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The Christian Priesthood.

DOES there exist a Priesthood in the Christian Church? If so, of what nature is it? What relationship does it bear to the Jewish Priesthood? On what does its continuance depend? Who are those endowed with it, and on what does its transmission rest? This question is one which divides the professing Christian Church at the present time into two great parts, holding views quite incompatible with one another. And yet it is remarkable that the matter is not so much as mentioned in any one of the ancient Creeds, nor does it seem to have ever been a cause of controversy in early times.

It seems to me that, if we wish to arrive at a correct answer to the question, we must in the first place lay aside all party feeling and examine the matter quietly, with a due sense of its importance. As Sallust represents one of his characters declaring, we must agree that, "*Omnes homines, . . . qui de rebus dubiis consultant, ab odio, amicitia, ira, atque misericordia vacuos esse decet.*"

In dealing with any system of religion or philosophy, if we really wish to ascertain correctly what its genuine teachings are, we must study the works of the founder or founders of the system, being careful to distinguish between the authentic doctrines taught by these men and the developments or corruptions or additions which have originated in later times. Only so can we attain to a scholarly knowledge of the subject. Thus we do not accept the writings of Porphyrius, Iamblicus, Proculus and other Neo-Platonist philosophers as fully and fairly representing Plato's teaching, but turn back to his own writings for information on the subject. Nor would any true scholar dream for a moment of taking Modern Hindûism as an exponent of Vedic beliefs, or Neo-Muhammadanism as correctly expounding what Muhammad himself taught. On the contrary, in the name of exact Scholarship, we study the Vedas (especially the Rig-Veda) and the Qur'an. To do otherwise would be to show ourselves destitute of anything worthy of the name of scholarship: it would infallibly lead us hopelessly astray, and would render us blind leaders of the blind. We should all agree that anything not taught in the original documents upon which all reliable knowledge of any religion or philosophy depends cannot be deemed part of that system. The same principle must be applied to the

study of Christianity. This is well expressed in the Sixth Article of the Church of England: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith."

Hence, for information regarding the Christian Doctrine of the Priesthood (*ιερωσύνη*) we turn to the New Testament. Even were we Non-Christian students of the Faith, that would be our only permissible course. Anything added by later writers, if not a clear and logical deduction from the New Testament, must be devoid of authority, and, as such, no true part of the Christian religion. We cannot even argue that it is perhaps a necessary development of the faith. It is well known that Newman himself retracted his "Doctrine of Development," and it was rightly condemned by the Pope as opening the door to every form of error.

I.

The New Testament tells us that the ordinances of the Mosaic Law were, speaking generally, "shadows of the things to come," the New Covenant being intended to fulfil the promises which they implied, to accomplish for all believers what the Law could only foreshadow. In themselves the forms of the Ceremonial Law were of no value whatever: their value consisted in their being types of great realities which were to be revealed under the New Dispensation. But, as there can be no shadow without a substance, the shadow would not be needed to prove the reality of the substance when once the substance was manifested. The shadow would pass away when no longer required, its purpose being ended. To endeavour to preserve it after that might do harm, but could not conceivably do good; just as the flower fades away and vanishes when the fruit is formed, for otherwise the growth and ripening of the latter might be arrested. Yet the reality borne witness to by the type would never fade away or be lost. Hence to answer the question which we are considering it is necessary to glance at Priesthood in the Old Testament among the Israelites.

Going back to early days we find only what may be called the Patriarchal Priesthood, according to which the father of the family or head of the clan or tribe was the priest, offering sacrifice for the family in virtue of his position. Later we find this supplemented

by the specially and Divinely ordained Levitical Priesthood of Aaron and his sons, the latter inheriting the Priesthood solely in virtue of their descent from him. The former patriarchal Priesthood was not fully abrogated by the Aaronic but became, so to speak, a Lay Priesthood, continuing principally in the Passover sacrifice and family sacrifices. Though the Aaronic Priesthood was of Divine appointment, yet it was not an end in itself, but was to continue until the accomplishment of God's purpose that the whole nation should become "a kingdom of priests and an holy people."¹

