

CHAPTER XV.

**THE COVENANT OF AN  
EVERLASTING PRIESTHOOD**

“That My covenant might be with Levi. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared Me, and was afraid before My name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips; he walked with Me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.”  
MAL. 2. 4-6.

**I**SRAEL was meant by God to be a nation of priests. In the first making of the Covenant this was distinctly stipulated. “If ye will obey My voice, and keep My covenant, ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests.” They were to be the stewards of the oracles of God; the channels through whom God’s knowledge and blessing were to be communicated to the world; in them all nations were to be blessed. Within the people of Israel one tribe was specially set apart to embody and emphasize the priestly idea. The first-born sons of the whole people were to have been the priests. But to secure a more complete separation from the rest of the people, and the entire giving up of any share in their possessions and pursuits, God chose one tribe to be exclusively

devoted to the work of proving what constitutes the spirit and the power of priesthood. Just as the priesthood of the whole people was part of God's Covenant with them, so the special calling of Levi is spoken of as God's Covenant of Life and Peace being with Him, as the Covenant of an everlasting priesthood. All this was to be a picture to help them and us, in some measure, to apprehend the priesthood of His own Blessed Son, the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Like Israel, all God's people, under the New Covenant, are a royal priesthood. The right of free and full access to God, the duty and power of mediating for our fellowmen and being God's channel of blessing to them, is the inalienable birthright of every believer. Owing to the feebleness and incapacity of many of God's children, their ignorance of the mighty grace of the New Covenant, they are utterly impotent to take up and exercise their priestly functions. To make up for this lack of service, to show forth the exceeding riches of His grace in the New Covenant, and the power He gives men of becoming, just as the priests of old were the forerunners of the Great High Priest, His followers and representatives, God still allows and invites those of His redeemed ones who are willing, to offer their lives to this blessed ministry. To him who accepts the call, the New Covenant brings in special measure what God has said: "My Covenant of Life and Peace shall be with him"; it becomes to him in very deed "the Covenant of an everlasting priesthood." As the Covenant of Levi's priesthood issued and culminated in Christ's, ours issues from that again, and receives from it its blessing to dispense to the world.

To those who desire to know the conditions on which, as part of the New Covenant, the Covenant of an everlasting priesthood can

be received and carried out, a study of the conditions on which Levi received the priesthood will be most instructive. We are not only told that God chose that tribe, but what there specially was in that tribe that fitted it for the work. Malachi says: “I gave him My covenant for the fear wherewith he feared Me, and was afraid before My name.” The reference is to what took place at Sinai when Israel had made the molten calf. Moses called all who were on the Lord’s side, who were ready to avenge the dishonour done to God, to come to him. The tribe of Levi did so, and at his bidding took their swords, and slew three thousand of the idolatrous people (Ex. 32. 26-29). In the blessing with which Moses blessed the tribes before his death, their absolute devotion to God, without considering relative or friend, is mentioned as the proof of their fitness for God’s service (Deut. 33. 5-11): “Let Thy Thummim and Thy Urim be with Thy holy one, who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not known thee; neither did he acknowledge his own brethren, nor know his own children: for they have observed Thy word and kept Thy covenant.”

The same principle is strikingly illustrated in the story of Aaron’s grandson, Phineas, where he, in his zeal for God, executed judgment on disobedience to God’s command. The words are most suggestive. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, hath turned away My wrath from the children of Israel, in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I consumed them not in My jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him My covenant of peace: and it shall be unto him, and his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was jealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel” (Num. 25. 10-13). To be jealous with God’s jealousy, to be jealous for God’s honour, and rise up against sin, is the gate into the Covenant

of an everlasting priesthood, is the secret of being entrusted by God with the sacred work of teaching His people, and burning incense before Him, and turning many from iniquity (Deut. 33. 10 ; Mal. 2. 6).

Even the New Covenant is in danger of being abused by the seeking of our own happiness or holiness, more than the honour of God or the deliverance of men. Even where these are not entirely neglected, they do not always take the place they are meant to have—that first place that makes everything, the dearest and best, secondary and subordinate to the work of helping and blessing men. A reckless disregard of everything that would interfere with God’s will and commands, a being jealous with God’s jealousy against sin, a witnessing and a fighting against it at any sacrifice—this is the school of training for the priestly office.

It is this the world needs nowadays—men of God in whom the fire of God burns, men who can stand and speak and act in power on behalf of a God who, amid His own people, is dishonoured by the worship of the golden calf. Understand that as you will, of the place given to money and rich men in the church, of the prevalence of worldliness and luxury, or of the more subtle danger of a worship meant for the true God, under forms taken from the Egyptians, and suited to the wisdom and the carnal life of this world. A religion God cannot approve is often found even where the people still profess to be in covenant with God. “Consecrate yourselves to-day unto the Lord, even every man upon his brother.” This call of Moses is as much needed to-day as ever. To each one who responds there is the reward of the priesthood.

Let all who would know to the full what the New-Covenant means, remember God’s Covenant of Life and Peace with Levi. Accept

of the holy calling to be an intercessor, and to burn incense before the Lord continually. Love, work, pray, believe, as one whom God has sought and found to stand in the gap before Him. The New Covenant was dedicated by a sacrifice and a death: reckon it your most wonderful privilege, your fullest entrance into its life, as you reflect the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord, to let the Spirit of that sacrifice and death be the moving power in all your priestly functions. Sacrifice yourself, live and die for your fellowmen.

One of the great objects with which God has made a Covenant with us is, as we have said so often, to waken strong confidence in Himself and His faithfulness to His promise. And one of the objects that He has in wakening and so strengthening the faith in us, is that He may use us as His channels of blessing to the world. In the work of saving men, He wants intercessory prayer to take the first place. He would have us come to Him to receive, from Him in heaven, the spiritual life and power which can pass out from us to them. He knows how difficult and hopeless it is in many cases to deal with sinners; He knows that it is no light thing for us to believe that in answer to our prayer the mighty power of God will move to save those around us; He knows that it needs strong faith to persevere patiently in prayer in cases in which the answer is long delayed, and every year appears farther off than ever. And so He undertakes, in our own experience, to prove what faith in His Divine power can do, in bringing down all the blessings of the New Covenant on ourselves, that we may be able to expect confidently what we ask for others.

In our priestly life there is still another aspect. The priests had no inheritance with their brethren; the Lord God was their inheritance. They had access to His dwelling and His presence, that there they

might intercede for others, and thence testify of what God is and wills. Their personal privilege and experience fitted them for their work. If we would intercede in power, do let us live in the full realization of New Covenant life. It gives us not only liberty and confidence with God, and power to persevere; it gives us power with men, as we can testify to and prove what God has done to us. Herein is the full glory of the New Covenant, that, like Christ, its Mediator, we have the fire of the Divine love dwelling in us, and consuming us in the service of men. May to each of us the chief glory of the New Covenant be that it is the Covenant of an everlasting priesthood.