

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

*IDEA OF OLD TESTAMENT PRIESTHOOD
FULFILLED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.*

IN a previous paper we have endeavoured to point out the principle or idea of the priesthood, and have spoken of the central and dominating position assigned to it in the Old Testament economy as a whole. The priestliness of Israel as a people was the fundamental conception of its existence,—not its prophetic character, although it enjoyed a clearer and more perfect revelation of the will of God than had been granted to the other nations of the world; and not its kingly character, although it had the one only living and true God for its rightful King, who, reigning in the hearts of His subjects, made them partakers of His own royal dignity,—but that priestly character in which, so far as the circumstances of the times permitted, it walked with God and He with it in a union corresponding at once to the Divine nature and to the original destiny of man. As a priestly people Israel received its power to prophesy and its privilege to rule. As a priestly people it both attained the purpose of its own individual existence and became a lesson to the world.

But the Old Testament was preparatory to the New. No truth is more clearly stamped upon the latter than that under it the former is not annihilated in order that an entirely new state of things may be introduced. The essential ideas contained in the old economy are always taken up, extended, perfected, and confirmed for ever, in that by which it was succeeded. Our Lord's own words upon the point supply the clue which is to guide us

through the labyrinth of questions connected with this subject, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished" (Matt. v. 17, 18). It is unnecessary to show either that the Old Testament Dispensation as a whole is here referred to, or that "the law" spoken of includes the law in all its parts, moral, ceremonial, and civil. Upon these points there is no difference of opinion worthy of mention, and we may start with the most perfect confidence from the assurance that every principle of the Old Testament Dispensation is "accomplished" in that of the New Testament. Among these the priesthood and the priestly functions in Israel must be found; while, at the same time, there is every reason to think that they will occupy a position amidst other parts of the Christian economy corresponding in importance to their position under that of the Jews.

Before, however, proceeding to inquire what this accomplishment or fulfilment in their case is, a more general question has to be asked. In what part of the sphere of New Testament revelation are we to seek the accomplishment of any part whatever of the economy of Israel? Is it in analogous ordinances, arrangements, and institutions; or is it, in the first instance at least, in Christ Himself and in Him alone? To this question it seems to us that only one answer can be given. Every part of the Jewish Dispensation is accomplished only in Christ; or, what amounts substantially to the same thing, in Christ along with the members of His body. The Head and the members, indeed, cannot be separated. According to the teaching of the sacred writers Christ and His people are so essentially and really one that whatever is predicated of the former may be predicated also of the latter. Believers

work their Lord's work, suffer in His sufferings, die with Him in His death, rise with Him in His resurrection, ascend with Him to the heavenly places, are seated with Him upon His throne, take part with Him in the final judgment, and throughout eternity are for ever with Him. Hence they are at times included even under His name. When St. Paul, writing to the Galatians, and referring to the promise given to Abraham, exclaims "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (chap. iii. 16), he means by "Christ" not merely the personal Redeemer, but all who have in faith embraced Him. So also, writing to the Corinthians, he evidently uses the word "Christ" as inclusive of both the Saviour and His Church, when he says: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 12): and it is unnecessary to prove that in the Revelation of St. John the Church is so identified with the glorious Personage seen in the first vision "like unto a son of man," that throughout the whole book the persecutions, sufferings, wars, and victories spoken of are those of the one not less than of the other. We are thus warranted in joining Christ and His Church in the closest possible connexion, when we urge that the institutions of the Mosaic economy are accomplished, not in institutions existing under the Christian Dispensation, but in that body, consisting of the Head and members, in which the Christian Dispensation is realized and exhibited to the eyes of men.

That this assertion is correct there appears to be ample proof. St. Paul taught it in its most general form when he said, "Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth"; or when again he said, "The law hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that

faith is come we are no longer under a tutor. For ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus"; or once more when, referring to his own experience, he exclaimed: "I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God" (Rom. x. 4; Gal. iii. 24; ii. 19). In these passages, and others of a similar kind, the Apostle has "the law" considered as a whole in view. He is dealing with the legal dispensation, and his assertion is that that dispensation has passed away, not because it has been fulfilled in new and higher institutions, but because it has been fulfilled in Christ.

