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other side of the picture, the *reciprocal* feature it enshrines, and without which we shall fail to realise the blessing it contains for ourselves as God's dear children, beloved for Christ's sake in spite of all our failures. Malachi gives it in most felicitous language (chap. 3:16; 7): 'They that feared the LORD spake often one with another; and a *Book of Remembrance* was written before Him, for them that feared the LORD, and that *thought upon His name*. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that Day, when I make up my jewels (or 'peculiar treasure', R.V.); and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him'.

'Sing praise unto the LORD, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the REMEMBRANCE OF HIS HOLINESS' (Psalm 30:4).

PEN PORTRAITS FROM OLD RECORDS

W. WILCOX

5. Servers of the Tabernacle and the Temple 1 Chronicles 6: 31-50

I. The Ministry of Song. vv 31-33.

It is of interest to note how large a part in Israel's Worship of Jehovah was given to song. There are songs found in the works of Moses, in the historical books, in the books of the Prophets, as well as in the more specifically poetical books. These songs were:

(a) *Ascriptions of Praise to the Lord*, giving expression to their wonder at His greatness, thanks for His goodness and praise of His Glory.

(b) *Outlets of Joyous Emotion*. At seasons of rejoicing, at the great festivals, or at times of national thanksgiving, they burst into song; ascribing their joy to their relation with the Lord, bringing their praise to His Name and attributing their conquests

over their foes to the Divine intervention on their behalf. Frequently, as in the Psalms, they exhort one another to praise the Lord when with rhythmic note, with melodies of harp and cymbal and phonic and anti-phonic stanzas they spoke forth their joyful praise. At times, under the stress of their joyous emotion they recited great episodes of their national history, praising the God of covenanted grace and mercy Who had so signally shewn His favours to them.

(c) *A Ministry unto the Lord*, being a definite service to which those who led the songs were appointed. We may here notice that those who were engaged in this ministry came under;

(i) *Royal Appointment*. Seeing that the pilgrim way was now past and that the ministries of the sons of Merari, of Kohath, and of Gershom to bear the furniture and structure of the tabernacle were no longer needed, David reorganised the Levites, dividing them into courses and assigning to them varied tasks. Here the sons of Merari were set over the service of song.

Let us remind ourselves, that, in our present service for God, the part we play, the task we perform must also come under the appointment of the Royal Hand of our Lord. When there is an attempt to allocate to ourselves the task we deem most suitable to us, and forget that it is His hand alone that can appoint, or when we attribute to some ecclesiastical hierarchy of however distinguished or single a nature the right to authorize our service, then we plainly deviate from the path laid down and illustrated in the Word.

When we are assured that we have been given our task, then it is our duty to perform it as unto the Lord, and not allow anything to turn us from it.

(ii) *The Requirements of the House of the Lord*, for it was in that House and in connection with its ministries that these men led the songs of praise. It was in that House that God had promised to meet with His people, and it was there that this communion was based on the fact of sacrifice having been offered and the blood sprinkled, a righteous basis was established on which

such meeting could take place. There their worship was offered as they ministered unto the Lord.

We are reminded of the reference to our Lord made by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'In the midst of the Assembly will I sing Thy Praise'. Heb. 2:12, where the Lord Himself is said to lead the praise offered by His people, while, in the concluding chapter the believer is exhorted to 'offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually'. Heb. 13:15.

In our corporate, as in our individual worship this praiseful song is to ascend to God, for with such a sacrifice He 'is well pleased'.

(iii) *The Rest which the Ark had now found.* The wanderings of the wilderness were over and the people of God had found their 'home' in the land of promise. Hence also the ark of the covenant was no longer carried from place to place, but had been brought to a settled place and there, in tabernacle or temple, the ark had 'rest'. In the ark had been placed originally, the tables of stone giving God's law for the moral nature of man, the pot of manna reminding Israel of God's provision for the physical sustenance of man, and Aaron's rod that budded showing God's appointment of the priesthood for man's spiritual needs. Here was provision for man's whole personality showing that God was the All-Sufficient for His people.

We, too, have found in Christ our all-sufficiency, for in Him we see the righteousness of God revealed, the food essential for the sustenance of spiritual life and the service of the priestly order securing our access to and acceptance by God fully manifest. It is when in Him we see both God's and our rest fully secured, and our appreciation of His work at Calvary deepened as we have found our rest in His rest, that we can really enter into this worshipful and songful praise.

II. A Ministry of Service. v. 48.

But there was not only such a service of song to which appointment was made, there were other branches of service for these sons of Merari. We may notice that this further service was,

(a) *Varied.* Its particular type is not named, it is only des-

cribed as all manner of service. Whether it was of the 'more honourable' kind, or of that which might be said to be 'without honour', if it was a service to which they had been appointed and rendered as unto God, it was a service which God could accept and which would minister to the good of all the congregation.

(b) *Priestly*. It must be a priestly service and rendered by a priestly people. 'Their brethren also, the Levites, were appointed' says the Chronicler.

The service of believers also is of a priestly character, for they have been appointed 'to offer up spiritual sacrifices', and none other is acceptable to God.

(c) *Holy*. All that is associated with 'the tabernacle of the house of God' must be holy. Nought that defiled could be connected with it. Every precaution was taken to exclude the defiling or defiled thing.

It is necessary to remember this today when certain elements of laxity and carelessness have crept in among the children of God, and the most holy things are often treated in an indifferent manner and commingled with things of doubtful nature.

Let our service be such as becomes the people of God who render that service to the God Whose first characteristic is declared to be holiness.

III. A Ministry of Sacrifice. v. 49.

This was the service of Aaron and his sons. It was mainly an Altar ministry, connected with the Altar of Burnt Offering and the Altar of Incense.

The fulness of the work of the Lord Jesus at Calvary as presented to God for His satisfaction, and the sweet savour of His continued ministry in the holy place as ever ascending to God are the substance of that priestly sacrifice which the believer offers as he comes before God. No more does he take the blood of bulls and of goats, no longer does he gather earthly spices and, compounding them together, makes that which, cast upon the golden altar, yielded a fragrance of incense which filled the holy place. It is rather the virtue and sweetness of that one, final and perfect sacrifice of Christ that occupies the mind and heart of the

believer and fills his hands as he comes into the holy Presence of God.

Mentioned with the altar ministry is *all* the work of the place most holy and this service was necessary for the successful accomplishment of the other. Because of the sacred obligation to serve at the altar, there can be no neglect of attention to the instruments of that service. This minor service is for God, and so is to be engaged in with the same diligence and holy zeal as is the major service. Let there be no laxity in small things, lest the major service be spoiled.

This service was rendered not only for themselves but to make an atonement for Israel and it was ever to conform to the commandment of God as mediated through His Servant Moses.

All our service must conform to the Word, that Word which has been so miraculously preserved to us and which speaks to us today as the voice of the living God. There can be no departure from it: given through His servants by His Spirit, it remains the one true and faithful Guide for life and service.

AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF ST JOHN'S GOSPEL

Prof. F. F. BRUCE, D.D.

II. Jesus Reveals Himself to the World (John 1:19-12:50)

(c) MINISTRY OF JESUS IN GALILEE, JERUSALEM AND BY THE LAKE
(John 4:45—6:71)

(v) *The Bread of Life* (John 6:22-71)

Ch. 6, v. 22—*On the morrow the multitude which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save one, and that Jesus entered not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples went away alone*—Next day the crowd of people that had been fed with the loaves and fishes found Jesus on the west shore of the Lake. They wondered how He had got across, because they saw that He had not gone with the disciples in their boat, and there was no other boat that He could have used.