

ART. III.—THE SACERDOTIUM OF CHRIST.

PART I.—INTRODUCTORY.

THE word "*sacerdotium*" is a connecting-link between the Gospel of Christ and the religions of the world. The Gods of the heathens had their altars and their priests—men set apart to serve at their altars with sacrificial service. The true *root-idea* of *sacerdotium* is probably a connecting-link between the truth as we know it and a primitive tradition of a primeval history, if not of a primeval revelation. In the midst of corruption—the corruption of human error—there was ever a witness to a record, the record of Divine truth. In the "Pontifex Maximus" of Roman history we may see a testimony in some sort to man's need of "a great High Priest," even as we see a foreshadowing of Him who is "made higher than the heavens" in the *Sovereign Pontiff* of old, who was King of Salem, and Priest of the Most High God. Altars, we know, were older than the Exodus. Sacrifice was older than the Flood, and *sacerdotium* was far earlier than the sons of Aaron.

These are trite remarks, the statement, it may be thought, of the merest truisms, yet they are not altogether insignificant. They have a bearing on a very important subject. The Mosaic idea of *sacerdotium* should be regarded in connection with what was in the days of Moses both the past and the future of priesthood. It is true, no doubt, that it was mainly concerned with the future, but not altogether with the future alone. The Pentateuch itself testifies to a more ancient *sacerdotium* independent of, and superior to, the *sacerdotium* of the law—a Gentile *sacerdotium* in a far higher place—the place of a far nobler office, than the Mosaic Priesthood.

But the purpose of these observations must not be misunderstood. It is not intended at all to detract anything from the teaching which is to be obtained from the careful study of the ceremonial law and its witness to the true character and functions of the *sacerdotium*. It is only contended that this teaching, to be viewed aright, should be regarded as a part, and only a part, of the unfolding of the counsels of God. When in the light of the Mosaic ritual we have endeavoured to form a true idea of the true *sacerdotium*, we are not to suppose that no light can be shed on our idea from other sources. There is a volume of the roll containing the hidden mysteries of God's infinite wisdom, which things angels desire to look into. And this is gradually unrolled in a light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

We are to look at the *sacerdotium* of the law not without an eye to the records of the past; but we shall most grievously err if we think to shade it from the clear light which shines upon it from the sure word of prophecy. Much more shall we err if we desire to examine it all apart from the truth and the glory of the Gospel of Christ.

In the light of the New Testament, altar, and sacrifice, and *sacerdotium*, are brought together under an epiphany of glory which ceremonial teachings could lead up to, and prepare for, but failed to exhibit. Doubtless, indeed, there were saints of old whose faith looked through and beyond the veil, and saw (some, perhaps, not dimly) under the shadows of the Old Covenant what belonged to the light of the New. Still, the teaching of the Old Covenant was the teaching of shadows—shadows which in due time were to pass away.

When the veil is taken away, as from the face of Moses, sacrifice and *sacerdotium* are to be seen, not only in relation to legal ordinances, but much rather in their relation to the need of the sinner man, in his fallen, outcast, ruined condition, the heir of condemnation and death, and herein in their relation also to the glory of God and His eternal purposes of mercy for the lost. A new light is made to shine on sacrificial death when it is seen in connection with the righteous judgment of God, and with Divine Redemption from the condemnation of sin, from the sting of death and the power of Satan. This is the view of the New Testament. And in the same view with this, but beyond this, is to be seen the rainbow of a new Divine glory encircling the idea—the now enthroned idea of *sacerdotium*. It is, if we may so speak, the rainbow of the New Covenant—the rainbow round about the throne—the throne which belongs to the one High Priest, seen now as the Mediator of the New Covenant—the Covenant of Peace made by His blood.