The lesson thus given in its general form is elsewhere taught by the same Apostle with reference to particular rites of Israel. Thus, to notice only one, which may be considered as a crucial instance, we read, "For our Passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ: wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 7, 8). The "feast" alluded to in these words is neither the Passover of the law nor a Communion season of the Christian Church. It is the whole life of the followers of Jesus, as that life is led in Him, and as, in it all, they are partakers of His joy. Their Paschal Lamb is for them always slain. For them the incense of Christ's offering continually ascends before the throne of God. They have put the leaven of sin out of their hearts and lives, not for an hour only, or a day or a week, but for ever. Therefore they keep constant festival. Their whole life, with its memories of deliverance from bondage, and with the first-fruits of a spiritual harvest ripening around them in their free and independent home, has a festival light thrown over it. They always eat the flesh and drink the blood of One who never fails either to support or quicken them. The Christian Passover never ends.

It is in the Gospel of St. John, however, that the clearest teaching upon the point now before us is to be found. One of the main thoughts pervading that Gospel, and illustrating the truth stated in the Prologue, that, while the law was given through Moses, "the grace and the truth came through Jesus Christ," is that in Christ Himself we have the fulfilment of all the institutions of the Old Testament. It can hardly be denied that such is the point of view under which we are to read the miracle of the multiplying of the bread, with the discourses accompanying it, in chap. vi.—there Christ is the fulfilment of the Passover—or that we are to read in the same spirit the narrative of our Lord's action in the Temple at Jerusalem, at the feast of Tabernacles, as given in chap. vii.—there He is the fulfilment of that closing feast of the Jewish year. Let us pass from these, and take another and still greater institution of Israel, the Sabbath. No Jewish ordinance has in itself a deeper interest, and none can be more plausibly appealed to in order to establish a conclusion different from that for which we are contending. It appears most natural to think that the Sabbath of the Jewish, is fulfilled in the Lord's Day of the Christian, Church. Yet that is not the teaching of the fourth Evangelist. He leads us rather to believe that the Sabbath is fulfilled in something far wider, deeper, and more glorious than any single day, or any succession, at intervals, of single days, can be. It is fulfilled, like the Passover and Tabernacles, in Christ; for it is impossible to mistake the teaching of the incident at the pool of Bethesda, related in the fifth chapter of the Gospel. He who there heals the impotent man upon the Sabbath, and, by doing so, rouses in a greater than ordinary degree the opposition of His enemies, presents Himself to us, in His conversation with the Jews, as Himself the accomplishment of the sacred institute. To the complaint, that "He did these things on the Sabbath," He replies, "My Father

worketh even until now, and I work"—as much as to say, "Behold in My Father and in Me the right idea of that sabbath-rest which you show so much eagerness to preserve. My Father's work of love to man, and My work of love in him, never know one moment's pause. By day and by night, through the years and through the ages, We work on, seeking, alike in providence and in grace, to heal the wounds inflicted by the children of men upon themselves. In one sense, therefore, We never rest. Yet in another sense We always rest; for Our work is not like your work; and, in the end which We contemplate and the spirit in which We work, We find the uninterrupted rest of which you have only the shadow in that commandment you now profess so much anxiety to honour and obey. So far from being a violation of that commandment, works done in My Father are an accomplishment of its rest, and you may now behold both the works and the rest in Me." If we are thus taught in St. John's Gospel that the fourth commandment is fulfilled in Christ, we are taught elsewhere that it is fulfilled also in the Church. "There remaineth therefore," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "a sabbatism (*σαββατισμός*) for the people of God" (chap. iv. 9). Time would be simply wasted in any attempt to show that this "sabbatism" cannot be understood of the keeping of the Christian Sunday. Here also, as in the narrative of our Lord's proceedings at Bethesda, the sacred writer rises to a nobler thought, and has his mind filled with a more glorious vision. He sees the Sabbath "accomplished" in the rest of that blessed inheritance to which Christians, as strangers and pilgrims in this world, were travelling; but, because it shall reach its perfection there, he sees it also now, as something to which they are already "come" (chap. xii. 22). Even now they keep endless Sabbath. Within them there is the constant peace of that hallowed day; and, whether they work or

rest, they so remember their Sabbath to keep it holy, that it sheds its peace not only over themselves, but over their sons and daughters, their man-servants and maid-servants, their cattle, and the stranger that is within their gates.

