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The Cult during the Period of the Biblical Patriarchs

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Abstract

During the time of the biblical patriarchs, worship was centered on the belief in the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” or the “God of our fathers”; together with Moses, in the consciousness of the Jewish people the place of “God the father” is taken by God-Yahweh, the One who revealed Himself in the “burning bush” and Who chose Israel as His people. The places of worship during the period of the biblical patriarchs are generally related to the moments when God revealed Himself to them. The theophanies, in which they were participants, also determined the identification of some places of worship.

Keywords

mosaic religion, the Old Testament, the period of the biblical patriarchs, divine worship, the priesthood of Melchizedek

I. The Cult of “God-the-Father”

According to the Old Testament writings of the Bible, the first contact that the patriarch Abraham has with God occurs when Yahweh commands him to migrate from Harran to Canaan, where he will be given possession of a land “flowing with milk and honey”. The promise made to Abraham by

God was also renewed to his descendants, Isaac and Jacob, and with their existence the specificity of the religion of the biblical patriarchs ends. The Mosaic period follows, in which God reveals himself to Moses on Mount Sinai, a moment that represents the beginning of a new stage in the religious history of the Jewish people. Surely, the God of the biblical patriarchs and that of Moses is One and the same, even though Abraham did not even know the name of his God, while God Himself reveals Himself to Moses as *Yahweh* – “*He that is*”.

The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob showed great obedience to the word of God, without knowing any of His names, simply addressing Him as *God (Elohim)*. In the book of Genesis, Abraham’s faith is presented as a free manifestation of it, a fact that determines a personal connection between him and God. God now becomes, “the God of Abraham”, and the spiritual inheritance resulting from this intimate relationship takes the form of a family property that is passed down from generation to generation. Thus, when Jacob goes to Harran to his kinsman Laban to marry one of his daughters, the agreement between them is authenticated by an oath that each makes: Jacob in the name of the “God of Isaac”, his father, and Laban, in the name of the “God of Nahor”, each swearing by the god of his clan.

Later, among the nomadic tribes bordering Israel to the northwest, the existence of a tradition regarding the individual-divinity relationship in the form of “master” or “patron” of the house was argued. Especially the names composed with the expression ’*ab* (father) ’*ah* (brother), ’*amm* (family) gave birth to names with religious meaning: Abiezer - Eliezer = My heavenly father is my helper, Abimelech - Elimelech = My heavenly father is my king¹.

So, during the period of the biblical patriarchs, the cult was centered on the belief in the “God of the father”² or, much more often, it is the

¹ John BRIGHT, *A History of Israel*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville-Kentucky, 2000⁴, pp. 97-99.

² A. ALT, *The God of the Father. Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, Basil Blackwell & Mott Ltd., Oxford, 1966, pp. 1-77; H. G. MAY, “The God of my Father. A Study in Patriarchal Religion”, in: *Journal of Bible and Religion* (JBR), IX (1941), pp. 155-158; J. P. HYATT, “Yahve as «The God of my Father»”, in: *Vetus Testamentum*, V (1955), pp. 130-136; Ion REȘCEANU, *Familia în Vechiul Testament*, Mitropolia

phrase “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” and “God of our fathers”. With Moses, in the consciousness of the Jewish people the place of “God the father” is taken by God-Yahweh, the One who revealed Himself in the “burning bush” of Moses and Who chose Israel as His people. It is about the One and the Same God, but with the changes inside the Jewish society, in the historical context of the Egyptian hegemony, the relationship between Israel and its God went to a higher level and to a much deeper involvement through the prism of a “covenant” bilaterally.

II. Places of worship

The places of worship during the time of the biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are generally related to the moments when God revealed Himself to them. The theophanies, in which they were participants, also determined the identification of some places of worship, whether it is a tree, a height or a water.

In Genesis 12, 6-7, Abraham’s first stop at *Shechem* is mentioned, in a holy place (*mâqom*), where there was an oak tree, identified with a Canaanite sanctuary with oracular powers. This is where the meeting between Yahweh and Abraham takes place, when God promises him the dominion of the earth through a numerous offspring. The next moment of this meeting takes place through the construction of a sacrificial altar. So, the three steps that lead to the creation of an altar are: theophany, divine communication, followed by the establishment of worship³. So, the building of sacrificial altars in honor of Yahweh represents a response to the revelation (theophany) of Him before man⁴.

