

Project Canterbury

THE  
PRIESTHOOD OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF THE

FOURTH GENERAL COUNCIL

OF THE

Reformed Episcopal Church

IN EMMANUEL CHURCH, OTTAWA, CANADA,

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 1876.

BY BISHOP WM. R. NICHOLSON, D.D.

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"An holy priesthood." 1 Pet. ii, 5.

BRETHREN OF THE COUNCIL:

Assembled in our capacity as a Council, we shall have to engage our attention a variety of interests belonging to the outward and, visible Church of God. The outward and visible is of great

importance; at the same time, the inward and invisible is of greater. A casket is valuable; yet only for the sake of the jewel within. What were we without our bodily organs? Still, the body were dead without the soul. It is the hidden intelligence within which gives to the eye its brightness, to the ear its music, to the tongue its eloquence, to the hand and the foot their activities. The Church' of God in the earth has its manifold modes and polities, all of them important; but it has also its one informing life, and all modes and polities are worse than nothing if they be not as obedient servants to the inhabiting spirit, or, like John Baptist to his Lord, as only heralds of what is greater and better than themselves. The form, however, which is so necessary, ever gravitates to formalism. We are apt to become so absorbed with looking at the machinery of the Church, as to leave uncared for the fire of the Holy Ghost, which, though out of sight, is alone what generates the motive power, and puts life into [3/4] wheel and shaft for effectuating the proposed results. We scarce need an exhortation to look at the Church's things which are seen; we do need to be urged toward the Church's things which are not seen.

I crave your attention to the subject of the PRIESTHOOD of the Church of God: the priesthood of the entire body of believers; the priesthood of every single believer.

It is a subject far off from the beaten track of most Christians' habitual thinking. Pity it is that it is so; but the more the reason for exciting attention to so great a truth.

Large is the space which is appropriated in Scripture to the priesthood of the Church. I might even say, that it is as the warp to the woof; interlacing with all other truths, and weaving the Word of God into a fabric of strength and beauty. Impossible, then, that it should be an indifferent truth, or even a truth only second-rate. It cannot be a speculative tenet; it must be a vital element of gospel blessedness. It is not a theological fossil; it is *a living power of gospel holiness*.

Here, however, as so often elsewhere, the traditions of Christendom are bewildering and misleading. Priesthood, as generally conceived of, instead of being a plant of the Heavenly Father's planting, is a parasite of man's device, entwining around the Church, and absorbing its gospel juices. I wonder not that so many of those who love the gospel have looked at this whole subject, as at "a great horror of darkness." But now, as the mariner uses his sextant when he would determine his position on the pathless ocean, and consults his compass to know in what direction to steer the ship, so, amid the wide waste of man's traditions, we betake ourselves to God's own estimate of the importance and preciousness of our subject. And as the miner, in his hunt for gold, is careful to follow up whatever "lead" he may have discovered, so, finding out those veins of the precious metal which lie at the surface of Scripture, and any others which may be deeper down, let us go on to explore our riches, till we know [4/5] ourselves to be possessed of a mine of blessedness whose yield the largest lifetime shall not be able to exhaust.

I. First of all, we see at the surface of the Word of God certain *declarations* of the priesthood of believers.

1. "An holy priesthood" is the declaration of our text. "Ye," saith the Apostle. He is writing to those to whom, as "believing," he says that "Christ is precious." "*Ye, an holy priesthood.*" It is of that Church, then, which is the whole body of true believers in Christ, that he declares a priesthood.

Now this word "priesthood" has been transferred to the New Testament from Leviticus. Wherefore,

say some, we are to understand the priesthood of Christians as merely a figurative application of the word. For have we blood to shed? Can we make expiation for sins? Have we anything to offer more than *spiritual* sacrifices, such as faith and thanksgiving? How, then, can we be literally priests?

But are "spiritual" and "figurative" equivalent terms? Are "spiritual" and "real" the opposites of one another? Is the priesthood of *Expiation* the only priesthood of Leviticus? Let the Word of God reply.

What doeth Christ in Heaven? Is He not there as our High Priest? And yet He sheds no blood there, He makes no expiation for sins there. He did shed his blood once, on earth; He did make expiation then. Without that priesthood of His self-offering on earth, He could not be our Priest in Heaven. That blood-shedding, however, has taken place, *once for all*. What doeth He, then, in His priesthood now in Heaven? He *pleads* in the presence of the Father *the value of what He has finished*. This, and this alone, is His priesthood there and now. Yet is it not a *real* priesthood? And now what do we in our approaches to God? Plead we not the same blood-shedding, once for all? Carry we not into the Presence, by faith, the same values? He pleads the expiation which He himself, indeed, has effected; and therein He infinitely differs from us. But it is the pleading of it, not the doing of it, [5/6] which He is engaged about in Heaven; the trustful claiming on the ground of it, and in the terms of the everlasting covenant ratified by His blood. So is it the trustful claiming on the ground of the same Expiation, and in the terms of the same Covenant, which believers in Him are engaged about. He is a better pleader than we, for He rests in His confidence with infinite complacency. Still, the one *plea* which he offers is our plea as well. Besides, as we offer it, the Father judicially regards us as judicially He regards Him, since we are "clothed upon with Him," and His righteousness is our righteousness, nay, we are "God's righteousness in Him." Therefore, have we not in Christ a priesthood which is of the same nature with what He himself exercises in Heaven?