The illustrations now given of the principle for which we contend must suffice. But every sacred institution of Israel might be adduced for the same purpose; and, whether we had to speak of Pentecost or the Day of Atonement, of the Sabbatic year or the year of Jubilee, of the Tabernacle, or the altar of incense, or the shew-bread, or the golden candlestick, it might be shown that in no single Christian ordinance is their "accomplishment" to be sought. All of them are shadows of something higher than any ordinance, even of Him who is the substance of all the ordinances and the life of all the institutions of His people; of Him who is the Author and the Finisher of His people's faith; and whose own and whose people's life are one.

Were it otherwise it would indeed be hardly possible to avoid charging the Church of Christ with remissness and neglect of duty. As a simple matter of fact there are numerous ordinances of the Old Testament economy, to which, in her own arrangements, she has nothing to correspond. Nor can it be pleaded that these were less important than the others to which a closer analogy is found in the Christian system. All were equally ordained of God; all expressed definite and distinct ideas; and all were equally obligatory upon Israel. If therefore the New Testament Israel is to embody in corresponding outward forms the ideas which, though heightened and extended, have passed over to her from the ancient Church, she has no right to omit any institution upon which the seal of the Divine approbation was once set. Necessary to the religious life then, the inference would be irresistible that they are not less necessary now. We are not entitled to

pick and choose among them as we please. We must either adopt them all, or we must be able to show that their "accomplishment" in Christ involves the passing away of some along with the retention of others. This latter distinction cannot be carried out; and, on the supposition we are combating, we ought to find, not an occasional only, but a complete parallel between the types and shadows of the Jewish Church and the separate fulfillments of these in the Church as she is perfected in Christ.

On the other hand again, what has been said does not entitle us to infer, either that there are no positive institutions under the New Testament, or that there may not be a close resemblance between the institutions of Israel and the arrangements made by the Christian Church for the edification of her members. In point of fact we know that Christians have at least the divinely appointed Sacraments and the Ministry; and, when we remember that the principles of the religious life are in all ages essentially the same, we may expect that the Divine Spirit operating in the Church will guide her to institutions similar in their nature to those which were once shaped directly by His hand. What we contend for is simply this, that the ordinances and institutions of the legal economy are not fulfilled in corresponding ordinances and institutions under the economy of grace. They are fulfilled in Christ, together with His Body which is the Church. The arrangements of the Christian Church have their source and origin in the living and glorified Redeemer. They must flow from Him in a manner accommodated to the nature of man and the spiritual ends to be attained. Analogy to those of the Old Testament has nothing to do with the immediate grounds of their obligation upon us. Do they visibly express on earth what Christ is now invisibly at the right hand of the Father? Do they afford in the body suitable channels for the varied streams of emotion, affec-

tion, and action that spring from the Head, and ought to find utterance in the members? These are the questions that we have to ask; and when they can be answered in the affirmative with regard to any Christian ordinance, it is enough. The vine is in the branches, and the branches are in the vine.

Having made these general remarks we may now turn to the point immediately before us,—the accomplishment under the Christian Dispensation of the priesthood in Israel. That accomplishment is to be found in Christ and in His Church.

In the first place, it is to be found in Christ Himself. For in the New Testament not only are Christ's priestly qualifications and functions frequently alluded to, but the main purport of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to set forth that glorious priesthood of His in heaven, before which the priesthood of the older economy has waxed old and vanished away. Of this heavenly priesthood of our Lord, this priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, we shall have to speak more particularly in another paper. In the meantime we desire only to observe that, keeping the special Melchizedek element of our Lord's priesthood as much as possible out of view, we are entitled to use what is said of Him as High Priest in illustration of what He is as Priest. We cannot separate these two offices. It matters not that in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read mainly of Christ as High Priest, and that the services of the Great Day of Atonement lie at the bottom of the description there given us of His work. In their essence the two offices were one. Priest and high priest differed in rank, but there was no fundamental difference between them. The office of the former simply culminated in that of the latter, and all that was demanded of the latter was no more than a sharper and more definite expression of what was demanded of the former. If the priest was