The New Testament teaches us that the High Priest was typical of Christ, the sons of Aaron typifying the priesthood of all who received the New Birth through faith in Him. Hence, St. Peter declares that true Christians are "a royal Priesthood, a holy nation a people for God's own possession."² Thus the anti-type corresponds to the type. As under the Law no one could possibly attain the Aaronic Priesthood except through natural descent from the High Priest Aaron, so under the Gospel no one can possibly become a priest except through receiving the New Birth from Christ. As *all* males born of Aaron's line were priests in virtue of that birth, so all persons, whether male or female (for such distinctions, just as distinctions of nationality, are done away in spiritual things in Christ), on receiving the New Spiritual birth through our One High Priest, become "priests of God and of Christ."³

Under the New Covenant the spiritual priesthood thus takes the place of the Aaronic. So too material sacrifices disappear because "that which is perfect is come," and therefore "that which is in part" is done away. In themselves we are told, they had no value, could have none. They may be compared to the cheque, which has entirely lost its value when the sum is once paid, except indeed in showing that it was really due and *has* been paid. In the same way in the Christian dispensation the only temple is a spiritual temple, the only altar is spiritual, the only true worship is "in spirit and in truth." Even our Divine Lord's sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the whole world was of value only because it was in essence spiritual: "Lo! I come to do Thy will, O God."

A priori therefore, from a general view of the principles which are the foundations of the Christian system as taught in the New Testament, it would seem that the possibility of the existence of a

¹ Exod. xix. 6.² 1 Peter ii. 9.³ Rev. xx. 6.

Sacerdotal caste, so to speak, under the new covenant is precluded.

But it is quite possible that a fuller consideration of the subject may lead to some modification of this opinion. There may, for instance, be certain terms, such as Priest (*ἱερεύς*), Altar (*θυσιαστήριον*), Priesthood (*ἱεράτευμα, ἱερωσύνη*), Sacrifice (*θυσία*), High Priest (*ἀρχιερεύς*), etc., employed in reference to offices and duties to be performed in connexion with the Christian Church. There may be some account of the institution of a sacerdotal order which would continue to discharge, with the requisite modifications, the religious duties performed under the Law by the Priests and Levites. All these and other matters require careful examination before we are justified in coming to a conclusion and giving an answer to the question under consideration. It is a question of such deep and far-reaching importance that it deserves the most earnest and attentive study.

The fact is that *all*¹ these sacerdotal terms are employed in the New Testament in connexion with the Christian Church. We must therefore inquire how and in what sense they are used, and how far their use implies the existence of a Christian Priesthood, distinct from the Spiritual priesthood of all believers.

(1) "Priests" (*ἱερεῖς*), are often mentioned in the New Testament, but only *Jewish* or *heathen* priests are thus spoken of, except in the Apocalypse, where the word is distinctly and indisputably applied to Christians, and that no less than three times (Rev. i. 6; v. 10; xx. 6). But in each such verse the term is used not of any special order or class, but of *all true Christians*. In the singular the same word is applied to a Jewish priest, a heathen priest, to Melchizedek, and to Christ, but to no apostle, bishop, or presbyter (the latter two words are of course interchangeable in the New Testament), or any other official of the Church. This is hardly to be wondered at, because the worship of the Church was modelled on that of the *synagogue*, not of the temple:—in fact the Epistle of James calls the Christian congregation "your synagogue" (Jas. ii. 2), and, in the synagogue, worship was conducted by the elders (presbyters), not by priests (*ἱερεῖς*).

(2) Two words are employed for "priesthood," *ἱεράτευμα* and *ἱερωσύνη*. The former is used only by St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9), the

¹ Except perhaps "Altar" (a disputed point), see below.

latter by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. vii. 11, 12, 14, with another reading, 24). The former is used in the concrete sense of "a body of priests," the latter in Hebrews means the priestly office. But the term *ἱεράτευμα* is applied to the whole body of believers in Christ, not to any special section or order among them. The other word refers only to the Levitical priesthood, and the priesthood "after the order of Melchizedek" which Christ alone can possess. It is not mentioned as belonging to any order in the Christian Church.