The sanctuary at Shechem takes on major importance during the period of the patriarch Jacob. Returning from Mesopotamia, Jacob buys from the sons of Hamor the land where he had pitched his tent and builds an altar

Olteniei, Craiova, 2014, pp. 165-168.

³ Rolland DE VAUX, *Le istituzioni dell’Antico Testamento*, Editura Marietti, Genova, 2002³, p. 290.

⁴ Augustine PAGOLU, *The Religion of the Patriarchs*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1998, p. 54.

(*mashshebah*), which means “the Lord God of Israel”. Jacob’s conflict with Simeon and Levi leads to his moving from Shechem to Bethel. Another episode in the history of the region of Shechem is connected with the tomb of Joseph, who, after dying in Egypt, according to his wish, his remains are brought to Shechem, the place of his birth and childhood, events that happened in the time of Joshua, at the entry of the people of Israel into the “Promised Land”. His grave, accompanied by the funerary monument, can be considered a place of worship of the Jewish people⁵.

According to Yahwist tradition, on the journey to the land of Canaan, at the next stop, Abraham builds a second sacrificial altar, between Bethel and ’Ai. But here, as at Shechem, there is an altar attributed to Jacob, being the meeting place of the Elohist and Yahwist traditions. It is the moment reported in Genesis 28, 10-22, when Jacob stops to rest in a holy place, where he has a wonderful dream, in which a ladder unites heaven with earth. He recognizes that place as a holy place, calling it “*bet-El*” or “the house of God” and anoints the stone on which he had slept with oil, making a promise to God to return, to establish an altar of sacrifice there. The fulfillment of the promise marks the establishment of an extremely important place of worship for the Jews. The sanctuary at Bethel is mentioned numerous times in the Old Testament writings as a holy place where the Jews came to offer sacrifices and ask for Yahweh’s blessing. Later, even the Ark of the Law built by Moses was kept for a time at Bethel, and after the political schism between Israel and Judah, King Jeroboam established at Bethel a cult rivaling that of Jerusalem⁶.

Another place of worship from the period of the biblical patriarchs is that of *Mamvri*. In Genesis 13, 18 it is said that Abraham built an altar under the oak of Mamvri. In the vicinity was the cave of Makpela, a place identified as the tomb of the biblical patriarchs and their wives⁷. Under the oak of Mamvri, Abraham receives God in the form of three mysterious guests, and it seems that under the same oak the covenant between God and Abraham takes place (Genesis 15).

⁵ Rolland DE VAUX, *Le istituzioni dell’Antico Testamento*, p. 291.

⁶ Rolland DE VAUX, *Le istituzioni dell’Antico Testamento*, p. 292.

⁷ Paul JOHNSON, *O istorie a evreilor*, Hasefer, București, 1999, pp. 15-16.

Except for the book of Genesis, the Bible does not mention Mamvri elsewhere, although there has been much speculation around the Mamvri oak, such as that it had existed since the creation of the world or that Abraham saw here the future Jerusalem and mysteries of the end of the world. The ruins of this place can be found today at Ramet el-Khalil (3 km from Hebron), and Israelite relics were discovered under the old sanctuaries⁸.

A sanctuary that is especially related to the history of the patriarch Isaac is that of *Beersheba*⁹. Located in the southern part of the Holy Land, this is where Yahweh reveals himself to Isaac, renewing his vow to Abraham. Isaac builds an altar here and offers a sacrifice to God (Genesis 24, 23-25), a tradition that is also preserved by Jacob, his son. However, as in the case of the altar at Bethel, the sanctuary at Beersheba is also attributed to Abraham (Genesis 21, 22-31), the place being also called “The Well of the Oath” or “The Well of the seven” (from the number of the seven sheep that Abraham gave to Abimelech in that place)¹⁰. The sanctuary at Beersheba is mentioned in the books of the Old Testament and in I Kings 8, 1-2, when Samuel names his sons as judges, but also in the prophet Amos 8, 14.

