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*THE SCRIPTURAL IDEA OF PRIESTHOOD
EMBODIED IN SUCCESSIVE TYPES.*

THE institution of priesthood is not peculiar to the people of God: there have been heathen priests in all ages, as well as Israelite or Christian. Races and nations, who have differed most widely in their idea of God, in purity of morals, in intellectual culture, and in social and political organization, have alike placed their trust in the intervention of priests for the worship of their gods. These heathen priesthoods varied according to the character of the religion; for while some forms of heathen religion testified to the moral sense of mankind and the spiritual aspirations of man's higher nature, others expressed the abject terror created by the widespread prevalence of evil and by the mighty powers of external nature. But whether the sense of unworthiness or of helplessness was uppermost, the impression produced upon the imagination by the awful mystery of the unseen world prompted men to seek relief in the intervention of human mediators, who might stand between them and the invisible beings whom they shrank from approaching in their own persons. They cast themselves upon the superior wisdom or holiness of fellow men; and rested with an instinctive, sometimes quite a pathetic, trust on the mediation of human priests, who could understand their hearts, and whose language they could understand. Hence the fundamental idea of a priest, as a man who had power with God, and was willing to use this power on behalf of others. To this corresponds the scriptural definition of a priest, as "taken from among men and ordained for men in things pertaining to God" (Heb. v. 1).¹

¹ I am sorry to find myself at issue here with Professor Milligan. He writes, in a recent number of *THE EXPOSITOR*, that "the fundamental and essential meaning of the word 'priest,' as used in Scripture, is that of one who has the privilege of immediate access to God, and is able to take advantage of it with

Sacrifice was the principal function of the ancient priest ; for no other form of worship was considered in early times equally expressive of man's devotion, or so acceptable to God. There was no material difference in this respect between the Hebrew and heathen types of priesthood ; material offerings and animal victims at a visible altar filled as prominent a place in the ancient worship of Jehovah as in that of heathen gods ; and this ritual continued unaltered as long as the Jewish temple was in existence. Protests were sometimes made against this sacrificial system, like those of Psalm xl., " Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire," and Psalm l., " Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats ? " Prophets lifted up their voice from time to time on behalf of a more spiritual service of God. But the Israelite ritual had been rigidly fixed by law before the people were able to grasp the conception of a worship rendered in spirit and in truth ; and it remained the same to the end.

1. The Hebrew Scriptures recorded however the existence of an earlier form of priesthood in the days of their fathers, which was essentially distinct in character from the Levitical. The most conspicuous representatives of this earlier or patriarchal priesthood were Noah, Abraham, and Melchizedek. The personal righteousness of Noah combined with his position as a father to establish his claim to rank as priest ; he stood before God in a double capacity, as at once the most righteous man of his generation, and as

confidence and hope " ; and that " the idea of mediation, of interposition with God on behalf of others, does not necessarily belong to the word." I take an opposite view, that the double relation, to God and man, makes the essence of priesthood. Christ Himself needed the incarnation to qualify Him as Priest for man, though He was already qualified by His eternal Sonship as Priest unto God. His office was to make propitiation for sins, and to succour the tempted ; therefore compassion on the ignorant and those that are out of the way, experience of suffering and temptation, mercy and faithfulness to man as well as God, are set down amongst the foremost of His qualifications for priesthood (Heb. ii. 17, 18 ; v. 2).

representative of his children and his children's children ; after the deluge he offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving on their behalf as well as his own for life delivered, and received from God in response a covenant of blessing for his remote descendants. The natural development of this family priesthood is perceptible in the time of Abraham and his sons ; as a body of dependants gather round the head of the family, he becomes priest to his household ; as the family grows in numbers, priesthood becomes the birth-right of the eldest son, and the hereditary dignity passes to the firstborn with the headship of the family. In this way the priesthood of the family expanded by degrees into the priesthood of the tribe. In Melchizedek is seen its highest dignity and most extended sphere, for he was at once king and priest ; and his priesthood was recognised more widely than his sovereignty : for Abraham, who owed him no allegiance as king, acknowledged his priesthood by the payment of tithes and acceptance of a blessing from him.