The Lord Jesus Christ alone, as the antitype of Aaron, is commensurate with the Scriptural definition, that "Every high-priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." *He offered himself a sacrifice for sins*. That was His priesthood of EXPIATION; and in *that* priesthood neither man nor angel can have the least possible part. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." The Priesthood of Expiation stood peerless and final amid that deluge of righteous wrath which swept into death the Divine Sufferer; and when He rose from the dead, the Priesthood of Expiation was thenceforth and forever an office only of the past, its functions exhausted, though its *efficacy*, streaming onward still, like the light of a burnt-out sun, is eternal. Blasphemous toward Christ, therefore, is the pretension of offering His Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper. And when men think to satisfy for their sins by their own good deeds, or by their sufferings, whether as penance or as involuntary, they do but snatch from Christ the honor of His own completed and Divine satisfaction for sins. But now His offering Himself a sacrifice for sins is only a single specification under the general statement of His having been ordained for men in things pertaining to God." When Aaron had [6/7] shed the blood of the sin-offering, *he had then to carry it within the vail*; and this latter was equally "for men in things pertaining to God." His being permitted to go with the blood into the Holiest was evidence of the *Propitiation* effected by the Expiation, and accordingly, as he entered, the smoke of sweet incense enveloped and arose from his person. And then, as with the blood he continued in the

Presence, it was virtually his act of pleading; as the fragrant fumes ascending symbolically expressed it, so, as it were, did the value of the blood ascend, and make its appeal to the Shechinah Deity there visible. Thus, while the shedding of the blood and the burning of the victim were *Expiation*, the going within the veil was *Intercession*. The Priesthood of Expiation went not within the veil, its work being all done on the outside; but the Priesthood of Intercession, taking charge of the fact of Expiation finished, entered into the immediate presence of God. So, after His finished sacrifice of the Cross, Christ had yet a work to do in heaven. Having been Himself personally delivered, by means of His own sufferings, from the curse which He bore as the substitute for sinners, he now appears before the Father as fragrant in the all-sufficiency of His past, pleading for the salvation of those for whom He died, and as well for His own delectation in seeing of the travail of His soul. This is His Priesthood of INTERCESSION; and in *this* priesthood His believing people may and do have part. Having been delivered in His deliverance, we in Him do now appear before the Father in the same fragrance which is His, pleading both for ourselves and for the salvation of others. Precisely because He is a priest in heaven, we also are priests. The branch is in the vine; the believer is in his Saviour. "As He is, so are we, even in this world." He offers up there the spiritual sacrifices of praise and intercession; we offer up here the spiritual sacrifices of praise and intercession. And both He and we offer them up on the same one ground of His own past sufferings. Thus "spiritual" and "real" are not opposites the one of the other. Nay, our functions as priests are even at [7/8] the top and perfection of all priesthood, since they are of the same nature with those of the High-Priesthood of Christ in heaven, which High-Priesthood is the very flower and fruit of the Priesthood at Gethsemane and Calvary.

Who, then, is a priest? In the rounded completeness of its meaning, Jesus Christ alone is exhaustive of the word. But the priesthood of expiation having been finished, a true priest now, whether Christ or any of his people, is one who has the distinction of direct access to the Father, who has it because of the sacrifice for sins accomplished, who is taken into closest nearness to the Father, and who thereupon has power with God in praying for and laboring for others. Priesthood, accordingly, is the power of Divine Service, of all Divine Service.

Such a priesthood is the whole true Church of God. And a "holy" priesthood; set apart to God, and, in their character as priests, regarded by him as his jewels.

2. "Ye are a royal priesthood" is another declaration (1 Pet. ii, 9). As priests, the people of God are *Kingly*.

Yet are they really Kings? And if not, must not priesthood also be interpreted figuratively? But it is not true that they are Kings only suppositiously. When they shall have been "seated with Christ in his throne, even as he is set down in his Father's throne," will they not be Kings? When they "reign with Christ a thousand years," will they not be Kings? And even now they are Kings, so far as concerns their *title* to Kingdom. Their priesthood is the foundation of their kingdom, even as Christ is "a priest upon his throne." "Ye are a royal priesthood," says the Apostle, "that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." As priests, they have been called out of darkness into God's marvelous light. Only as priests, are they capacitated to show forth his praises. Only as priests, then, can he glorify himself in them to crown them with glory and honor.