If this is so, we have need to beware of the error of divesting our sacerdotal idea of its New Testament glory, and conceiving of it again only as under its Mosaic veil. The New Testament is not so much to be interpreted by Old Testament shadows, as those shadows are to receive interpretation and explanation from the revelation of the Divine originals, from the pattern of which they were to be made as necessarily imperfect and inadequate copies.

The neglect of this truth will surely lead, as it has led, to a Judaizing process in respect of the faith of the Christian Church, tending to mar its perfection and dim its glory, and to turn souls back from the liberty of Christ, and bring them again into bondage to the elements of the world. To this cause must be attributed the tendency to sacerdotalize the Christian ministry,

a tendency which from the time of Cyprian has been more or less a growing evil in the midst of the Church's influence for good, and which is to be traced through the ages as a leaven gradually corrupting the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ.

But this is not all. The bearing of these introductory remarks on some modern forms of error will appear more clearly as we proceed. But it may be well, perhaps, here to ask some special attention to so much as this: That a prevalent view of the *sacerdotium* of Christ, and His present High Priestly functions in heaven, claiming to rest on the typical foreshewing in the ceremonial ritual of the law, is not only a misapprehension of the true teaching of the type, but a mistake which could hardly have been conceived save in the dimness of the shadowy light which is passed, and which should disappear as soon as the veil is removed, and the darkness expelled by the clear shining of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, it can hardly be doubted that the Christian faith might be held, and held in its saving power, without any teaching whatever, or any knowledge whatever, of any *sacerdotium* whatever, except so far as the sacerdotal idea may be said to be implicitly involved in the simplest Articles of the Christian faith.

It is not surely without an instructive lesson for us that we may mark the position which teaching directly concerning *sacerdotium* (as such) is found to occupy in the writings of the New Testament. In the earlier dogmatic Epistles we do not meet with any teaching concerning it *by name* at all. This is surely not a little remarkable. And if so, it certainly ought to be not remarked merely, but well considered, and carefully weighed.

Take, for example, St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. It will hardly be disputed that we have here what may be truly called a systematic treatise concerning the truth and the power of the Gospel of Christ. And what is it which we have here set before us as the great object of our faith? It is undoubtedly the death of Christ, the equivalent of which is the blood of Christ. And we are taught to see our justification (the justification of the ungodly) as resulting immediately and directly from that death regarded in its juridical aspect, with its redemptive side turned towards us, for our faith's apprehension. Moreover, in just one very important verse we have this redemptive death brought into line with the sacrificial ideas of the Old Covenant—ideas which thus, we can hardly doubt, are meant to receive their true interpretation here. We have also a view given us of Christ at the right hand of God, and making intercession for us. But

(if we except metaphorical allusions) there is, throughout the Epistle not a word concerning any *sacerdotium* in the New Covenant. In the whole treatise there is not a word of instruction directly concerning the Priesthood of Christ.

The same may be said of the Epistle to the Galatians, in which the redemptive view of Christ's death, and the view of His redemption as by substitution, is prominent, but in which we look in vain for a word concerning *sacerdotium*.

So in the Epistle to Philippians there is not an allusion to any sacerdotal functions. And in the Epistle to the Colossians, while we have teaching concerning Christ's session at God's right hand, and strong insistence on the redemptive, peace-making efficacy of Christ's death upon the Cross, there is absolute silence concerning *sacerdotium*.

But there is another Epistle which, of all the Epistles, is most like a manual of Christian theology. This is the Epistle to the Ephesians. In this Epistle, besides the teaching of the redemptive efficacy of Christ's death, which runs parallel with the Epistle to the Colossians, we have a statement, as of a well-understood fundamental truth, concerning Christ's giving Himself¹ for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour, and much also concerning the gifts of the ascended Saviour; but still no word directly concerning the *sacerdotium* of the Christian Church, not one word concerning any Priesthood of Christ in the heavens.