(3) "High Priest" (*ἀρχιερεύς*) is used of the Jewish hierarch and also of our Lord, but not of any member of the Christian community.

(4) "Altar" (*θυσιαστήριον*) occurs fairly often in the New Testament; but with one possible exception (Heb. xiii. 10), it denotes (a) Abraham's altar; (b) The altar in the Temple; or (c) The heavenly altar in John's apocalyptic vision. It is at least highly improbable that the passage in Hebrews xiii. 10, can mean that the Christians at that time had *one* altar somewhere on earth, like the Jewish altar of incense or that of burnt sacrifice, or that they had church-buildings and an altar of some kind in each. Of neither does history contain the slightest hint for generations afterwards, nor does their synagogue-worship tend to confirm such a supposition. Without a priestly order (of which, as we have seen, we find no trace) a literal altar would not be admissible. Hence, if the passage does not mean "we Israelites have an altar" (and the temple was still standing when the Epistle was written), then the word must be used in a spiritual or metaphorical sense.

(5) "Sacrifices" (*θυσίαι*) are often mentioned in the New Testament. But when the word does not refer to Jewish or heathen offerings, it denotes either (a) Christ's one sacrifice offered on the Cross, or (b) what St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 5), terms "spiritual sacrifices," or (c) is used metaphorically in the latter sense (cf. Rom. xii. 1). The New Testament nowhere applies the word to any material offering made by Christians. Not only so, but the Epistle to the Hebrews (*passim*) clearly and repeatedly declares that all material sacrifices are in themselves worthless, and also shows that Christ's sacrifice of Himself on the Cross was so perfect and complete that it left no room for any sacrifice, Jewish or Christian, except the offering of ourselves as "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto

God, which is your reasonable service" (*λατρεία*, i.e. method of worship).

The natural conclusion from all this is exactly the same that we reached by our previous examination of the general fundamental principles which underlie the Christian Faith.

We thus see that not only is the idea of the existence of a sacerdotal order in the Christian Church contrary to its distinctive principles, but also that, whereas words of sacerdotal significance in both the Jewish and the heathen religious systems are not infrequently used in the New Testament in reference to things Christian, they are always there employed in a higher, spiritual sense, thus raising them to a higher plane and precluding the possibility of their use in the Church in the lower signification which they had previously had.

But let us examine the matter from another, a third, point of view—the negative. That is to say, let us inquire what terms are *not* used in the New Testament as descriptive of the officiating ministers and the ceremonies of the Church.

That the New Testament does recognize the existence of a special body of persons with special functions in a large measure distinct from the general mass of Christians is indisputable. To different members of this body the titles of apostles, prophets, presbyters, deacons, deaconesses, etc., are assigned. There are also certain ordinances of Divine appointment, especially Baptism and the Lord's Supper, otherwise called at times "the breaking of bread." We have distinct accounts of the institution of the two Sacrament and of the appointment of certain persons to some of these offices. But the point to notice here is that nowhere is the Lord's Supper entitled a Sacrifice; nowhere is the title "priest" (*ιερεύς*) given to any one holding any one of these offices, nowhere is a hint given of the existence of any "priesthood" (*ιεράτευμα, ιερωσύνη*) in the Church other than that common to all believers. Christ is the only true High Priest, and His priesthood is unchangeable, not passing from Him to any successor, like the Jewish priesthood and high priesthood (*ἀπαράβατον*). No directions are given for a special attire for the Christian "clergy" (to use by anticipation a term employed in the New Testament—I Pet. v. 3—in quite another sense). In all these matters the contrast between the Aaronic priesthood and

the Christian ministry is absolute and unmistakable. It is worthy of mention that, even to the present day, the garments which some clergy value as denoting their possession of a distinctive "priesthood" (*ιερωσύνη, sacerdotium*) superior to that possessed in common by all true Christians are historically known to be derived, not from the priestly attire of either the Jewish or the heathen sacrificial priest (*ιερεύς*), but from the dress of the Roman gentleman, heathen or Christian, in the time of the Empire. This fact is in itself sufficient to show that there never was in the Christian Church any special sacerdotal dress,¹ as there was in the Jewish, simply because there was, originally at least, no sacerdotal order, as there were no sacerdotal functions, in the Church of Christ.