the possession of God in a more peculiar sense than the ordinary Israelite by the confining of his office to the tribe of Levi and the descendants of Aaron, this principle of Divine possession received a clearer illustration in the case of the high priest by the restriction of that honour to the first born in Aaron's house through successive generations. If the ordinary priest had to be free from all uncleanness, but was permitted notwithstanding this, although under the penalty of being unclean until the evening, to touch the dead body of any one of his nearest relatives, such touching of even the body of either his father or mother was strictly forbidden to the high priest (Lev. xxi. 2, 11); while the general prescriptions for ceremonial purity were in the case of the latter both more numerous and more strict. If the ordinary priest was to be holy, and to have that feature of his office symbolically set forth in his garments, much more was holiness symbolized by the special garments of the high priest, and particularly by the golden plate worn on his forehead and having inscribed upon it HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And finally, the consecration of the high priest, while on the same lines as that of the priest, was greatly more elaborate and minute. In all these respects it will be seen that the high priesthood was simply the culmination of the ordinary priesthood. Commentators, accordingly, have always found it impossible to distinguish between the use of the two terms in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The high priest had, indeed, his own consecration and dress, and he discharged certain duties not permitted to the priest. Yet it was as a priest that he acted and was honoured. He was simply the first, in one sense the *primus inter pares*, of the priesthood, just as the services of the Day of Atonement were not essentially different from, but were the culminating point of, all the sacred services of the year. In the high priesthood there was

greater dignity and greater concentration of effect than in the priesthood; but, in all that was essential to calling, privilege, and work, the commonest priest who ministered at the altar occupied the same ground as Israel's greatest, most unique, and most honoured functionary. In Christ as High Priest, therefore, not less than in Christ as Priest, the "fulfilment" of the idea of priesthood is to be sought; and, when sought, it is found in Him.

Thus He possesses the two general qualifications fundamental to the thought of separation to the priesthood. (1) He was appointed to His office by God Himself. "He glorified not Himself to be made high priest, but He that spake unto Him, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Heb. v. 5). (2) He can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for "in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him out of death, and having been heard for His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and, having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation" (Heb. v. 7-9).

Not only so. In Him also were accomplished all the other personal qualifications of a perfect priest. Was the priest of Israel marked out as in an eminent degree the possession of God, and one who could thus come into nearer communion with God than others? It was so in the highest possible measure with Him of whom it was declared by the voice from heaven, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17), who said of Himself, "I and My Father are one" (John x. 30), and who is distinctly proclaimed to be "the effulgence of the Father's glory and the very image of His substance" (Heb. i. 3). Was it necessary that the priest should be free from all personal defect and from all uncleanness? Christ was

“holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners,” One who offered Himself “without blemish unto God” (Heb. vii. 26 ; ix. 14). Did the priest in Israel require to be more than free from uncleanness, to be positively holy? Christ could say, “Which of you convicteth Me of sin?” “I do always the things that are pleasing to Him that sent Me” (John viii. 46, 29) ; while His Apostle declares that He “did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth” (1 Pet. ii. 22). Or, finally, were Israel’s priests not only divinely selected for their office, but consecrated to it? Christ was not only chosen of God, but was consecrated by the most full and perfect unction of the Spirit. His flesh was conceived by the power of the Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary: at His baptism the Spirit of God descended upon Him: He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness that there, tempted of the devil, He might both taste and overcome what were to be the most fiery trials of His future messianic work: He returned in the power of the Spirit to begin His labours; the Spirit was upon Him when He preached: by the Spirit of God He wrought the works which both attested and illustrated the Divine origin and nature of His mission, until at last through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself unto God (Matt. i. 20 ; iii. 16 ; iv. 1 ; Luke iv. 14, 18 ; xi. 20 ; Heb. ix. 14).