Now all this is perfectly intelligible, and quite natural, on the supposition that the true essential ideas of *sacerdotium* are to be sought and found as implicitly contained in the teaching of these Epistles concerning Christ's redemptive death, and His heavenly intercession and saving succour. But it is quite inconsistent with the theory that we are to see in Christ's heavenly *sacerdotium* a most important function, an all-important object of every Christian's belief, which is not at all involved in the teaching of these Epistles, which is something quite outside of, quite beyond all that they have taught us as pertaining to the Christian faith.

¹ Chap. v. 2, *παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν*. So in v. 25 and Gal. ii. 20 it can hardly need to be said that the verb implies the willing surrender of the sacrificial victim, not any sacerdotal function of the priest. Cf. Isa. liii. 6 and 12 (LXX.) with Rom. iv. 25. Yet error has arisen from want of marking clearly this distinction. Thus, e.g., if I mistake not, the idea of surrender unto death, as implied in the institution of the Lord's Supper was too soon clothed upon (by human thoughts) with the idea of sacrificial oblation. And, as a natural consequence, the starting-point of the *sacerdotium* after the order of Melchizedek was transferred from the Cross to the Supper. And then, as a further consequence, the "Do this" was regarded as investing the apostles with the *sacerdotium* of the New Covenant.

But yet further. Let us look at the records we possess—inspired records—of the beginnings of the Christian Church, as contained in the Acts of the Apostles. Here we have various proclamations of the Gospel of Christ, many instructions in the Christian faith—*elementary* instructions, doubtless, for the most part, yet instructions sufficing for the saving of believers. They set before us Christ: Christ once the Crucified—Christ now the Exalted—Christ at God's right hand—Christ the Giver of Divine gifts—Christ the Head of the corner—Christ the only Saviour, by faith in Whom believers receive remission of sins.

But in vain we look for one word bearing witness by name to the *sacerdotium* of Christ.

Is this to be accounted for? It is easy to account for it on the supposition that the teaching of Christ's *sacerdotium* gathers together and unifies and develops the ideas contained in the elementary teachings of the Apostles. It can hardly be accounted for on the supposition that we are to build on the teaching of Christ's *sacerdotium* new and most important doctrines which had no place in the early apostolic doctrine.

And this argument might be added to from a fair view of the visions of the Apocalypse. There we have indeed the symbolical representation of the Saviour as our High Priest in the heavens. We have set clearly before us the cleansing efficacy of His atoning blood. We behold Him as Himself applying that shed blood for our washing or for our loosing.¹ Moreover, we are taught to recognise His death as our redemption price; we see ourselves redeemed by His having been slain for us. But we find nothing whatever that can fairly be said to set Him before us as either offering sacrifice, or being offered in sacrifice in heaven.²

Nor is this all. It would doubtless be a mistake to rest overmuch weight on what is *absent* from the teachings of our blessed Lord Himself. The Disciples were to wait for the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. He, when He was come, was to guide them into *the whole truth*. He was to testify of Christ. He was to show them the things of Christ. He was to glorify Christ. Nevertheless, it was to be part of

¹ In Rev. i. 5, against the weight of MSS. evidence for *λῶσαντι* (which will vary according to our estimate of the uncials A and C) may perhaps be set the "mystery" contained in John xiii. Cf. especially verses 1 and 10. Cf. also 1 John i. 7 and Rev. vii. 14; and view in connection Heb. x. 21-23.

² If the angel of Rev. viii. 3 is to be understood as symbolizing Christ, and even if we suppose Him (with Archdeacon Lee, p. 597) to be first seen as *over the brazen altar* (cf. vi. 9), His *offering* (the word is *ἕνα δῶση*) is only upon the *golden altar* of incense (upon which might be offered no sacrifice, Exod. xxx. 9) "with *the prayers* of all saints."

the Spirit's teaching work to bring all things to their remembrance which Christ had said to them. And it is surely to be much observed that He had said no word to them concerning His priesthood. Yet He had spoken to them of His ascension, of His going His way to Him that sent Him, of His going to prepare a place for them, of His future intercession for them, of the Divine Gift Which He would send unto them from the Father.