III. Offering sacrifices. The sacrificer

If in the Near East the information related to the mode of operation of the sacrifices, organized according to very clear prescriptions, as well as their matter, is frequent, the details about the conduct of the worship of the biblical patriarchs are extremely limited. In the book of Genesis two sacrifices of Abraham and two of Jacob are mentioned (Genesis 15, 7-21 and 22, 1-14, respectively 31, 56 and 46, 1). Abraham’s sacrifices consisted of animal sacrifices (a goat and a ram, respectively a ram), while the matter of Jacob’s sacrifices is not mentioned¹¹.

⁸ Rolland DE VAUX, *Le istituzioni dell’Antico Testamento*, p. 293.

⁹ W. J. MARTIN, A. R. MILLARD, “Beersheba”, in: *Dicționar biblic*, Cartea Creștină, Oradea, 1995, p. 138.

¹⁰ Rolland DE VAUX, *Le istituzioni dell’Antico Testamento*, p. 293.

¹¹ Augustine PAGOLU, *The Religion of the Patriarchs*, p. 65.

The time, the matter and the manner of the fulfillment of the two sacrifices brought by Abraham were precisely established by God Himself (Genesis 15 and 22). God's request to Abraham to offer as a sacrifice his only son, Isaac, should not be recorded as a cultic prescription or an argument for the existence of human sacrifice, being obvious the fact that that episode represented nothing more than a test of faith, concluded with a reaffirmation of the responsibility of the covenant between God and Abraham.

The sacrifices made by Jacob to God, which appear mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 31, 56 and 46, 1), are related to two important moments in the history of the Jewish people. The first sacrifice is brought by Jacob after the agreement made with Laban in Harran, and the second when he learns that Joseph, his son sold in Egypt, is alive. Both situations had a very well-defined purpose of the sacrifice, once the sealing of a covenant, and the second time thanksgiving to God¹².

It is certain that the sacrifices brought to God by the biblical patriarchs were much more than those mentioned in the biblical writings of Genesis, but it must be remembered that they were directly related to the built altars, and the one who held the status of sacrificer was the head of the family. The quality of a sacrificer is, for the period of the biblical patriarchs, equivalent to that of a priest, intercessor before God, a position that the head of the family assumed on behalf of all the members of his family.

Based on the testimonies provided by the Jewish tradition¹³, also taken over by the Christian tradition, highlighted by the Blessed Jerome¹⁴, the idea was imposed that, before Moses, the priestly function would have been performed by the first born. The opinion is also strengthened by the fact that Moses asked the people to redeem the firstborn from the Lord, these being considered to be faithful to Him (Exodus 13, 2-3). The support of such an

¹² Augustine PAGOLU, *The Religion of the Patriarchs*, p. 74.

¹³ Before the making of the tent, the rights were permitted and the cult was performed by the first born. After the making of the tent, the rights disappeared and the cult was performed by the priests". Cf. *Talmud* – Tractate Zebachim 14, 4.

¹⁴ "There is a tradition according to which the first born in the Jewish family functioned as priests and had priestly clothes, in which dressed, brought sacrifices, before Aarom was chosen priest". Cf. Dumitru ABRUDAN, Emilian CORNÎTESCU, *Arheologia biblică*, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1994, p. 211.

opinion was not assumed by the majority of biblical commentators who notice the fact that for the pre-Mosaic period, the right to offer sacrifices to God was not restricted only to the first-born. Only by associating them, naturally, with family heads, those who are often recorded in the pages of the Old Testament as sacrificers, we can better understand the Jewish tradition mentioned above. Approached independently of this report noticed by the wider biblical context, that opinion cannot be supported.

A distinct note of the quality of sacrificer, priest, mediator before God that the head of the family assumed on behalf of all his family members, is given by the context of the covenant relationship between the biblical patriarchs and God. Beginning with Abraham, the biblical patriarchs fulfill their priestly role as part of the alliance between themselves and their families on the one hand and God on the other. They do not represent the others only as sacrificers or worshipers before God, but also as intercessors for them, for their family and their descendants in order to fulfill the divine promises. This quality is illustrated in the pages of the Old Testament through the election and consecration of Abraham and his family.

IV. The consecration of Abraham's tribe by covenant

The history of the choice of the Jews as God's chosen people is directly related to Abraham, a man originally from Ur of the Chaldees, to whom God addresses a command, followed by a promise: "Get out of your land and your kindred and your father's house and come in the land that I will show you. And I will raise up a great people from you, I will bless you, I will magnify your name and you will be a source of blessing" (Genesis 12, 1-2).