3. A third declaration is in that sublime song of all believers, [8/9] "Unto Him that loved us, and

washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. i, 5, 6). There the priesthood is claimed by each individual of the body. They declare that they have been made priests through having been washed from their sins in Christ's blood. He has presented them to the Father in His own priesthood, and in that presentation they have been placed so near as that nearer cannot be, and,, by consequence, they themselves have become priests. And they claim it as a matter of distinct thought and conscious appropriation. It is the subject-matter of their resounding doxology to Jesus Christ, and of their worshipping gladness. It is not a thing merely to be conceded, and then lost sight of in the conventional leadership of a class. It is something pre-eminent, and to be looked at with rejoicing in the bright light of communion with God.

4. Yet another declaration concerns *the risen saints*. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. On such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Rev. xx, 6). Priests we shall be in the glories of the coming resurrection. Priesthood is inseparable from a state of salvation. It is an everlasting thing. As the believer's position in Christ is never lost, so neither his priesthood. As here and now he is a priest in the direct access into the spiritual presence of God, and in Christian beneficence toward men, so will he be a priest in the same offices there and then, entering into the beatific splendors of God's visible residence, and exercising a various ministration toward the nations then existent on the earth. "*Blessed* is he that hath part in the first resurrection," for "he shall be a priest." Priesthood is the very expression of blessedness.

And now, looking back over these declarations, we are at once arrested by the evident *equality* of all believers in the regard of priesthood. They are all together a priesthood, and each particular [9/10] one is himself or herself a priest; as well Phebe the deaconess as Paul the Apostle, Onesimus the slave as Philemon the master. There are other official differences among them, some occupying one office in the church, some another. There are Denominational differences. And there are differences of a practical kind; some, more than others, appreciating the fact of their priesthood, and feeling it as a mighty power of holy living. Hence, there are differences of personal realization in the joy of communion with God. And again, there are answering differences in the degrees of personal reward in Heaven. But in the fact and office of priesthood there is absolute equality; only one and the same right and title, among them all, to nearest access to God. And just here, on the one priestly level among all Christians, our Reformed Church plants its standard.

That in the church of God, all of whom are a priesthood, there should be a separate class specially called priests, and nearer to God than are the others, is simply an absurdity. The standing of every believer in Christ absolutely precludes it. In Israel there was such a separate class; but that was a ceremonial dispensation, and such an outward demarcation was indispensable for shadowing forth the good things to come. Ours, however, is not a ceremonial priesthood. Nor, in all the New Testament, are Christian ministers, as such, even named priests. The minister is, indeed, a priest, but only because he is a Christian, not because he is a minister. Nay, he is a minister only because he is first a priest. Priesthood is the power of Divine service; and with that power every one is gifted the instant he believes in Jesus, and is washed from his sins in the blood of redemption. When such an one is called of God into the official ministry, it is that he shall expend his power of service in the way of preaching the gospel; but, even so, no more of priestly function does he exercise, than does the Christian mother who teaches her children about Jesus, and is interceding for them at the throne

of grace. [10/11] The priesthood of the Church is universal. But we need division of labor.

Nor is there a single service of God's worship but what any Christian is competent to perform. Writers on Christian antiquities tell us, that the Lord's Supper was observed by the first believers at Jerusalem in their own houses, and at the conclusion of the ordinary evening meal. The analogy of the Paschal supper, at which the master of the household presided, would lead the first Christians into that practice, since it was at the Paschal Supper Jesus instituted that service. And evidently the laity at Corinth, at the time of Paul's writing his epistles to that Church, were in the habit of observing the Lord's Supper at the close of an actual supper, and independently of the ministry.

Now that the ministry should have the leadership in the devotions of God's house is a thing eminently fitting, nor would we for an instant disturb that arrangement. It is in the last degree important, however, that we apprehend the true ground of their leadership; that we understand it to have come about by an arrangement of the body of believers themselves, for convenience and order. For the insidious tendency of the outward and visible is to throw this truth of universal priesthood into the shade; and to one brought up under the ordinary influences of Christendom, like an electric shock to the nerves of the body would be his first clear view of it. Moreover, in every organization among men, and churches are no exceptions, the drift is evermore toward self-assertion and imperial rule. Concessions granted lovingly at first do at length harden into rights domineeringly claimed. The administering of ordinances is now arrogated to the ministry on the ground of Divine right; and the consequences are, that a kind of superstitious attention is given to their perfunctory officiating, the joy of direct fellowship with God is hindered, formalism is even provided for as though it were the normal condition of the Church, and a mere *churchism* usurps the place of faith's beatific [11/12] vision of God. Oh, the priesthood of all believers is a very synonym of "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

II. But now, going down beneath the surface of Scripture, what other vein of the precious metal do we discover? This: that *even the Priesthood of Leviticus was ordained to typify the service of Christians.*

Its first and chiefest business was the setting forth of Christ; and certain functions it had, and they were the fundamental ones; which could have no reference whatever except to his expiatory work. But Christ and His Church are inseparable. When in the counsels of Eternity he undertook the cause of human redemption, a church was promised Him, a body of saved ones, would it not be most fitting, then, that when the Levitical priesthood was ordained for shadowing forth His work for sinners, it should have been so ordained as also to shadow forth His Church?