Now, this is all perfectly natural and intelligible on the hypothesis that we have here the telling of functions which were afterwards to be gathered into the teaching of Christ's *sacerdotium*; but it is surely hardly consistent with the notion that we are to see in Christ's heavenly *sacerdotium* that which is altogether foreign to all that Christ had taught His Disciples concerning Himself both before and after His resurrection from the dead.

And may we not yet add to all this a very significant fact? The doctrine, if accepted, must needs, in consistency, claim for itself a high place among the objects of a Christian's belief. Yet there has been found no room for it in any creed of the Christian Church. It is surely strange that an important matter of belief should never have found a place among the Articles of the Christian faith. Surely we may say that, according to the doctrine of some of our modern teachers, the silence of the earlier Epistles and of the early apostolic preaching—to say nothing of the discourses of our blessed Lord—on what, if true, must be regarded as such an important article of our faith, is utterly unaccountable.

On the theory of Christ's offering His sacrifice continually for ever in heaven, because He is a priest for ever, it is surely inexplicable that all New Testament teaching concerning His priesthood should have been omitted till the truth was taught in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

It is only when we come to this Epistle of apparently later date, and an Epistle specially concerned with the exposition of Jewish ordinances in their relation to the revealed mysteries of the Gospel, that we have set before us a doctrine of Christian *sacerdotium* at all. Here we have indeed the truth of *sacerdotium*—the *sacerdotium* of the true High Priest of our profession. But have we here the doctrine in question set clearly before us? I have confidence that it will be found that this question can only be fairly answered in the negative. If a mistaken exegesis of two isolated texts has sometimes answered in the affirmative, it is simply because those texts have, for the purpose, been *isolated indeed* from the whole tenour of the doctrine in which they are set. But here we shall see the *sacerdotium* of Christ set before us—and this

should be well observed—not in anything like an isolated position, but to be viewed in connection with the redemptive aspect of Christ's death—in the aspect in which it is seen as the blood of the new covenant, and in relation to the risen and ascended Saviour as the Mediator of that covenant.

Are we, then, to make light of the Epistle to the Hebrews? Is it for us to disparage its distinctive teachings? God forbid! We are not only to recognise fully its important position in the Canon of the New Testament Scriptures: we should not fail to estimate its high value in relation to the whole volume of inspiration, and to the history of God's dealings with the human race, and to the unfolding of the revelation of His wondrous loving-kindness for the lost. In its teaching concerning *sacerdotium*, we not only have an idea put before us which may be said to be a uniting centre, binding together into one the doctrines of Divine grace, and in that unifying process bringing them under an illuminating power of Divine glory; but, further, we have here shown us how ideas, roughly misshapen in the religions of the heathen, and strangely disfigured by men's carnal thoughts, have been shaped, re-formed, and educated by a preparatory dispensation in the chosen school of God's favour and Divine instruction, educated by earthly shadows that they might be prepared to fasten on heavenly realities—realities to be revealed when the fulness of the time should come, and God should send forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

No doubt we do well to regard the Epistle to the Hebrews as having a very special purpose in relation to the people to whom it is addressed. Very valuable and important is its teaching as a connecting-link between the old and the new. But in view of the unrolling of the volume of the book, we may be sure it has a voice of instruction not for Jewish believers alone. In the revelation of the Divine *οικονομία* it has an important purpose for the edification of the whole Christian Church. The view which it sets before us of the *sacerdotium* of Christ may be said to concentrate the teaching of the whole Divine *evangel* in the fulness of its Divine blessing.

And there is nothing in what has been urged in this paper which, rightly understood, will be found to deduct anything from the fullest recognition of this truth.