From this standpoint too we are led to the same conclusion as before.

We have learnt that in New Testament times there was no trace of the existence of a "priesthood" belonging to the "clergy" as such, and not to the laity. It *may*, of course, be urged that the thing may have existed, though not named; in fact that its not being mentioned is due to its being so universally recognized that there was not the slightest reason to insist upon it. Such an assertion cannot be seriously taken as an argument, for any imaginable practice or doctrine might be "proved" in the same way. It might, for instance, be argued that for the same reason the Book of Mormon was revered by the early Church. In fact it would be much easier to maintain the latter thesis on these grounds than the former.

There can, however, be no question that the doctrine of a special "priesthood" of the clergy is now widely held by many Christians, and that it holds a leading place in the belief—we might almost say in the Creed—of certain Churches. This being the case the idea must have had an origin, and it should be possible to discover *whence* it originated, and perhaps also *when*, just as one can learn by carefully examining Roman Catholic literature at what particular period and how the doctrine of the Infallibility of the Pope, or of the Papal Supremacy, or of Transubstantiation, arose and obtained acceptance. In respect to other religions and philosophies, such as

¹ What Polycrates, an Asian bishop, says about St. John's being a *ιερεύς* and wearing the *πέραλον* (Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.* v. 24) is not accepted as literally correct by scholars.

Buddhism, Hindûism, or Islâm, one cannot lay claim to be a real student of any of these systems unless he has devoted considerable attention to the changes which have gradually and in process of time taken place in them, so as to learn the origin of such changes and under what circumstances and influences they occurred.

Surely the same method of study is not only possible but necessary with reference to the Christian Faith. With regard to the doctrine of a special "priesthood" of the clergy as distinct from the Christian laity, we have seen that it has no foundation in Holy Scripture, nor does even a single trace of such a belief occur in the New Testament. Let us now examine the works of the "Apostolic Fathers," in order to see whether any of them taught it, though their authority must be admitted to be at the very least far inferior to that of the writers of the Canonical Books of the New Testament. Even if they held the doctrine (as they did not), it could not be accepted, being contrary to New Testament teaching.

Of most of the sacerdotal terms mentioned above the use in the Apostolic Fathers is very limited indeed. This is true also of the "Didachê" or "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." Our limits will not permit us to deal at any length with them, but we may briefly mention that:—

In the Apostolic Fathers we find the words *ἀρχιερεῖς* and *ιερεῖς* only in Clement of Rome and Ignatius. Clement uses the words only in his Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xl. and there, writing before the destruction of the Temple, he applies them only to the Jewish High Priests and the Aaronic priests.

Ignatius, too, uses them (*Ad Philadelphenos*, cap. 9), speaking of the Jewish priests and high priest. He then goes on to speak of Christ as our High Priest, in accordance with the Epistle to the Hebrews. Thus nowhere are the Christian clergy given such titles in these ancient Christian writings.

In the Didachê the word *ιερεῖς* does not occur at all, though a full account is given of the way in which the Holy Communion was then administered. The word *ἀρχιερεῖς* occurs but once, and it applies to an order no longer extant in our time—that of the prophets. It is enjoined that the first-fruits be given to the prophets, as among the Jews to the high ¹ Priest and the others who assisted

¹ Especially in Deut. xxvi. 2-11: See also Lev. xxiii. 10; Numbers xviii. 12; Deut. xviii. 4.

him for their sustenance, because "they are your high priests." This is instructive as showing not only that the word is used metaphorically, so to speak, but also as proving that the presbyters (still called *ἐπίσκοποι*) were *not* deemed to hold an office analogous to that of the Aaronic priests.

The term *θυσία* does not seem to occur at all, except in a spiritual sense, in the Apostolic Fathers. In the *Didachê* it is found only in chap. xiv. 1, 2, 3,¹ where too it is employed in a spiritual sense, as in the New Testament.