This priesthood had none of the definite form and systematic organization which belonged to the Levitical. Nor does the Old Testament record any direct interposition of Divine authority by which it was shaped ; but presents it as a spontaneous growth of natural religion, developed out of the relations of the family. Its claims to the respect of men rested rather on their willing acquiescence than on any exclusive privileges. Its sacredness was not maintained by jealous restrictions upon others' right to sacrifice. Cain and Abel, for instance, offered sacrifice each for himself ; Abraham did not cease to act as priest to his own household, because he recognised an independent and superior priesthood in Melchizedek ; nor did Jacob hesitate to build altars and offer sacrifice in the lifetime of his father Isaac. Throughout the patriarchal period men were free to erect altars, and perform sacrifices, whenever and wherever the spirit of devotion prompted them ; though certain men

obtained meanwhile, by reason of superior dignity, wisdom, or holiness, an exceptional position and title as priests.

2. The Levitical priesthood was very different in type, for the legislation of Sinai abruptly terminated natural freedom and power of growth; the priesthood became from that time a national institution, bound up with the theocracy; the forms of worship were stereotyped by rigid rules of law, and freedom of sacrifice only revived on exceptional occasions, like that of Elijah's sacrifice, when the national worship of Jehovah had fallen into disuse or been abolished through the prevalence of idolatry. For the central idea of the Law was the national organization of Israel under the immediate government of Jehovah: and His actual presence in their midst, represented by a material sanctuary, formed the keystone of the Mosaic system. Hence the institution of a strictly national priesthood became indispensable. For this visible sanctuary required a permanent staff of ministers, invested with special authority from God as keepers of His house, guardians of holy things and places, conductors or assistants at the religious services there held. The ritual of sacrifice also, which was prescribed in harmony with the religious sentiment of those rude times, called for the services of a select company of priests: and it was necessary to invest them with peculiar sanctity in the eyes of Israel, because the worship was designed to be an important instrument in the education of the national conscience, and abounded in suggestions of spiritual truth. It was their office to pronounce with authority on every case of sin and uncleanness, to shut out offenders from the house of God, to prescribe and present sacrifices for atonement and purification, to grant absolution in His name, and bring to Him acceptable offerings of every kind from His faithful servants. In order to satisfy these necessary requirements a priestly caste was created by the adoption of the hereditary principle; one tribe was

selected for ministration, and one family of that tribe solemnly consecrated in perpetuity to the priesthood. The permanent separation of priests and people was thus secured, and their consecration for life hallowed them and their office in the sight of all Israel. This exclusiveness was a new principle to the Israelites, first promulgated in the Law; and the revolt of Korah evinces the strength of the resentment felt among the congregation who were shut out from all holy offices, and the Levites who were denied admission to the priesthood. But the principle served the same purpose as the exclusion of the people from the holy chambers; it brought home to their minds a sense of their own uncleanness in the sight of Jehovah, and taught them His unapproachable holiness. The particular choice of the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron cannot be explained by any intrinsic superiority in holiness or zeal on their part; for Aaron was an inferior delegate of Moses, destitute of the high qualities that marked his brother for command; and though Phinehas and some of his descendants were bright examples of zeal and faith, others were equally conspicuous for profaneness and ungodliness. One instance is indeed recorded of Levi's zealous championship of the cause of God; but it was due apparently to the personal influence of Moses and Aaron on their own tribe, and was therefore the result, rather than the cause, of Divine selection. So far as appears from their history, both tribe and family were chosen in pursuance of a Divine purpose, without any special holiness or goodness of their own; as other families, tribes, and nations have been singled out from time to time under God's providence as His instruments for some special work. Future generations of priests and Levites were set apart before their birth for the inheritance of greater privileges and responsibilities than other Israelites; and even those who proved most unworthy did not thereby forfeit their position, for the holiness with which

they were invested was official and not personal. Meanwhile no personal holiness and no dignity entitled other Israelites to approach the altar, or enter the holy place; even the anointed kings of the house of David shared the exclusion of the people from priestly ministrations, and one monarch who presumed in his pride of power to intrude into the holy place was smitten with leprosy (2 Chron. xxvi. 16-21).¹