Although he is told about a land he does not know, Abraham does not deny it for a moment and, with full confidence in the word received from God, sets out for the promised land, showing a lot of obedience and courage. The promise of Abraham's seed gives him the status of mediator (priest) between God and men. Arriving in Canaan, famine forces him to migrate to Egypt, from where he later returns following a divine

intervention, which brings suffering to Pharaoh's house, after he had taken Sarai, his wife, as his wife (Genesis 12, 11- 20)¹⁵.

The situation is repeated in Gerara, where the chief of the place, Abimelech, takes Sarah to himself without knowing that she is Abraham's wife, but believing that she is his sister, but he is stopped by God in a dream without touching her (Genesis 20). Abraham's justification to Abimelech: "I thought that the fear of God was lacking in these places and I was afraid that I would be killed" (Genesis 20, 11) shows Abraham's faithfulness to God, based on his quality to represent Him in the middle of an idolatrous and immoral world. The fact that Abraham intercedes before God for the entire house of Abimelech that had been struck with extermination because of Sarah, Abimelech's women starting to give birth again (Genesis 20, 17-18), also reveals another dimension of Abraham's ministry, those to be an intercessor before God not only for his family and descendants, but also for the family of a foreign person of his race.

In Genesis 13, 14-18, God renews the promise made to Abraham, regarding his numerous descendants and the land that will be given to him as a possession. It is the moment when Abraham moves his tents to Mamvri, where he builds an altar in honor of God, a place where we meet Abraham not only as a *sacrificer*, but also as an *intercessor* before the three angels for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, threatened with destruction from the cause of their sins (Genesis 18, 16-33). The meeting with the three angels also reveals to us another dimension that Abraham's choice implies, namely the quality of a *teacher* for the sons of his house, called to walk in the way of the Lord: "That I have chosen him to teach his sons and his house according to himself to walk in the way of the Lord and to do judgment and justice; so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham all that he promised him" (Genesis 18, 19).

The physical impossibility of his wife, Sarah, to have children, leads Abraham, on her advice, to marry Hagar, his maid, who will be able to give him a son and thus God's promise can be fulfilled. Hagar gives birth to Abraham's son Ishmael, but this was not God's plan. The wonderful meeting at the Mamvri oak, when Abraham meets God in the form of three

¹⁵ Lee HUMPHREYS, *The Character of God in the Book of Genesis*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville-Kentucky, 2001, p. 152.

men, is realized by the promise made by them to Abraham that he will have a son with his wife Sarah.

God's prophecy at the Mamvri oak is fulfilled and Sarah gives birth to Isaac, and God's promise to Abraham is half fulfilled, the other half being related to the land that will be given to him as a property¹⁶. But God wants to test the strength of his servant Abraham's faith and asks him to sacrifice Isaac. Upon God's intervention, the sacrifice does not occur, and Abraham's faith and obedience leads God to renew the promise made to him regarding his descendants and the land that will be given to them under their control¹⁷: "I have sworn by Myself, says the Lord, since you have done this and spared not even your only son, for Me. Therefore I will bless you with My blessing, and I will greatly multiply your nation, so that they will be like the stars of the sky and like the sand on the seashore, and your nation will rule over the cities of its enemies. And all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through your seed, because you obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22, 16-18).

The first born is *resith*, the perfection, the excellence; in other words, the head represents the whole body. All that is good, perfect, belongs to God. Abraham sacrifices his only son, whom he loves, and if Isaac can be sacrificed, then any other of his descendants can be sacrificed, dedicated to the Lord. The first born, considered holy, belongs to God, a fact for which the divine Law will later prescribe norms through which it can be redeemed (Exodus 13, 12-13).

God now becomes the "Protector" of Abraham's descendants, a fact that will be seen in the events that chronicle the life of Isaac and his descendants Jacob and Esau, the former becoming the father of the twelve tribes of the Jewish people. The seed of Abraham will be permanently under God's protection, until the appearance of Moses, a few centuries later, when the Jewish people are consecrated as the "chosen people" of Yahweh, and the "covenant" that will be founded on Mount Sinai, being one much more profound and decisive for the history of Hebrew civilization in the context of the Ancient Near East.

¹⁶ Lee HUMPHREYS, *The Character of God*, pp. 153-156.