The word "Altar" is met with some five times in the Apostolic Fathers. Clement (*Ep. ad Cor.*, chap. xli.), uses it only once, and then of the Jewish altar in the Temple. Ignatius employs it figuratively three times. He says: "Let no one err; unless one be within the altar, he lacks God's bread" (*Ep. ad Ephes.* 5). He uses the word in a like figurative sense, also in *Ep. ad Magnes*, 7, and in *Ep. ad Philadelphenos*, 4. Polycarp employs the word only once, when he says that well-conducted widows "are God's altar (*v.l.* altars)" in *Ep. ad Philipp.*, 4.

To find *ιερεύς* or *ἀρχιερεύς* applied to any Christian minister we must turn in the first place to the heathen satirist Lucian, and in the second to the falsely so-called *Apostolic Constitutions*. In the Pseudo-Clementine Liturgy contained in the latter work, dating probably about 260 A.D. at earliest, the "elected bishop" (*χειροτονηθείς ἐπίσκοπος*) is in a rubric styled *ὁ ἀρχιερεύς* (Neale and Littledale's *Primitive Liturgies*, pp. 85, 86, 92). Neither of these can be deemed high authorities from a Christian standpoint. In striking contrast with the Pseudo-Clementine Liturgy we find Minucius Felix, an Orthodox writer (about 230 A.D.), using the word "Sacerdotes" of heathen priests only, repudiating the idea of a Christian altar, and speaking of only "spiritual sacrifices" among Christians.

II.

We must now consider some objections which have been raised to the conclusion that the early Church recognized no sacrificial priesthood as existing in the Church, other than the *ἱερωσύνη* of all true believers in Christ.

(1) "If the Jews (in spite of the fact that in Exodus xix. 6, the same title of 'a kingdom of priests' is applied to the whole nation

that St. Peter applies to the whole body of Christians) yet had a sacerdotal priesthood, why should not the Christians too have one? "

Among other reasons, because the title *was never applied* to the Jewish nation. Exodus xix. 5, 6, speaks of the *future* (as the Hebrew text explicitly states, and as the Targum and the Hebrew commentators explain it), saying distinctly that, *if* the nation fulfilled certain conditions, which it *did not* fulfil, then it *would* become what St. Peter says the Christian Church *has* become, "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter ii. 9.)

To prove the existence of the special Levitical *sacerdotium* among the Jews we have in the Law of Moses a detailed account of its Divine appointment. It would require a similar account of Divine appointment to prove that a similar "priesthood" exists in the Christian Church. But we have seen that no such account occurs; therefore no such separate sacerdotal class can exist in the Church of Christ.

Again, the establishment of such a class would be a *step backward*. Even among the Jews it was fading away long before our Lord's time. To take away from all Christians their spiritual priesthood in order to establish a sacerdotal priesthood on the Jewish model would be a downward step. It would be a distinct *degradation* to the clergy to put them in such a position, on a far lower plane than the laity, if the laity were to retain the higher spiritual priesthood while the clergy were merely sacrificial priests.

Were there a sacrificial class in the Christian Church, there must be prescribed a ceremonial dress, ritual, altar, sacrifices, etc. None of these are so much as mentioned in the New Testament or in the early Christian literature.

(2) "But in Romans xv. 16, St. Paul uses the verb *ιερουργειν* (to officiate as a sacrificial priest) of himself."

The passage runs thus: "Ministering-in-sacrifice (R.V. margin) the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable." Here the thing offered in sacrifice is "the Gospel of God." Of course no material sacrifice is meant, none of the Gospels having yet been written. How such metaphorical language can be fancied adequate to support the claim that St. Paul was a sacrificial priest it is hard to see. The "offering up of the Gentiles" was their own work, according to Romans xii. 1, as no one else could possibly do it but those personally concerned.

(3) "The Christian presbyter represents the Christian people,

who are 'a royal priesthood (*ἱεράτευμα*),' according to 1 Peter ii. 9: Hence, as the representative of a body of sacrificial priests he is evidently a sacrificial priest (*ἱερεὺς*) himself."