The most cursory examination of Scripture discloses the absolute control of the priesthood over public worship. The house of God was wholly in their charge, to open and to shut against any of God's people; day by day it was their office to cleanse, light, and order it, with the aid of subordinate Levites. It was they who kept ever burning the flame of Israel's sacrifice, and maintained the fire on the altar of incense. The congregation could not offer their morning or evening prayers with acceptance, unless the priest lighted his censer at the altar, that the smoke might rise up before the mercy-seat, and mingle with their prayers. All who were defiled by uncleanness, or burdened with sin, must needs repair to him for purification and atonement. All whose hearts were stirred with the spirit of devotion or gratitude to God appealed to him for his intervention in the consummation of their vows and presentation of their thankofferings.

And yet in spite of this Divine appointment and these exclusive privileges, it would be a great mistake to conclude that the Israelite priests played a chief part by reason of their office in guiding the destinies of their Church and nation. For it must be remembered that God did not

¹ Saul at Gilgal, and David at the entrance of the ark into Zion, are often supposed to have offered sacrifice with their own hands. But the history of the priesthood in those times, and the circumstances of each occasion, render it most unlikely that they dispensed with the services of a priest in making their offerings. The sin of Saul lay in disobedience to God's prophet, not in intrusion into the priestly office.

constitute them either rulers or guides of His people ; there were beside them other representatives of God who claimed an equally Divine commission from on high. A succession of rulers with various titles, differing according to the special functions entrusted to their charge, were raised up for the government of God's people in their early struggles for national independence and unity, such as Moses the lawgiver, Joshua the captain, Gideon the judge, Samuel the prophet, Saul and David the kings, all ruling in the Lord's name ; while after David followed a line of hereditary kings, anointed with holy oil like the hereditary priests. It is true that some priests were also numbered among these heaven-sent rulers, nor were there any stouter champions of God's cause against idolatry than the priests Jehoiada, Ezra, and the Maccabees ; but these rose to power by reason of their personal qualities as men of faith, and not in virtue of their priestly office.

Again, priests were not, as such, the teachers of Israel. They had no claim as a body to the inspiration of the prophets or the learning of the scribes. For prophets claimed direct inspiration from God ; they were listened to as bearers of God's message, and authorized interpreters of His will to their own as well as succeeding generations. The Old Testament itself was the fruit of their labours, and bears witness to the Spirit of God that was in them. And when in later days the spoken word gave place to the written, as the authoritative exponent of the mind of God, the scribes took the place of the prophets as interpreters of His will, and became in their turn the spiritual and religious guides of Israel. Both prophets and scribes numbered priests in their foremost ranks ; for Ezekiel and Jeremiah among prophets, Ezra himself the first and greatest of scribes, combined hereditary priesthood with their more important offices ; but as priests they were only ministers of the ritual, as prophets and scribes they were ministers

of the word of God. Now the ministration of the ritual became from the nature of the case formal and mechanical, because the ritual was from the beginning unalterably fixed, without power of growth or development, from the time of its first promulgation in the Law. The priest had no discretion to make the slightest change in the customs once delivered to Moses; his functions were purely ministerial. The result was that, in spite of the respect which his sacred calling procured for every priest who led a consistent life, the true leaders, reformers, and restorers of Israel, who swayed men's lives, and acted on their minds and consciences, were rulers, prophets, and scribes alone. Absolute as the Israelite priest was within his own particular sphere, that sphere was strictly limited to formal service about the house of God; and his Divine commission was constantly overshadowed by higher representatives of God, who either carried on the government in His name, or embodied His Spirit in words of power.