¹⁷ Ashley DAY, *Exploring the lives of the Patriarchs*, Author House, Bloomington, 2011, pp. 18-20.

By fulfilling the divine promise, Abraham becomes the “father” par excellence of mankind, the beginning of a spiritual paternity, a paternity resulting from faith, about which the Holy Apostle Paul speaks convincingly (Rom 4, 16; 9, 7-8). For the Apostle of the Gentiles, paternity according to the flesh (Rom 4, 1) is nothing more than the condition of a spiritual and universal paternity, founded on the permanence and coherence of God’s plan of salvation that always works from Abraham until the glorification of Jesus (Exodus 3, 15; Acts 3, 13)¹⁸.

V. Melchizedek’s Priesthood

The only information that is known about Melchizedek is reported in the writings of the Bible, in Genesis 14, 18-20, Psalm 109 and the Epistle to the Hebrews 5 and 7. The history in which he appears mentioned is presented in Genesis 14, 18, when Abraham, returning from fighting alongside Lot against Kedarlaomer, meets Melchizedek, “the high priest of justice and king of Salem, the city of peace”. Melchizedek “priest of the Most High God” offers Abraham a gift of bread and wine and at the same time blesses him, and Abraham is said to have “given him a tenth of everything”¹⁹. The etymology of the word “Melchizedek” is of Hebrew origin. “Melek” means “king” and “sedek” translates as “righteousness”. Melchizedek being, therefore, the “king of righteousness”²⁰. The Scripture tells us: “And when Abram was returning, after the defeat of Kedarlaomer and the kings united with him, the king of Sodom came before him in the valley of Shave, which today is called the Valley of the Kings. And Melchizedek, the king of Salem, brought him bread and wine. This Melchizedek was the priest of the Most High God. And Melchizedek blessed Abram and said: «Blessed be Abram by God the Most High, the Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be the Most High God, Who delivered your enemies

¹⁸ Ioan BUGA, “Personalitatea Patriarhului Avraam oglindită în epistolele Sfântului Apostol Pavel”, in: *Studii Teologice*, XXX (1978) 3-4, p. 198.

¹⁹ G. W. REASER, *Melchizedek or the Exaltation of the Son of Man*, Sherman French & Company, Boston, 1913, p. 29.

²⁰ Gianfranco RAVASI, *Il libro della Genesi (12-50)*, Citta Nuova, Roma, 2001², p. 130.

into your hands!». And Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything” (Genesis 14, 17-20).

Melchizedek is one of the most mysterious characters mentioned in the writings of the Bible, being associated countless times to Jesus Christ, especially through the miraculous way in which he appears on earth. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Holy Apostle Paul uses the example of the nature of Melchizedek to explain the nature and purpose of Christ: “In another place it is said: «You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek». He, in the days of His body, brought, with cries and tears, requests and prayers to the One who could save Him from death and it was heard for His piety. And, although he was a Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. And, perfecting Himself, He became the cause of eternal salvation for all those who obey Him. And by God he was appointed: High priest according to the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 5, 6-10)

The parallel between the priesthood of Melchizedek and the Aaronic priesthood must be analyzed by looking at the book of Leviticus and the Epistle to the Hebrews. In fact, the Epistle to the Hebrews was called “Leviticus of the New Testament”. The latter tries to clarify the issue of Christ’s priesthood. At the time the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, the Levitical priesthood was already a completed chapter in the history of salvation, and its role in God’s plan had been fulfilled²¹.

The Levitical priesthood and its hierarchical system are no longer a priority for the Holy Apostle Paul, because the importance of the priestly ministry is now seen through the lens of the Priesthood of Christ. To be a priest according to the order of the Levites, descent from the family of Aaron was mandatory, constituting an order of the priesthood²².

The priesthood of Melchizedek is also grounded as an order, for it is said: “You are a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek”. But an order cannot be made up of only one representative, that is why we speak of a universal priesthood, and those who can have it must fulfill two essential conditions: to be called by God and to be sons of God. The

²¹ Claudio GIANOTTO, *Melchisedek e la sua tipologia: tradizioni giudaiche, cristiane e gnostiche*, Paideia, Brescia, 1984, p. 123.