If he is in any true sense a Christian believer, of course he shares in the "royal priesthood," just as truly as any of the laity. He does not need to claim it as representing the laity collectively. But the theory of the objector here is that the presbyter, as representing the laity, can claim as their representative *an office which they do not possess*, viz., that of an offerer of material sacrifices, like the Aaronic priests. The argument is, so to speak, that an English elector, as representing a body of English electors, has a right to sit in the French Parliament. How can holders of the English franchise give one of their number a right to an office which they are not qualified to hold themselves? How can a number of persons forming a "spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood (*ἱεράτευμα*), to offer up *spiritual sacrifices*" (1 Pet. ii. 5), as St. Peter says—how can they possibly authorize one of their number to offer *material* sacrifices for them, and constitute him their representative in doing what they have no right to do?

Again, to delegate any one as our representative implies our resigning our rights into his hands. He and we cannot both exercise them at the same time. Were Christians generally to delegate their spiritual priesthood to the clergy, that would practically amount to giving it up entirely, which would mean giving up the right to pray, the right to approach God through Christ—in a word it would be ceasing to be Christians in any true meaning of the word. But even then the resignation of our *spiritual* priesthood into the hands of one of our number, were such a thing possible, would not make him a *sacrificial* priest in an entirely different *and much lower* sense.

Once more, as a matter of fact the laity are never asked to delegate, nor have they ever delegated, their spiritual priesthood to the clergy. The spiritual priesthood, in the nature of the case, is incapable of being delegated. Moreover, whoever heard of the laity electing one of their number as their "priest"? The theory is based upon a more patent fiction than even the hypothesis of "the Social compact."

Strangely enough, those who support the theory that the clergy have a "priesthood" as representing the laity are the very people

who rightly urge the laity to exercise their "spiritual priesthood." But this is a contradiction in terms. How can the laity exercise it, if they have chosen the clergy as their delegates for that purpose? Or, is the matter made more logical by holding that the laity have delegated to the clergy the office of sacrificial priests, which the laity do not themselves possess?

(4) "The words *λειτουργός*, *λειτουργεῖν*, which are used of the Christian ministry in the New Testament (Acts. xiii. 2; Rom. xv. 16) are technical words for priestly ministry, both Jewish and Pagan." ¹

The fact is that *λειτουργός* means, first of all, one who does service to the public in any way. Polybius uses the word as denoting "a workman." Then it came to denote one who served God, in any capacity, in connexion with Divine worship in the Temple or anywhere else. Thus in Romans xiii. 6, even heathen rulers are called *λειτουργοὶ Θεοῦ*, "God's ministers." This is sufficient to show that a sacrificial meaning is not by any means necessarily attached to the word in the New Testament. The persons referred to in Acts xiii. 2, are not Christian presbyters but laymen; to wit Barnabas, Symeon Niger, Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen. One only of these *afterwards* became an "apostle" of a Church, but not in the full meaning of the term Apostle. In Romans xv. 16, St. Paul is "a minister (*λειτουργός*) of Jesus Christ unto the Gentiles," surely without a sacrificial sense. The angels are "ministering (*λειτουργικὰ*) spirits" in Hebrews i. 14, not because they exercise "priestly ministry" but because they "do service." The verb is used of the service of a priest in the Temple in Hebrews x. 11, but is distinguished in some measure from "offering sacrifices." Hence it is hardly correct to say that the words are used "technically," in connexion with "priestly ministry." They certainly do not prove any sacerdotal office to belong to the persons to whom they refer.

(5) "In 1 Corinthians xi. 25, the verb rendered 'do' (*ποιεῖτε*) has a sacrificial sense."

This is a mere assertion, contrary to all the circumstances attending the Institution of the Lord's Supper. It was not in the Temple, nor at an altar, nor was our Lord a sacrificial priest on earth (Hebrews viii. 4).