3. The New Testament reveals a far higher ideal of priesthood in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. So distinct, however, is the priesthood of Christ in all its outward features from any previous type, that a generation elapsed after His death before His work of redemption was presented under that aspect. For the first generation of Christians were Israelites, trained under the Levitical system, and imbued with the spirit of the Hebrew Scriptures. Their idea of priestly functions was necessarily formed from the ancient ritual of their fathers, to which the hearts of Christian Israel clung with unabated reverence and affection; and their experience of priesthood was limited to the earthly priests, with whom they were brought into continual contact in their religious life. Until therefore they beheld altar and mercy-seat visibly doomed to destruction, and the impending abolition of the daily sacrifice and the yearly atonement forced them to ask in dismay

what was to take their place, they did not connect the idea of priesthood with Christ, though they knew Him as their Prophet and their King. Then at last God revealed to them that the priesthood, which they beheld passing away, was but a shadow of the real, and that the substance remained unchanged and unchangeable in the person of their Eternal High Priest, enthroned beside His Father in heaven.¹

It was impossible to arrive at this doctrine from contemplation of the earthly life of Christ; for this was not priest-like, but the very reverse. He was born a king of the royal tribe of Judah and house of David; He was, and He claimed to be, the true King of Israel, albeit a spiritual king. Again, He came as a prophet; even His enemies were constrained to admit His wisdom as a teacher and bow before His authority as a prophet. But He was not born a priest of the chosen lineage of Aaron; He claimed no special privilege of access to God's earthly temple; He performed no priestly function; He neither was, nor could be mistaken for, a priest in the days of His flesh. The whole Israelite conception of a priest as engaged in material sacrifices at a visible altar in a local temple must be dismissed from the mind before it can grasp the real nature of the priesthood of Christ.

For that priesthood did not begin on earth. His earthly life was a continual preparation for it, and that in two ways: (1) He was gaining fellowship with man as His brother in the flesh, being subject, like him, to weakness and to pain, enduring temptation, wrestling with inward and outward evil, helping the infirmities, healing the diseases, and forgiving the sins of men; (2) He was offering

¹ The priesthood of Christ is developed for the first time in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Many considerations, particularly its reference to the impending judgments of God, fix its date as written on the eve of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Himself as a perfect sacrifice, pure, spotless, undefiled, for the sins of the world. But just as the mediatorial function of the Levitical priest began after the victim had been slain by presenting its life-blood and burning the fat or flesh on God's altar, so also Christ's mediatorial office did not begin till He had finally completed by His death His work of self-sacrifice.¹ "If He were on earth" (it is written), "He would not be a priest"; for God had appointed other priests to present the life-blood of earthly victims before His mercy-seat on earth. Christ's office was to plead in heaven the sacrifice which He had made on earth of His own life for the lives of His human brethren, and make this a basis for their reconciliation with God.

The possession of immortal life was an essential qualification for this priesthood; for man is himself immortal, and needs therefore an everliving priest, not of this world, to satisfy his requirements before God. An unbroken line of mortal priests was well fitted to maintain the permanence of ministration through successive generations at an earthly temple. But an eternal high priest for man needed such a power of indestructible life resident for ever in his person, as was obscurely typified by the mysterious personal dignity of Melchizedek. Even Christ Himself did not fulfil that ideal till He had been raised above mortal weakness and earthly contact with sin. As the Levitical priest went through a formal death, and received a formal gift of new life from God, in the ceremonial of priestly consecration,

¹ Under the Law the duties of presenting the victim, laying the hand upon its head, and slaying it, devolved upon the person or congregation who offered the sacrifice, and were performed by them or their representatives (Lev. i. iv.). On the day of atonement and similar solemn occasions the priest performed these duties (Lev. xvi. 15; 2 Chron. xxix. 24). He acted on these occasions in a double capacity, as representative of his people, and as mediator for them. But the two functions are not the less distinct because on particular occasions one person united both. Christ in the days of His flesh offered Himself as representative Son of man, but He was not appointed Mediator between God and man till He entered into heaven itself.

before he was installed in his sacerdotal office (Lev. viii.) ; so Christ did not assume His priesthood till He had through death triumphed finally over every weakness of the flesh, and put on His immortality.