As with our Lord’s personal qualifications, so also with His work. Of the precise nature of His Offering, His Intercession, and His Benediction we shall speak hereafter. In the meantime it is enough to say that throughout the New Testament these three functions are constantly ascribed to Him. However differently the Church may at different times have conceived of Christ’s offering, she has never doubted that by Him that offering was made in which alone we are accepted and complete. She has never failed to believe that in Him we have an Advocate and Intercessor with the

Father. She has never ceased to look to Him as the source of all strength and comfort for her warfare and pilgrimage in life. These things are too plainly written in the New Testament to permit a moment's hesitation in regard to them, while in the richness, the fulness, and the perfection that are connected with them, they witness to an "accomplishment" in Christ of all of which they speak, and therefore to the "accomplishment" of the priestly office in Him.

Finally, Christ fulfils the great end of the priesthood, for by Him and in Him we draw near to God. No longer at a distance from Him whom we have offended and whose judgment we deserve, we have boldness in approaching Him by that Redeemer who has revealed Himself as the "Way." No longer oppressed by a spirit of bondage, we receive the spirit of adoption, crying Abba, Father. No longer trembling at the foot of Sinai, we are "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel" (Heb. xii. 22-24).

Thus then was everything connected with the priesthood of Israel fulfilled in Christ. Every essential principle which there found a partial and outward expression in the person and in the work of the sons of Aaron was spiritualised, extended, and perfected in Him whom the Father sealed, and who, at once God and man, was the Mediator of the better covenant established upon better promises. Not for Himself alone did Jesus draw near, or does He now draw near, to God in the most free and joyful confidence of access to the Father. That He had always done. Through the eternity that was past He had been the Father's delight, rejoicing always before Him. But now He took the whole

line of His spiritual descendants with Him into the Father's presence. As the high priest of old bore upon his jewelled breastplate the names of all the tribes of Israel, so He bore His spiritual Israel in His heart when He drew near to the throne of God; and they drew near in Him. He is their representative in the deepest and fullest meaning of the word, so that, as He lives in them they live in Him (though in such a way that it may be said that they live also in "themselves"), all His privileges are theirs: "I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one"; "and I made known unto them Thy name, and will make it known, that the love wherewith Thou lovedst Me may be in them, and I in them" (John xvii. 23, 26).

Hence also the priesthood of the Old Testament Dispensation is fulfilled not in Christ only but in His Church. We do not at present ask whether within the general Christian priesthood there may be another priesthood? nor, if it be so, do we inquire in the meantime as to the mutual relations between the two. For the purpose immediately before us it is enough to say that speaking of the Church, it is necessary to speak of it as a whole; for, as a whole and not in any of its parts, it is the Body of Christ and identified with Him. No group of members however, in its active service, more important than another, can either perform the functions, or claim the privileges, or discharge the responsibilities of the Body.

The priesthood then is fulfilled not only in Christ, but in His Church taken as a whole. If indeed we start from the idea that there is no visible Church; if we regard the Church simply as invisible and ideal, composed of all everywhere who have embraced the Gospel and are animated by the Spirit; if there be no such thing as organization among the members, and no united life, then of course it is impossible to speak of the Church's priesthood. But the moment we admit, with the great body of Christians

in all ages as well as now, that our Lord did institute a kingdom, a community, a body, which He intended to be visible, that moment the priesthood of the Church follows by necessary consequence from His own priesthood. The fundamental fact of Christianity, the Incarnation of the Eternal Son, leads directly to it. Let us notice briefly the argument of the fourth Evangelist upon the point. According to the first chapter of his Gospel, the light of the Word who "was with God and was God," had been always shining with more or less brightness in the world. It had been "the light of *men*." It had lightened not only God's ancient people in their divinely provided fold, but also those "other sheep" which, as we learn at a later point in the same Gospel, were yet to be brought into the one flock of the one Shepherd (chap. x. 16). Thus it had been up to the time of the Christian era. Then there was a great development. Then the light, no longer shining merely as a spiritual influence in the minds of men, reached its culminating point and assumed its concrete and most powerful reality in the Son. Then that Word who had hitherto been only an unseen light to men "became flesh, and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from a father), full of grace and truth" (chap. i. 14), while the effect of His Incarnation was that, whereas no man had seen God at any time, "the only begotten which was in the bosom of the Father, He declared Him" (ver. 18); that is, came not simply as a spiritual influence from Him, but set Him forth to the eyes of men. Then the Father was *seen* in the Son. The same principle must still continue to operate. No reason can be assigned why it should have taken effect only during the short period of our Lord's ministry upon earth, or why, after His departure, the world should be left without any visible support to cling to, without any visible ark in which to find refuge. It was not so left. According to chaps. xiv.-xvii.