The Levitical priests were Aaron and his sons. What was the relationship subsisting between him and them? There was a marked distinction between them, as was evinced in both dress and functions. Yet he and they were closely associated. They were made dependent on him, insomuch that only as he was filling his place, could they stand in their places. Nay, they were represented in him; for when he went into the Holy of Holies, where they could not go, he bare with him the sins of "his house," that those sins might be forgiven through the blood already shed. And they were his sons; none others were associated with him.

Now, was such relationship for nothing? If, as the Apostle tells us, Aaron was the type of Christ, were not his sons the type of Christians? Not exclusively indeed. But as, when Christ suffered on

the cross, we were set forth in Him, so it was not an incongruous thing that, while in their bloody sacrifices the sons of Aaron typified Christ solely, they should also, in those ceremonial deliverances resulting to them from the blood of bulls and goats, have typified all believers as spiritually delivered by the [12/13] blood of Christ. See, then, how minutely answered to, and fully, as between Christ and Christians, is that constitution of the Levitical priesthood. Are not Christians the sons of Christ? Is He not the Second Adam, the progenitor of His people? Does not the branch grow out of the vine? They are indeed the sons of the Father, but are made so only in Christ, who is Himself the Son of the Father. And is it not only in the fact of Christ filling His place as our High Priest, that we stand in our places of service? And are we not now represented in Him in heaven? and, therefore, is not His blood, shed once for all, evermore cleansing us from all sin? And yet how marked the distinction. The gorgeous dress of Aaron, so transcending that of his sons, was it not symbolical of those Divine excellencies of person and character belonging to Christ, an appreciation of which prostrates us before Him in adoring reverence and worship? And the transcendent function of Aaron, he alone going into the Holiest, and representing there in blood and incense his priestly house, did it not symbolize Christ as personally alone in the work of redemption, as our Forerunner, matchless and mateless, whom we could not follow till after His work was done, and He had presented it to the Father? Were not the sons of Aaron the type of Christians? Did ever type prophesy its antitype more plainly or beautifully?

But consider now Aaron himself. As High Priest, he was typically Christ. But another character he had than that of High Priest. He was a sinner, and needed to have atonement made for him. Therein he *contrasted* with Christ, and the contrast is marked in Scripture.\* Personal Aaron, then, was atoned for by what official Aaron did. And because personal Aaron was in official Aaron, therefore might personal Aaron stand before God in even the Holiest. Now personal Aaron, as being accepted in official Aaron, was typically all believers; for are they not *in* the antitypical Aaron? and, what is more, in him in even the [13/14] Holiest, *in nearest access to God*? Hence that wonderful word of the Apostle, "We have boldness *to enter into the Holiest* by the blood of Jesus." And accordingly, when at length the blood of Jesus was shed, the veil of the Holiest was rent in twain, and the Holiest itself has been actually laid open to every believer. Thus Aaron himself was a type of Christians. But of all priestly functions the very topmost was that of going into the Holiest; and so, intimate communion with God, joys of fellowship, a clear, deep-felt, serene assurance of our home in heaven, all this is not only priestly blessedness, it is the *ultima thule* of priesthood.

Consider, next, that Aaron's priesthood and that of his sons are spoken of in the law (Ex. xxviii, 1) as being but *one ministration* of priesthood. So essentially included in Aaron, typically speaking, was all priesthood. And what read we of the one ministration of priesthood of Christ and Christians? It is Jesus who speaks in that sublime oracle, "In the *midst* of the Church *I* will sing praise unto thee" (Heb, ii, 2); He, the Leader of the praises of His Church. And in that Apocalyptic scene, when prayers of all the saints were lying, like sacrifices, upon the golden altar before the throne, it was Jesus who added to those prayers his own incense; and the prayers were borne upward by the smoke of the incense upon its fragrant wings. His priesthood, as He is now in the heavens, and their priesthood are but *one ministration*.

And now, in view of all this remarkable foreshadowing of the Church in Leviticus, is it strange that every priestly action of that book should be predicated of Christians, though, of course, in the spiritual fulfillment? Did those priests offer sacrifices? We offer up "spiritual" sacrifices." Did they

bear incense before God? The Philippian believers are said to have presented to God "an odor of a sweet smell;" for it was the sweet merits of Christ which the incense typified, and believers are enveloped in His merits. Did the priests of Leviticus eat of the flesh of [14/15] their peace-offerings? So do Christians, by faith, "eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man," and feast upon the peace of God. Did they intercede for the people? So is it the duty of believers in Christ to do, and "the prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Were they teachers of the law? So do Christians "hold forth the word of life," and "minister grace to the hearers." Did they separate clean from unclean? Christians are described as doing spiritually what they did but ceremonially, and as "coming out and being separate from evil." Did they cut off unclean persons from the congregation of Israel? Christians are in duty bound to "mark them which cause offences contrary to the doctrine' which they have learned, and avoid them." And did they go into the Holy Places? Aaron especially into the Holiest? So do believers "draw near to God," and "enter into the Holiest."