Let it be granted that the doctrine of the high priesthood of Christ adds nothing to the teaching which may be said to be involved in the simplest declaration of the message of the Gospel, yet it certainly tends to evolve from this, and then

to throw a strong light upon, an aspect of the Redeemer's present position and function in heaven which may be said, I believe, to sustain all the other Articles of the Christian faith, and an aspect which might well, perhaps, be much more strongly emphasized in our Christian teaching, and which certainly needs to be much more fully realized in our Christian living.

Moreover, in view of this educating purpose of the ceremonial law, as seen in this Epistle, we need not hesitate to call it to bear witness against the doctrine of Christ's continual offering His sacrifice in heaven.

It is surely saying too little—far, very far too little—to assert that the doctrine is not to be found here. The doctrine of the Epistle, fairly viewed in its entirety, is simply fatal to the idea. The notion must fall before it. Its grievous wounding, as by stroke upon stroke, is to be seen in various details of the inspired teaching. Its wounding unto death is to be found in a succession of texts following hard one upon another. Its death-blow is to be seen in the view of the instruction of the Epistle as a whole.

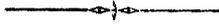
And we shall need to carry with us the remembrance of this educating purpose of the shadows of the Mosaic ceremonial law as we proceed to further investigations of the subject which is before us. It must suffice for the present to indicate vaguely and roughly the central and main idea of *sacerdotium* to which it leads us. The early history of the Mosaic priesthood brings out clearly what may be called the root idea of the need and office of the priesthood in relation to God and to the people of His inheritance. The need is the need of those who, though taken out of the world to be the people of the Lord, dare not draw near to the glory of Jehovah. The office is the office of those who are called of God to draw near with a mediatorial nearness on behalf of those who must worship afar off.

When man sinned God drove out the man. A way is being prepared, according to God's eternal counsel for the outcast race to return. But the sinner man must be taught to know the terrible truth of sin, and the awful condemnation of sin. Even the people chosen to be *near* to God, that He may dwell among them, must learn the truth concerning their God, that to outcast sinners He is a consuming fire, and thankfully to acquiesce in the Divine provision of a chosen class, called to draw near in their behalf, with a nearness to Him which is not for them.

And this idea of priesthood will be found connecting itself with the earlier teaching of altar and sacrifice, a teaching which now also in the law receives a much fuller development.

The priests are to be continually standing and ministering at the altar, that they may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. Their nearness of mediation is dependent on sacrificial atonement; and the sacrificial atonement for the whole people is dependent on their continual ministrations. So much as this will probably be allowed by all, and this much must serve as an introduction to what will have to follow.

N. DIMOCK.



ART. IV.—SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS: MANNING, HUGH JAMES ROSE, DEAN HOOK, GLADSTONE, MACAULAY, THACKERAY.

[These are given with no other object than to illustrate the standpoint of the different writers.—EDITOR.]

I.

THE REV. H. E. MANNING (CARDINAL) TO THE REV. JAMES TRIPP.¹

(*On the early Oxford Movement.*)

January 20 (1838).

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I was on the point of writing to you yesterday, and intended to do so to-day, not to apologize for my non-appearance, but to ask how you are. Your account of Mrs. Tripp truly grieves me. I earnestly hope and pray it may please God to alleviate her sufferings and to sanctify your successive trials to you both.

I wish to refer, as you assure me it is not too much for you, to your last letter. The part, which implied an uncomfortable feeling in your mind, was the sentence, "I call no man master"; which seemed to me a sort of unconscious resentment of a suspicion that I desired to make myself your master, or that I thought the * * * was your master. Now the suspicion, and the wish, are as unworthy of me as of yourself; and I will in a moment show you that *the rule of my faith and teaching* is diametrically levelled at the system of "I am of Paul and I of Apollos," etc.; which system is the universal rule of the so-called Evangelical party, *little as they may be aware of it.*

¹ Mr. Tripp was Rector of Hardham, Cold Waltham, and Up Waltham, and gave Manning his title in conjunction with Mr. Sargent, Rector of Lavington.