Again, the priesthood of Christ is essentially spiritual. God is a Spirit, and spiritual communion between God and man lies at the bottom of all true worship. Its outward forms may vary indefinitely, but there must be some real approach of man to God in spirit and in truth, or else there is no real worship ; for the value of worship depends on its power to effect communion of spirit with an unseen God. The most elementary conception of a priest attributes to him the power to bring men nearer to God than they could come without his aid. When once therefore the true nature of God is apprehended, it becomes obvious that no formal approach can satisfy the ideal of priesthood, and that the priest who does not achieve spiritual communion between God and man is reaching after mere shadows of worship, and failing to secure acceptance in the sight of God. Even the Israelite priest, invested as he was with a Divine commission, filled nevertheless a subordinate place to the prophet, because the spiritual intercourse between God and His people fell within the prophet's sphere, while the priest was concerned with men's outward offerings, and had no direct cognisance of their inner lives.

But it is not enough to recognise the priesthood of Christ as spiritual ; it is necessary to consider further what kind of spirit animated it. For each successive priesthood has differed in spirit according to the different conception of God which it expressed. There was a marked difference between the patriarchal and Levitical priesthoods ; for though God was from the beginning regarded as the creator and invisible ruler of the world, yet in the earlier period He was contemplated as the friend of man, readily accessible to human gifts and intercourse, and at times walking

visibly with man ; the growing sense of sin had not yet built up a wall of separation between Him and His creatures. The revelation of Sinai transformed this relation of man to God. It created multiplied forms of uncleanness, it deepened the sense of sin, it intensified the holiness of the God of Israel as unable to bear the sight of iniquity, and limited all direct intercourse with Him to a few chosen priests. Atonement for sin became the central idea of mediation, and almost absorbed every other conception of priestly functions ; even the burnt offering, though presented by God's own people and most faithful servants, was viewed as a species of atonement. The sense of God's love was almost lost in the dread of His holiness ; for atonement was fixed by an immutable covenant, and forgiveness of sin came no longer as a spontaneous act of personal mercy and love, but was claimed as the legal right of those who adopted the prescribed means of averting the wrath of God. Accordingly the dominant spirit of the Israelite ritual placed the personal initiative of worship in man, seeking by the appointed method to act upon the mind of God, to win His favour, or avert His anger.

But the God, whom Christ reveals, is not an impersonation of holiness and justice sitting apart in His majesty, but a heavenly Father of infinite love even to those who have not begun to love Him, whose heart goes forth to meet His wayward children when they are yet a great way off, who is ever waiting to forgive, and eager to bless. The initiative here is wholly on the side of God. Whereas the Israelite priesthood provided means for man seeking God, Christ came forth from God to win back fallen man ; and no idea can be formed of His priesthood without taking account of this radical difference ; for it involves a revolution in the idea of priesthood, when it is realized that the barriers which divide God and man lie wholly in the heart of man, and that the work of reconciliation has to be carried on

entirely there. The ideal priest under the gospel must plead with men's consciences, reassure their doubts and fears, pave the way for their return to God by the removal of every obstacle ; he must win his way into men's confidence as the authorized messenger of God and the friend of man.

The perfect fulfilment of such a task demands a perfect insight into the mind of God and undoubted authority from Him ; such as belongs to the Son of God alone, who is wholly one in spirit with the Father. Therefore the priesthood of Christ is in Scripture based upon His Sonship. It is said that the address of the second Psalm, "Thou art my Son," conveys to Him at the same time with the position of a son priestly rights inherent in that adoption (Heb. v. 5) ; and His Divine authority as the ideal high priest for man is made to rest on the fact that He is the eternal Son of God.

Again the ideal high priest for man must also possess perfect insight into the mind of man and entire sympathy with his spirit. Therefore Christ's assumption of the office was preceded by His incarnation. It issued out of this indeed as an immediate result. For when He became Son of man, and made Himself one with men in flesh and blood, He recognised their birthright as sons of God (however much God's image might be now defaced in them) with all its consequences ; He was not ashamed to call them brethren on earth, or to present Himself before God in heaven as firstborn of many brethren. He reestablished for mankind all their rights, as members of the spiritual family of God ; and they became anew sons of God and brethren of Christ. As brethren therefore they acquired a claim on His brotherly love ; and His priesthood on their behalf followed as a necessary consequence from their brotherhood. For how can any true son be himself one in spirit with his father, and yet bear to see his brethren,

who are likewise heirs to the father's love, shut out from it! He must perforce set himself to open a way for their return home, and stretch forth his hands to help them onwards on their way to the father. In other words, Christ could not but become man's priest unto God by reason of the greatness of His love for man, as a child of God.