On the other hand, no action at all is predicated of Christians that is not described as priestly. Do they pray? Their prayers are "set forth before God as *incense*, and the lifting up of their hands as *the evening sacrifice*." Do they sing praises to God? It is "the *sacrifice* of praise" which they "offer" (Heb. xiii, 15); this word *offer* being, in the Greek, the regular Septuagint word for the offering of sacrifices. Do Christians exercise faith in Christ? "The *sacrifice* of their faith," saith the Apostle; and again, "The *service* of their faith;" that is, the *priestly ministration* of their faith, the Greek word for "service" here being a Levitical word (Phil. ii, 17). Are they to do good, and to communicate of their pecuniary substance? "With such *sacrifices* God is well pleased." Do any of them preach the gospel? It is a *priestly serving*, as the Apostle's word expresses it (Rom. xv;16), and leads to the "offering up" of converted men to God. Do they present their bodies, and devote themselves to God? They do it as "*a living sacrifice*;" and, according to the Greek of the Apostle, it is their "reasonable (spiritual) *priestly service*" (Rom. xii, 1). In fine, does "the blood of Christ purge their consciences from dead works to serve the [15/16] living God" (Heb, ix, 14), to serve Him in all possible acts of service? The Apostle's word is, to "serve as a priest." Or, does the Christian "serve God in his spirit in the gospel of His Son" (Rom. i, 9), including all possible service in thoughts, affections, purposes, motives, in every detail, and throughout the life? The word "serve" in that place is the serving of a priest. The Christian is a priest to his God in his spirit; in all his inner self, and therefore through all his outer self; "not in a material temple, not at a material altar, but in his spirit, and at the gospel of Christ." So that, as Christians, we do nothing except as priests. All worship is the action of priesthood. The devout culture of the heart is the work of a priest. The overcoming of evil, the growth in spiritual life, the doing good to others, all is priestly. For, it was by giving us access to God in the Holiest, that is, by making us priests, that the salvation in Christ has empowered us for service. To say that we are priests is to say that we are capable servants of God; and if we appreciate our priesthood, we become acceptable servants. A separate class of priests in the Church? Most damaging conceit; not only blasphemous toward Christ, but a greedy plunderer of all fields of Christian blessedness.

Yes, the priesthood of Leviticus was ordained to typify the service of Christians. What honor conferred upon our holy living. What nearness to God it proves to be ours. What oneness with Christ it demonstrates.

III. And now we strike a third vein in this great mine of spiritual wealth: the Consecration e9 the priesthood of Leviticus receives its fulfillment in the Setting Apart of believers.

The latter is an exact answering to the former, as antitype to type. In the eighth chapter of Leviticus we have the account of that Consecration.

1. " And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take Aaron and his sons with him." Aaron's being "taken," that is, chosen, represented that "Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high [16/17] priest," but was called of God, and set apart to His work in the counsels of eternity. And Aaron's sons being "taken" represented that the people of Christ have been chosen of God to be His people. For, hath He not "chosen them in Christ?" Hath He not "called" them, and "drawn" them? Did He not "take" Saul of Tarsus, and Lydia, too, whose heart He opened to attend to the things which were spoken to her? The first step in our being made priests is one which shows how graciously God loves us.

2. But only the sons of Aaron were taken with him. None others were admitted to the priesthood. And does God ever put into the gospel service any who are not included in that word of Christ to His Father, "Behold, I and the children which Thou hast given me?" Men are dead as toward God till they be born again, and dead men render no service. But when He "quicken" them into life, and makes them "the sons of God," then. are they "His workmanship created unto good works." Priesthood and Sonship, therefore, are inseparably allied. Only a child's service is acceptable to God, and only a child's spirit is the spirit of priesthood. The joyous action of a child and the functions of priesthood blend in one. Inherent in priesthood is the principle of "the full assurance of faith." Whoever says, in the depths of his feelings, Abba, Father, feels his priesthood.

Thus, priesthood is no part of the outward arrangements of God's Church; although it is what should permeate the outward, like thought in sound, like heat in light. It is not created by Papal conclave or by churchly council. It is no dangling pendant to the concatenation of historic centuries. It exists only in the birth of God's life in the soul. Not the so-called Apostolical Succession is the principle of its being. The family principle is that which dominates the priesthood of the Church of God. Whoever is a. member of the family of faith is a priest of God, man or woman, prince or peasant, minister or layman. Whoever belongs not to the family of faith is not a priest of God, although [17/18] on his head had been laid the bands of all the generations of Bishops from Linus of Rome to Pius IX.

