the community in the climactic movements of the liturgy. The study of Jan Fekkes on the interrelationship of Rev 19:7, 21:2, 21:18 was used to reach a conclusion in that the Sticharion vesting prayer is rooted in Isaiah, but at the same time related to Rev 19:7-9 and the imagery of the bride/New Jerusalem. The Sticharion vesting prayer can be read and understood within the completion of the Isaiah

prophecy read in Rev 19-21. While the act of wearing this vestment can allude to the clergyman's relocation into the Throne room and the Kingdom of God, as discussed above, the prayer accompanying this vesting alludes to an additional meaning. The clergyman himself becomes the bride of the Lamb, taking up his Baptismal witness and being adorned with his virtues, and crowned with the grace of God, which in the first place ordained him to the priesthood.

2. Implications of the Research

The results of this study suggest three major implications in regard to the performative exegesis of the liturgical praxis in general, and to the clothing imagery of the book of Revelation in particular. First, the book of Revelation is a liturgical book, and applying liturgical performative exegesis to its chapters provides the scholarship with an authentic exegesis and interpretation. This new level of exegesis moves the majority of interpretations from the time and event predicting type to a more authentic Christological and soteriological level. Situating the Revelation imageries within their adequate and suitable liturgical frames is the way to see the book as performative exegesis of the apocalyptic heritage on one hand, and on the other as a text to be performed in the liturgical setting of today's Christian communities that retain a sacramental theology and praxis).

Second, the clothing imageries and metaphors are prevalent in the book of Revelation and in the other apocalyptic literatures. It indicates significant meanings and functions such as the identity, the role, and liturgical place in some instances. This study demonstrates the clothing imagery with twofold functions. First, it surpasses being a mere

symbol and indicates hermeneutical and exegetical heritage that have been used in the sacred texts in Judaism and Christianity. Second, applying this metaphor into liturgical performance transform the rites from being merely performed to becoming more rooted in the early Christian reception of the Christological and soteriological understanding. As I discussed in Chapter 5, the clothing metaphor in the vesting of the clergy, gives the priesthood prominent meanings such as human kenosis, relocating to the heavenly throne room and renewing the pledge to martyrdom we have taken through our Baptism.

The final implication of this study that I wish to mention is that the Christological approach of the Scriptural visions (such as the ones we have discussed in Chapter 2, the theophany at Mamre, Isaiah 6, and the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7) is authentic to the early Christian exegesis. This approach is manifested in a liturgical setting and within liturgical elements such as hymnology, sermons, iconography, and I believe above all liturgical praxis. These elements challenge the scholarship to move to a new horizon of approaching the sacred texts. I agree with Bucur's closing statement in *Scripture Re-envisioned*:

Neither "allegory" nor "typology" (nor the more recent terms of "figural" and "figurative") capture the epiphanic claim underlying the identification of Jesus Christ with the divine manifestation to the patriarchs and prophets of Israel; the term "rewritten Bible" is also inadequate, because the Christian "rewriting" of theophanies does not express itself in the production of a new text, but in a new reading of the existing texts.³⁴⁷

The one thing this study tried to add to this claim is that the Christian rewriting of the sacred text and apocalyptic text express itself not just in new readings of the existing texts, but also in liturgical movements and rites. This claim helps us extend our perception of the liturgical rites as mere symbols to become performative exegesis of the

³⁴⁷ Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned*, 276.

sacred texts that the early exegetes, along with their communities, practiced and developed.

3. Suggestions for Further Research

Since more scholarship is interested nowadays in performative exegesis, I hope that this modest research can be counted towards these efforts. The following is a list of some of the future research I suggest for expanding the frame of this work:

1. Applying the liturgical interpretation method on the book of Revelation to produce an interpretation that is authentic and more in line with the early Christian reception of the book and its resources.
2. Applying a comparative study on the clothing imageries in the whole book of Revelation. This study should focus on the juxtaposition the book presents between dressing the righteous, the Holy City and the Woman with a Child, and the clothing of Babylon, the Harlot, and Beast and try to find how the liturgical heritage in iconography, hymnology, homilies, writings and practices have performed this juxtaposition.
3. The performative exegesis of the clothing metaphor in other rites also can be a key to recognize different traditions within Christianity in receiving the sacred texts of Judaism and early Christianity. I would suggest studying the rite of tonsuring a monastic in the churches which hold to the monastic tradition. The monks are those individuals who decided to leave the world to dwell apart within a monastic community. Once the novice reaches the stage of what the Western tradition calls “final vows,” the novice in the Byzantine rite receives the little or the great

schema as a symbol of final departure from the world and the dedication to the monastic life. In both services there are rituals of clothing that provide another area of research to discover the way this rite performs a sacred text to give it a liturgical exegesis:

a. The first set of rituals is the rite of bringing the monk's (or nun's) garment to the Holy Altar the day before the tonsuring.