of the same Gospel, our Lord, on His return to the Father, commissioned His Church to take His place, and to become a visible representative of Himself. There is surely nothing unreasonable in this. Surely the visible is not by the mere fact of its visibility despiritualised. Surely man may be most successfully appealed to when regard is had to both sides of his nature, and not to one alone. The words of an able, though anonymous, writer may be quoted upon this point.

“The origin and cause of all that is done in the Christian Church is the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is a Spirit, essentially invisible. In Him is all life, and grace, and power to bless; He is visible in the God-man Christ Jesus; and only from, and by, and through that God-man, all that is in God for us can come to us; and except through Him that is visible, we can receive nothing from Him who is the invisible. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the symbol of Him who is invisible; the channel, the means, through which all spiritual grace and power come. But for the time being, and during the period between His first and second advents, He also is invisible to us. He therefore has instituted certain images, or symbols, which represent Him in some character, or office, or ministry, or act, or operation, or some fact concerning Him. And, by means of these, Christ ordinarily ministers to His people the grace, power, and blessing of those offices, acts, and operations which they respectively symbolize; and, by the use of them in the manner He has appointed, the faithful obtain that grace and blessing. The material part of our Lord’s human nature, in and by which God is imaged and symbolized to us, and through which all grace is ministered to us, is taken from the substance of this earth; and all those symbolic things of which we speak must be of the substance of, and appertaining to, this material creation. . . . The Church cannot *omit* any of them; cannot *change* any; cannot *substitute* anything else in their places; she cannot add to, she cannot take from any of them, without suffering consequent detriment and loss.”¹

Such is the principle, and from that principle it follows by direct and immediate consequence that whatever function is characteristic of the Head of the Church must be manifested in the body. We have already seen, however,

¹ *Creation and Redemption*, p. 30.

that the priestly offices of the Old Testament Dispensation are fulfilled in Christ; they must therefore be also fulfilled in His Church. "As He is, even so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17).

Upon all that is involved in this we cannot now dwell; and the work of the priestly Church will be best considered after we have spoken of that Melchizedek, or heavenly, priesthood of our Lord of which it is the immediate expression. In the meantime we have only to ask whether the presuppositions, the conditions and the general functions predicated of Christ as Priest, are also in the New Testament predicated of His Church. The answer to that question must be given in the affirmative. For, as to the presuppositions belonging to the Church's character and work, it cannot be doubted that,—

(1) She enters upon her commission, whatever her commission be, not as taking honour to herself, but as called of God. She is an elect body, separated from the world by free selecting mercy, and not owing to any merit of her own; and she is elected for the very purpose of being, in holy communion and fellowship, one with God. She is chosen out of the world that she may be in a special manner the recipient of Divine grace, and may exhibit its quickening, elevating, and consoling power. It is a mistake to think that the Church exists only, or even mainly, as a centre of missionary action either at home or abroad. She is to *be* before she is to *do*. She is to shine as a light in the midst of darkness; but the light must be kindled and fed before it will burn. She is to be a city set on a hill that cannot be hid; but the city must be built before it can be seen. She is to sing the Lord's song in a strange land; but she must perfect her own power in singing it before she can attract others by her music. The first duty of the Church is to have regard to her own internal condition, and to see that it is worthy of her Lord. It may be the policy of this