3. Again, Aaron and his sons were washed with water. While water as used for refreshment sets forth in Scripture the influences of the Holy Spirit, as used for washing it is the blood and sufferings of Christ. As, "Christ gave Himself for the Church, that He might cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Aaron's being washed with water was Christ's being washed with His own blood and sufferings. For, bare He not our sins in His own body? Was not the defilement of our guilt imputed to Him? And when the damnatory wrath of His Father was being poured out upon Him, did He not Himself say, "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul"?\* But did He avail to cleanse away the guilt laid upon Him? Then was He washed with His own blood and sufferings. And, accordingly, the sons of Aaron being washed with water with Aaron typified the fact that believers died with Christ, and have been washed from condemnation with His blood. The sufferings of their Substitute were the sufferings of believers. Now, Aaron and his sons were washed in order to priesthood. So Christ was not "made perfect" in priesthood except "through sufferings." And believers are introduced into their priesthood only through the sufferings of Christ. Their priesthood starts into being only out of salvation possessed. It is not for procuring salvation,

but only for service. And always salvation before service, and as the fountain of service.

4. As another step in the consecration, Aaron and his sons were clothed for the office of priesthood. Aaron, in "garments of glory and beauty." His sons, not in the magnificence belonging to him; for the excellencies of Christ are His own.

Yet the sons were so clothed as to be like Aaron; for the excellencies of Christ are imputed to us. The fine white linen of Aaron was upon his sons; that same material clothed both him and [18/19] them; and are not believers clothed with the same righteousness which is Christ's? Not only washed from condemnation, but judicially made righteous, and therein personally accepted. Nor only so, but the sons of Aaron were represented in the name of their tribe, as inscribed upon one of the onyx stones of memorial in the shoulder pieces of Aaron's Ephod, and there they were enveloped in even the magnificence of the High Priest. So God has made beautiful all believers with the beauty of Christ. Not merely accepted in His righteousness, but even endeared to God, and his very delight. Sanctified, says the Apostle: "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ." Priesthood and sanctification to God are inseparably allied; and he is the appreciative priest who realizes that God has covered him over with the entire preciousness of his Saviour.

5. Again, Aaron and his sons were anointed with the holy oil. Peter says, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost," and John says, "The anointing which ye have received." Thus how important to priesthood that we should have the sanctification of the Spirit as well; that he should teach us to feel the power of our sanctification in Christ, and to work it out in every day results.

Whoever should imitate that holy oil should be cut off from Israel.\* Men cannot confer the Holy Ghost; and a claim to do it, without express authority to that effect, is an imitation of the holy oil; as in the sentence, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands." [Ordination service of the Church of England and of the Protestant Episcopal Church.] Not so are priests ever made.

6. At length, the filling of the hands of Aaron and his sons was the crisis of their consecration. The very word "consecration" is, in the Hebrew, "fillings." The "ram of consecration" is the "ram of fillings." So that the decisive moment of the consecration [19/20] was when their hands were filled, for it was giving the priest wherewith to offer. Now their hands were filled with the slain "ram of consecration," and what had filled their hands was afterwards in part burned on the altar "for a sweet savor" to God, and in part eaten. When Christ presented himself to the Father, His hands were full of the merits of his "obedience unto death," "a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." And to His people it is given to have their hands filled with the same merits and the same sweet savor. Not alone are their persons accepted, but their works also. Their hands, the organs of activity, are filled. It is a normal idea of priesthood that Christ's merits are presented to the Father in every exercise of the priest's office; in every prayer, in every praise, in every meditation, in every labor for others; insomuch that even a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple is Christ filling the hand, and shall not lose its reward. A wonderful thing it is that his merits should pervade and sweeten all our imperfect obedience. Like as in a plant, in which you have first the substance of it, and then that substance filled and beautified with the green and the fragrance of vegetable life. We may fail to appreciate this, and, by consequence, may practically fail, in many things we do, to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." But such is the official enrichment of our priesthood. What we need is to cultivate a joyous faith in this endowment of our office, as

corresponding to the priest's eating of a part of the consecration ram. Thereby we should grow strong in our consciousness of Christ in everything, and it would irradiate the sense of duty with the feeling of gladness, and make us to abound not alone in duties done, but, what is more, in the confidence of God's approval of our dutifulness. For, whatever the satisfaction resulting to our moral nature from the idea of duty performed, yet, as matter of fact we never do duties perfectly, and of the fact of our failures not seldom have we so painful a conviction that it disheartens for service. But take home the truth, that the merits and sweetness of Christ are [20/21] made of God to fill and character our obedience, like as in a cluster of ripened grapes, it is the virtue of the vine which has expressed itself in the luscious fruit, and then neither idleness nor indifference shall be allowed to waste our energies, and even duties that are unpleasant will take on an attractive look. Oh, a Christ fullness is what belongs to our service, and our priesthood is a joy for ever.