b. There is a link to garment in a metaphor in an antiphon, which says: "Grant me a fountain of tears of repentance and wash away the stain of my transgressions." The imagery of washing, stain, and fountain relate directly to clothing. The purity and the washing of the garment is an intrinsic imagery with roots that go back to the Old Testament and other apocalyptic texts, as we have seen above.

c. The imagery of clothing a (male or female) monastic is related to Revelation 1. The prayers of clothing or vesting a monk say: "Gird his loin with the power of truth, clothe him with the breastplate of righteousness and exultation, and shoe his feet in the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Make him wise to take up the shield of faith, with which he will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the Evil One, and to receive the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Holy Spirit, which is your word." The prayer is from Ephesians 6; nevertheless, the image of the sword, because it is saying "your sword," can be linked to the One like the Son of Man in Revelation 1.

d. The actual clothing of a monastic. The line “clothed with righteousness and exultation of the great and angelic schema” draws on the clothing of the martyrs in Revelation and the robe of righteousness from the rite of Baptism.

e. The prayers of vesting continue, saying: “Be clothed with the tunic of salvation, be girded with the belt of chastity, receive the sign of the Cross, arm your intelligible feet with the weapons of temperance and you will find repose for your souls. My soul rejoices in the Lord for He has clothed me with the robe of salvation, and He has enclosed me with the tunic of happiness; as a bridegroom He has placed a mitre upon me and as a bride He has adorned me with adornments.” There are many parallels to the clergy vesting in this prayer, a fact that can help us see Revelation 4 and 5 and other clothing imageries, especially the two witnesses of Revelation and the bride of the Lamb being performed in this rite.

f. During the Liturgy of Tonsuring, the Trisagion (“Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us”) is replaced with the Baptismal Hymn, “As many of you as have been Baptized in Christ, have put on Christ.” This change in the ordinary liturgy of replacing the Trisagion with the Baptismal Hymn demonstrates the centrality of the clothing metaphor, and the rite presents a performative exegesis of this specific metaphor in how the community perceives the sacred text and implements the text with the practice, and vice-a-versa.

4. One last area of expanding the scope of this research is the liturgical hymnography, especially those that rewrite a Scriptural narrative and also provide another kind of performatives, to study the impact of the sacred text in the life of

the community. One example could be the “Hymn of Kassiani” in the Orthros (Matins) service of Wednesday of Holy Week in the Byzantine rite. This hymn retells the story of the myrrh bearing woman who came to Jesus while sitting at the table in the Pharisee’s house and anointed His feet with expensive ointment, and by this act she received the forgiveness of her sins. The hymn took this biblical event and put a high Christology and theology in the mouth of this woman that, while silent in the Gospel narrative, leads the whole conversation with the Lord in the hymn. The hymn reads as follows:

O Lord God, the woman who had fallen into many sins, having perceived Thy divinity, received the rank of ointment-bearer, offering Thee spices before Thy burial, wailing and crying: "Woe is me, for the love of adultery and sin hath given me a dark and lightless night; accept the fountains of my tears, O Thou Who drawest the waters of the sea by the clouds. Incline Thou to the sigh of my heart, O Thou Who didst bend the heavens by Thine inapprehensible condescension; I will kiss Thy pure feet and I will wipe them with my tresses. I will kiss Thy feet, Whose tread when it fell on the ears of Eve in Paradise dismayed her so that she did hide herself because of fear. Who then shall examine the multitude of my sin and the depth of Thy judgment? Wherefore, O my Savior and the Deliverer of my soul, turn not away from Thy handmaiden, O Thou of boundless mercy."³⁴⁸

Some of the research topics can be the process of rewriting a scriptural narrative into a hymn and the criteria of freedom in conducting the exegesis of the text. How does such a hymn convey Christological and soteriological understanding? And how does performing such a text impact the worshipping community? A good starting resource for such

³⁴⁸ The Service of Tuesday Night of Holy Week on the Antiochian Archdiocese Online Liturgical Resource. <https://antiochian.org/liturgicday/2710>

research could be Terence Cuneo's "*Ritualized Faith: Essays on the Philosophy of Liturgy*."³⁴⁹

4. Conclusion

The early Christian community strove to establish her identity through a better understanding of who Jesus Christ is. Christology and Trinitarian theology developed very early within the growing Christian communities, who before reading and possessing manuscripts learned about their Scriptures by hearing and practicing. This is what makes liturgy rooted in the early Christian reception of the scriptures and actualizes the Scriptures and apocalyptic within the frame of the liturgical rites. Clothing imagery helps to extend such a claim and its use in the liturgical settings, discussed above, and enriches the recent scholarly endeavor to delve into the performative exegesis and the hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures in relation to early Christian community practices.

³⁴⁹ Terence Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith: Essays on the Philosophy of Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Also, On this hymn see Bucur, "*The Feet that Eve Heard in Paradise and Was Afraid: Observations on the Christology of Byzantine Hymns*," *Philosophy and Theology* 18 (2006):3-26.

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