It is interesting to notice that even Bishop Gore (*Orders and Unity*, p. 65) admits that "There is not found in the New Testament

¹Bishop Gore, *Orders and Unity*, p. 161, note.

any basis for the idea of a priestly class in the Church occupying any nearer position to God than the rest of their brethren." He agrees with Dr. Denney in saying "There is not—as in the nature of the case there could not be—any trace in the New Testament of a Christian priest making sacrifice for sin and mediating *again* . . . between God and men" (p. 159). Yet the Bishop holds that the Church "was continually exercising its priesthood; offering up spiritual sacrifices . . . as one body, acting through its appointed officers; and these officers came to be called priests,¹ as being, like the Old Testament priests, agents and officers of a priestly body, by a Divine appointment." But we have already seen that the argument implied in the latter part of this statement is in error; for in Exodus xix. 6, the Jewish Church is *not* declared to be "a priestly body." A promise was given it of becoming "a kingdom of priests," *if* it fulfilled certain conditions. These it did *not* fulfil. They were fulfilled by our Lord, and hence all who are "in Christ" are "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter ii. 9). In the case of the Aaronic priesthood there is recorded a "Divine appointment"; but it is precisely this that is lacking to create a sacrificial priestly body in the Christian Church. Undoubtedly the presbyters of the Church were in the third century (rarely and doubtfully in the second) called *ιερείς*, but without Scriptural authority, and hence wrongly, through heathen influences and misconceptions. This fact by no means justifies the title being given them. Neither the length of time that has since elapsed nor the wide extent of the prevalence of the error can ever make it right. No amount of antiquity, no degree of popular prejudice, can make right that which is wrong.

In conclusion: we have ascertained, as a matter of history, that

¹Though defending the view that the word "priest," in the sense of "a sacrificial priest" (*ιερείς*) may legitimately be applied to a Christian presbyter, Bishop Gore nevertheless says: "In the Church the idea of the priest has been at certain periods and in certain regions allowed to become too simply that of a man who in virtue of his ordination has the power to offer sacrifices for the quick and the dead, and to absolve his fellow-men. This definition of his office by a specific power to perform certain rites, having efficacy with God on behalf of others, brings the idea of a Christian priest perilously near to the pagan standard of priesthood which Christianity superseded" (*Orders and Unity*, p. 164).

This being so, surely we should be careful not to use such a title as "priest" in the sense of *hierēus* in reference to a Christian presbyter. It is not justified by Holy Scripture, it is contrary to the practice of the early Church, and it cannot be defended by exact scholarship, while its heathen origin is historically evident, and the effect of the use of such an incorrect term has been evil in every age since it was first introduced.

the doctrine of the sacrificial priesthood of the clergy arose and spread in the Church during the third and succeeding centuries. The terms *ἱερεύς* and *ἀρχιερεύς* were first applied to a presbyter and a bishop respectively only in a figurative sense. The metaphor was afterwards taken as expressing a literal fact. This took place through the influence of heathen sacerdotal ideas, which prevailed especially in Syria,¹ but also in other places, and was aided by the entrance of large numbers of converts from heathenism into the Church in every land. The orders of bishop, presbyter and deacon came in time to be at first compared and afterwards gradually confounded with the three orders of high priest, priest, and levite among the Jews, though this was contrary to the whole spirit of the New Testament. Cyprian (probably through what we may frankly call ignorance) fell into this mistake, and through his great influence the error spread more rapidly than it might otherwise have done. It continued to prevail almost universally until the revived study of the Greek New Testament at the Reformation once more revealed the true spiritual nature of the Christian religion and the fact of the spiritual priesthood of all true Christians, thus restoring us in this great matter to "the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

W. ST. CLAIR TISDALL.

P.S. It is not always remembered that the word *priest* in the Prayer Book is derived from the Greek *presbyteros* through the latinized *presbyter* and the old French *prestre* (modern *prêtre*), the term rendered *elder* in the New Testament, and is therefore strictly correct, not originally meaning a sacrificial minister, which in Greek is *hierews*. Unfortunately, however, there is in English no word to express *hierews* (in Hebrew *kôhên*). Hence in both Old Testament and New Testament "priest" is used to translate the latter word, and this has caused confusion even in the minds of educated men.

¹Bishop Lightfoot, *Dissertation on the Christian Ministry*.