In fine, is not the Setting Apart of believers the Antitype of the Consecration to the Priesthood of Leviticus? In the very process of being saved in Christ is involved the being set apart or consecrated to service. "I have ordained you," said Jesus, "that ye should go and bring forth fruit." A divine ordination to office is theirs. Priestcraft it is which would use the Levitical consecration for sequestering and exaggerating the Christian ministry; but Priesthood it is which shines to our view in the application of it to Christians.

IV. Finally, the Actual Entrance of the Levitical Priests upon the discharge of their functions was made to foreshow the Resurrection Life of Christian service.

The priests went not to their work till the eighth day;\* that is, the day after the seven days of their consecration had ended. On that eighth day Aaron stood forth in his perfected priesthood. On that day, then, he was the type of the Lord Jesus as risen from the dead; for Aaron's Antitype, as having been "made perfect through sufferings," could have had his perfected priesthood only in RESURRECTION. Thus the EIGHTH day was one of God's symbols of resurrection; even as still Sunday, the eighth day, is the festival of resurrection, it being the eighth with reference to what has gone before and out of which it has risen, but as well the first with reference to what may follow, even as resurrection is the beginning of a new series of time.

Now in correspondence to the fact, that in association with Aaron his sons also stood to their work not till the eighth day, is [21/22] it not said that believers *have risen with Christ?* that their "life is hid with Christ in God?" and that even now they are "seated with him in the heavenlies?" And does not Scripture bring this their resurrection life to bear with tremendous force in respect of all holy service? "*If ye then be risen with Christ,*" was Paul's grand appeal to the Colossians.

Thus was it foreshown that the only sphere of priesthood is resurrection life. We cannot be priests except as we have risen with Christ; we cannot properly discharge our priesthood except as we are realizing this fact. That we have actually passed from death unto life, and really have in us the risen life of Christ, and in our spirits here and now are part and parcel of the New creation of God; *that* is our resurrection life; and priesthood has its play and power in a clear assurance of it. We are priests not after the law of a carnal commandment," but, in our Divine Melchisedec and Captain of our salvation, "after the power of an endless life." Our priesthood in the present time is but the earnest and anticipation of it in heaven. Hence Priesthood *appreciated is heavenly-mindedness*. It sends forth its faith into the Heavenly Sanctuary, and brings back for its own inspiration and strengthening the foretasted blessedness of priesthood there. There we "shall follow the Lamb

whithersoever he goeth." There we shall serve God in the perfection of service; each one of us as that six-winged seraph of whom it is said, "with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." How transporting the prospect. How quickening to our halting service now. Is it not evident that we should become more thoroughly the practical servants of God, if we were consciously under the power of our resurrection life? How it would put to flight worldly ambition, unseemly strife, unholy greed, envyings, sensualness, selfishness. And honesty and honor, patience, meekness, temperance, diligence, brotherly kindness, and charity, how richly they all would grow along the pathway of priesthood in resurrection life.

[23] Looking back now over all this wealthy domain of Christian thought which we have endeavored to explore, what impression have we of God's estimate of the importance and preciousness of Priesthood? Is it not the most spiritual, the most heavenly, of subjects? The priesthood of the people of God is their being put in possession of the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of peace." It is the direct outcome of the believer's personal union with the Saviour, and of his identification with the work of his Substitute. It is Sonship. It is Sanctification. It is Heavenly-mindedness. It is the Earnest of Heaven. It is the power of service. It touches our Christian life not alone at one or two points, but covers it from head to foot. It is our ability to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. It is the glorification of God's boundless love for his saved ones in Christ.

And the *doctrine* of priesthood it is all-important that we keep clear and familiar. Like a sun-glass, it brings the rays of light, otherwise scattered, to a burning focus. It necessitates the full honoring of Christ; enforcing the truth that nothing must be allowed to intervene between him and the believer, and putting upon him the whole weight of our souls. It defines and makes more vivid personal fellowship with God, and suffuses it with incense and fragrance. It demonstrates that the Assurance of Faith, instead of being that aristocratic privilege which so many think is accorded to only a favored few, is indeed the common birthright of every believer. And it directs us into "the joy of the Lord" which "is our strength," and certifies us that "our joy may be full." Moreover, it is the irresistible antagonist of some of the deadliest errors prevailing in Christendom.

Brethren, we have different appointments of service. There are ministers and laymen, parents and children, friends and neighbors; but whatever our station, we are, as believers in Christ, priests of God. Let us appreciate it. Especially here, in this Council of our Church, let our gospel priesthood dominate [23/24] our action, and distill into our souls both sweetness and light. Give honor to the Word of God. "Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest." "Thy words were found," said Jeremiah, "and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Oh, if only our Reformed Church, laity and clergy both, were living in the full priestliness of their standing in Christ! "Awake, O North wind, and come, thou South; blow upon our garden, that the spices thereof may flow out!"