²² Marco BRAGADIN, *Il guardian del tempo. L’ordine di Melchisedek*, Melchisedek, Milano, 2013, p. 238.

order of the priesthood of Melchizedek has at least two representatives. Chronologically speaking, the first is Melchizedek, the one who welcomed Abraham, and the second is Christ, the Son of God. The fact that there are others who are called sons of God, induces the idea that they also belong to the priestly caste “after the order of Melchizedek”²³.

There are several elements that are found in the personality of both Christ and Melchizedek. Both are Priests of the Most High God forever, kings of justice and kings of peace (Melchizedek of Salem, which means “peace”, and Christ of Jerusalem, “the city of God’s peace”).

The priesthood of Melchizedek, understood from the mentions of him in the biblical writings, demonstrates the fact that there can be a priesthood that excludes the bloody sacrifices practiced in the performance of the Levitical cult. Melchizedek greets Abraham with divine blessing, giving him bread and wine. And yet he is a priest, but not just any priest, but “a priest of the Most High God”. A foreshadowing of the elimination of bloody sacrifices from the performance of worship is seen here. Abraham recognizes in Melchizedek the “divine priesthood” and relates to him in a very special way, giving him a tithe of all he owns²⁴.

The blessing given by Melchizedek to Abraham in God’s Name is not a declarative blessing, but one that positively transforms Abraham’s life, in that he will have a son. It is a blessing that is always given by a superior to an inferior²⁵. The superiority of Melchizedek’s priesthood in front of the Levitical priesthood²⁶ is evident from the wonderful words of the Holy Apostle Paul who says: “And Melchizedek, who does not derive his offspring from them, received tithes from Abraham and Abraham, who made the promises, blessed him. Without a doubt, the least takes blessing from the greatest. And here some mortal men take the tithe, while in the beyond, one who is proven to be alive. And so to speak, through Abraham, Levi also gave a tithe, the one who took a tithe. Because he was still in Abraham’s bosom when Melchizedek met him” (Hebrews 7, 6-10).

²³ G. W. REASER, *Melchizedek or the Exaltation of the Son of Man*, pp. 23-24.

²⁴ G. W. REASER, *Melchizedek or the Exaltation of the Son of Man*, pp. 25-26.

²⁵ Franco MANZI, *Melchisedek e l’angelologia nell’Epistola agli Ebrei e a Qumran*, Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Roma, 1997, p. 141.

²⁶ Claudio GIANOTTO, *Melchisedek e la sua tipologia*, p. 270.

The words of the Holy Apostle Paul leave no doubt regarding the distinction, in the sense of superiority, of the priesthood of Melchizedek compared to the Levitical priesthood, through the tithe given by Abraham to Melchizedek, the priesthood of Melchizedek being a foreshadowing of the Priesthood of Christ²⁷. Continuation of the Epistle to the Hebrews ch. 7, 11-19, argues the transitory role of the Levitical priesthood, which is replaced by another priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek²⁸, the Priesthood of Christ being a priesthood that brings perfection through a new and eternal Law. The Levitical priesthood had a limited role in history being temporally related to a certain period in the history of the Jewish people, while the Priesthood of Christ, according to the order and likeness of Melchizedek, is from eternity²⁹.

Regarding the common elements of Christ and Melchizedek, it should be noted that Melchizedek is the one who is similar to Christ and not the other way around. Although, chronologically, in scriptural history Melchizedek precedes Christ, in the divine plan, primacy corresponds to the Son of God. Melchizedek is the one who performs the simple function of anti-typological foreshadowing of Christ³⁰. Thus, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews of the Holy Apostle Paul, the characteristic of the connection of the anti-typological priesthood of Melchizedek with the priesthood of Christ from eternity, has the purpose of sketching the portrait of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the Supreme Priest for eternity, not only according to the external order, but after the likeness of Melchizedek³¹, too.

²⁷ Franco MANZI, *Melchisedek e l'angelologia*, p. 143.

²⁸ Francesco BINDELLA, *Melchisedek alla luce della rivelazione del Nome divino: sacerdozio, regalità, profezia all'origine*, Porziuncola, Assisi, 1994, pp. 68-69.

²⁹ Franco MANZI, *Melchisedek e l'angelologia*, p. 145.

³⁰ Franco MANZI, *Melchisedek e l'angelologia*, p. 149.

³¹ Franco MANZI, *Melchisedek e l'angelologia*, p. 152.