This change in the nature of His priesthood involves a corresponding change in the sacrifices which He presents to God. A spiritual priest must offer spiritual sacrifices. The sacrifices of the old covenant have each their Christian counterpart. As the Mosaic tabernacle was made after the pattern of a heavenly archetype (Exod. xxv. 40), so the ritual was typical even in minute details of a spiritual system. The most conspicuous instance of this was found in the yearly entrance of the high priest alone into God's secret chamber, to make atonement for the sins of his people; by which Israel had been educated to trust in the mediation of the one spiritual high priest who was to enter alone into the Father's presence on behalf of all His children. But now, instead of the yearly atonement and the many offerings for sin and uncleanness prescribed in the Law, the gospel pointed to Christ's one offering of Himself as an all-sufficient atonement. It left no room for any further sin offering; for it revealed most fully once for all, not only the Son's entire forgiveness of the sinners for whom He gave up His own life, but the love of the Father also, who had sent Him to die for sinners: and it was impossible to add anything to the force of this assurance. But though the sacrifice is finished and complete, the remembrance of it must be kept ever fresh in the minds of men; for it is still as necessary as it was in Israelite days that the sinner should confess his sins over it, declare his own unworthiness to stand in God's sight, and send up his prayer for forgiveness in its name. The enthronement

of human sympathy in the living person of a heavenly mediator, able and willing to stand between the penitent and the just consequences of his misdeeds, continues therefore a vital necessity for the restoration of the guilty. There is no visible cloud of incense now rising up before God's mercy-seat, and mingling with the prayers of God's faithful people, that they may find acceptance with Him; but the intercession of the Spirit is needed to help our infirmities, and our High Priest must quicken us with heavenly fire, that we may pray aright. Moreover Christ Himself, when He replaced burnt offering by an absolute surrender of Himself to do God's will, gave a clear example of the continual burnt offering which Christians are bound to render to God in Him. Christians again are even more bound, than Israelites were, to offer to God the fruit of the lips giving Him thanks, and to bring out of the means, with which He has blessed them, gifts for His service, for His poor, and for the use of brethren in Christ; these are the Christian thankofferings, to be made through Christ, *i.e.* with humble acknowledgment of their own unworthiness, and thankful remembrance of His redemption.

4. The New Testament presents one more type of priesthood, subordinate to, but inseparable from, the priesthood of Christ; *viz.* the priesthood of Christian men. The latter is the inevitable result of the former; for whatever is true of Christ as a man, must also be true of those that are Christ's. He undertakes no office in which He does not make His brethren sharers. If He be a king, they are to reign with Him as companions of His throne; if judge, they are to be seated as His assessors beside His seat of judgment: they are destined partners of His heavenly glory, as they are called to be of His earthly sufferings. It would be alien to the whole spirit of Christianity to conceive Him sitting in heaven as a solitary priest-king like Melchizedek. Therefore the Epistle to the Hebrews, when it

applies to Him the prophetic language of Psalm cx., "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," alters the words so far as to entitle Him, not priest, but high priest (Heb. v. 10). The risen Lord is not alone in His high office, but firstborn of the many children of the resurrection, and leader of a glorious company of human brethren, whom He has made kings and priests unto His God and Father. The inspired author of that epistle beheld in glorious visions the great host of the faithful departed, from righteous Abel downwards, first awaiting the death of Christ for consecration to a heavenly priesthood, then gathered as consecrated spirits round their Lord in heaven (Heb. xi. 40 ; xii. 23).¹