world's rulers to turn the thoughts of men from internal anarchy to foreign war. In the Church, the policy which, whether consciously or unconsciously, substitutes multiplied forms of external exertion for the healing of internal ills, is false and ruinous. She is first of all summoned to be priestly, and a priest is one who worships in God's holy place and abides within His tabernacle. And this is her *commission*. It is her duty, not her policy. There is no presumption in it. Her confidence before God rests upon no high estimate of her own powers and gifts, but upon the fact that she is the messenger of Christ, and upon the assurance that, so long as she is faithful to her Lord, He will not fail her. The whole New Testament bears witness to this aspect of the Church's mission. It is the thought not only of the texts that we have referred to but of many like them; and, in particular, it is the prominent thought both of the Redeemer's high priestly prayer, and of that supreme moment when He breathed upon His disciples, and said to them, "Peace be unto you; as the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (John xx. 21).

(2) The second presupposition of the priesthood is not less spoken of throughout the New Testament as fulfilled in the Church—sympathy with the suffering children of men, compassion for the ignorant and them that are out of the way. The most distinguishing mark of the Church is love. It is the "royal law according to the Scriptures," "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself": "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another": "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (James ii. 8; 1 John iv. 11; 1 Cor. xiii. 13). Love is the essence, the evidence, and the fruit of drawing near to God; and, reflected from the Divine love, is itself a Gospel. The large and generous heart that feels and weeps and prays for all, carries good news, reaching far beyond its actual gift, to the labouring

and heavy laden children of men. The Church's warm hand and pitying voice and eye filled with tears of sympathy, are the sources of her influence, when thunders of excommunication would be as unheard as the earthquake that rolls past unnoticed amidst the din of battle. No zeal for truth, no gifts of power, no martyr spirit, can be a substitute for love.

These then are the two chief marks of the Church of Christ as she is set before us in the New Testament. The two embrace the whole of her position, and are in the most intimate manner dependent upon one another. As she looks heavenward, she is called to union with God; as she looks earthward, to sympathy with man; without the first there cannot be the second (1 John iv. 21); without the second there cannot be the first (1 John iv. 20); and the two are the prerequisites of the priesthood.

Not only, however, are these prerequisites of priesthood thus found in the Church of Christ, she comes before us in the New Testament as possessed of all the qualifications required of those by whom the priestly office in Israel was held. It is unnecessary to enlarge on these, and the simple mention of them will be enough. The Church is God's own peculiar possession, consisting of those who are not their own but His, who have been adopted as children into His family, who are the sons and the daughters of the Lord Almighty, and into whose hearts, because they are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son, crying *Abba, Father*. She is, negatively, free from all uncleanness; for her members have purged out the old leaven of malice and wickedness, have died to sin, and have put off the old man which was corrupt according to the deceitful lusts of the flesh. Nor may they fail to combine with this a positive righteousness, for they have to be holy as God is holy, and perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect. While, lastly, they are consecrated to God's service with the

“unction from the Holy One,” the Spirit that dwelleth in them, and shall be in them. Every qualification, in short, of the ancient priesthood, although in its fulfilled and accomplished form, is spoken of in the New Testament as marking, not only the Saviour Himself, but also the members of His body. Whether they have a priestly work to do as well as a priestly character to bear we shall see hereafter. In the meantime it is enough to say that, as we cannot separate the idea of priesthood from the Vine, so neither can we separate from the branches the privilege, the responsibility, and the duty which the term implies.

W. MILLIGAN.

THE PAULINE ANTILEGOMENA.

It is not proposed here to dispute what may be considered the opinion now general in England, that the so-called Epistle to the Hebrews on the one hand is not the actual work of the Apostle Paul, on the other that it was written by some one who had felt his influence strongly. In all this there is nothing arbitrary, nothing that is not supported by something in either the internal or the external evidence. But when it is attempted—sometimes when the attempt is abandoned—to determine who the actual author was, certain tacit assumptions are usually made, which do appear to be arbitrary, and which, as we shall find, certain minute phenomena appear to contradict. If we can eliminate these arbitrary assumptions, it will bring us a step nearer to right views about the Epistle, even though the result, as to its authorship, be no more than negative. These arbitrary assumptions, indeed, are not required by those who keep closest to the traditional belief. Those who regard the Epistle as written under St. Paul’s actual direction have real evidence in their favour—external evidence, in the fact