Beloved brethren, my own heart interprets you, that you would not be satisfied to have me release your attention until I had spoken a brief loving tribute to him, whose memory just now, by a melancholy interest, is uppermost in our hearts. Passing, then, from the discussion of our glorious theme, and bearing with us its gospel blessedness into this the hour of our Church's great sorrow, permit me to say that it has been with somewhat of painful effort I have sought to discharge the duty of this occasion. It was laid upon me by his appointment. And so frequently, during the composition

of my sermon, my love for him brought up his image before me, and I delighted myself at thinking how one with me he would be in the thoughts and truths which I was preparing to deliver here. But what unexpected alternations of human experience. It was while engaged upon the closing pages of my manuscript I received the startling telegram, "Bishop Cummins is dying; come by the first train." Dropping my pen, I hastened with all dispatch from Philadelphia to his home in Maryland, that, if possible, I might catch from his own lips his dying testimony. Alas, I was too late. His redeemed spirit had been for some hours with Jesus, when I reached that stricken and desolate household. Yet, although I had not the privilege of listening to himself, I learned of his triumphant departure from the vivid recitals of his weeping family.

[25] Our beloved Bishop and Leader was *ready*: not merely resigned, but *acquiescent*. "*Then let me die,*" was his quick response, when told by the physician that nothing more could be done. Then, with a trust strong, clear, and serene, like that of Stephen, he added, "*Lord Jesus receive my spirit.*" After an interval he continued,

"Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly,  
While the billows near me roll,  
While the tempest still is high;  
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,  
Till the storm of life is past;  
Safe into the haven guide;  
O receive my soul at last."

His very last utterance on earth was no more than what infant lips might have said, "*Jesus, precious Saviour;*" at once his farewell to the world below, and his home-greeting to the world above; the simplest of all expressions of the heart, yet the sublimest of all formulas of thought; the shortest, yet the fullest. So he *died*; and so he *lives*. In such words as these, as in a chariot of fire, his ascending spirit went triumphing "far above all heavens;" and yet, not until upon the Elishas left below had fallen the mantle of Elijah, in that message to the Church, "Tell them to go forward."

The very process of his dying was the march of victory. Within one hour and a quarter from his first knowing that he could not recover, all was over. The summons had come to him, and, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye, he was required to answer it. Yet no consternation, not even a disturbance; all was so calm, so absorbed into the sweet will of God, so blissful. He died as he had lived; he lives as he died. He had fulfilled his priesthood on earth; he is now in the priesthood of the heavens. He had here drawn nigh in full assurance of faith; he is now within the veil, where faith has merged in sight.

[26] "His sword was in his hand,  
Still warm with recent fight,  
Ready that moment, at command,  
Through rock and steel to smite.  
His spirit, with a bound,  
Left its encumbering clay;  
His tent, at sunrise, on the ground  
A darkened ruin lay.

Soldier of Christ, well done!  
Praise be thy new employ;  
And while eternal ages run,  
Rest in thy Saviour's joy."

This is not the time to analyze his character, neither to delineate his great work, neither to forecast the magnitude of its far-reaching results. The future will provide for the due rendering of those services. But no labored effort do we need for giving shape to our present vivid apprehensions, or for calling forth our lively affections. We recognize without delay how rich and sacred a bequest to us is his *memory, so untarnished*. We recall at once the sweetnesses of his character, his marked humility, his Christ-like meekness, his long-suffering gentleness, his unretaliating speech, his persistent patience. We remember his abiding faith in God and His word, his understanding of the gospel, his personal trust in Jesus, his reliance on Christ as his only righteousness, his rejoicings in the felt blessedness of salvation experienced; his moral bravery, his courage of faith, his decision of character, his self-abnegation, his sacrifice of self for truth and principle; his fervid oratory, his eloquent defence and preaching of the gospel, and his influence over men. We speak what we know, and testify what we have seen.

Great indeed is our loss. No other man, be he how transcendent as he may, can ever stand to the Reformed Episcopal Church in the same relations, *for he was our Luther*. Nor shall his name ever fade from the annals of the Church militant. He was spared sufficiently long to us, that our Church might stand upon her own feet; and now her banner is unfurled to the breezes of heaven, [26/27] and on its gleaming folds inscribed the legend, "Jesus, precious Saviour." His death is to us as God's clarion call; his absence from us is filled up with the presence of Jesus.

His beloved family and our beloved Church are inseparable in the bonds of this sorrow; but to them and to us the gospel truths at which we have been looking are as sunlight to the gloom. We have sometimes seen in the west a pile of dark clouds, whereupon, and soaring high above them, a scene of gorgeous grandeur, of many blending hues of light, of temple, towers, and palaces, was enkindled by the setting sun; and in the ravishing of our imaginations, as though the New Jerusalem had come down out of heaven in burnished gold and flashing gems, we thought no more of the dark clouds at the base, save only as enhancing by contrast the glory on high. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

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