But this priesthood is not limited to the Church triumphant in heaven ; it belongs equally to the Church militant on earth. It is not a future dignity reserved for saints in heaven, but a present duty and existing privilege of every true member of Christ on earth. St. Peter, and St. John in the Revelation, are both explicit on this head : "Ye are a royal priesthood"; "Christ hath made us kings and priests unto His God and Father." Both speak of priesthood as the actual and undoubted heritage of all Christians. Moreover the language of St. Peter derives additional emphasis from its original application in the Old Testament ; for the words are not the Apostle's own, but are borrowed by him from God's address to Israel at the time when He admitted them to covenant at Sinai as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. xix. 6). He then declared that He had chosen the whole nation, brought them nearer to Himself than any other men, and made them by His special favour worshippers in His courts, and keepers of His sanctuary, that they might become priests unto the Gentiles,

¹ In both these passages our version has unfortunately substituted "*perfect*" for *consecrate* : the latter is the correct rendering of *τελειοῦν* in all the passages of Scripture which refer to priesthood.

and that the world might learn through them the knowledge of God and of His holiness. I know no other passage of the Old Testament suggesting a priesthood distinct from the priesthood of the altar and the sanctuary. It contains the germ of a noble truth, which long lay half-buried and forgotten—for the time was not yet ripe for the comprehension of a world-wide spiritual priesthood—but bore fruit at last when the Apostle seized on it to remind the Christian Israel that they have succeeded in their turn to the priestly privileges and responsibilities of Israel; and that God has now chosen them out of the world, and revealed Himself to them in the face of Jesus Christ, that through them the light of His countenance may shine upon all who are now walking in darkness; and so all His children of every nation and every class may be brought near to Him in faith and love, and enter in their turn as consecrated priests through the rent veil into His holy presence.

The truth is, that the great heavenly High Priest needs the services of all His brethren on earth for carrying on His work of reconciliation. His plan of salvation is to make man the instrument of man's restoration. Therefore, as we read in Hebrews x. 14, He has consecrated for ever all those that are or shall be dedicated to the service of God.¹ He gives to every member of His Church grace to become His under-priest. He has indeed other means of bringing men to God besides the cooperation of Christian brethren, for He speaks to them by the voice of His Spirit, and the calls of His providence: but He does not rely on spiritual influences alone; He uses largely the living power and love of human priests, to reassure the guilty, raise up the fallen, and strengthen the weak; He breathes into them

¹ Our version reads here again "*perfected*" for *consecrated*. But it is not true that Christians are yet perfected; they are already consecrated, *i.e.* made priests unto God.

His own spirit of mingled holiness and love, and strengthens them that they may impart a like strength to others.¹

I find therefore in the doctrine of Christian priesthood a protest against the narrow view of religion which limits each man's duty to his own personal salvation, without regard to the welfare of other human souls. It is impossible to reconcile any selfish isolation of individual Christians with the spirit of Christ; no man can become a member of Christ without other men acquiring an immediate claim upon him in Christ's name to become a priest unto them, that he may bring them if possible as near to God as he stands himself. Christ has made us all members one of another, that those who are strong may strengthen weaker brethren, those who are wise may teach the ignorant, those who have come near to God may draw those who are far off. It is the law of His kingdom that every Christian should become by the aid of His Spirit a fresh centre of religious practice and Christian worship. He bids each of His disciples, as soon as he has grasped the hand of his heavenly High Priest, stretch forth a hand in his turn to forlorn outcast wanderers. By this ministry of souls He binds high and low together in the common service of their heavenly Father, weaving chains of human lovingkindness to reach down from His Father's throne in heaven to the lowest depths of earthly misery, until all God's children are embraced within the golden network of Divine love.

F. RENDALL.

¹ It must not be forgotten that in dealing with Christian priesthood I refer exclusively to the scriptural usage of the term "priest." The same word is also used in the Prayer-book and Articles, with a distinct meaning of its own. When these, retaining the language of more ancient liturgies, speak of the three orders of Bishops Priests and Deacons, they obviously employ the name to describe the primitive order of *πρεσβύτεροι*, designated in Scripture as "elders"; whereas the title of priest is in the Bible reserved exclusively for the translation of the Greek *ιερεύς*.