

of his people with an extempore prayer; or when in his study there is poured into his ear the story of some broken and contrite heart; or when he endeavours to comfort a penitent soul with the promises of pardon written in the Word of God. The priesthood of the Church is the priesthood of Christ; it is a delegated priesthood, as His was also. "Even Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest;" He was "called of God." Nor was His only a delegated authority, but also a delegated power. "The word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me." "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." My brothers, let nothing rob you of the confident conviction that you are the priests of God. The more you believe in your high commission; the more you are alive to its privileges and its powers, its responsibilities and its perils; the more happily, and the more humbly, will you labour among your people, in the office and work of a priest in the Church of God.

But we must go further. The idea of priesthood implies a sacrifice. As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us—the priest "must have somewhat to offer." Are we then to be sacrificing priests? Beyond all doubt; according to St. Peter, every Christian is a sacrificing priest; a priest "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Christ Jesus;" spiritual, but none the less real because they are spiritual. And if this be true of all priests, then especially of those who are the office-bearers in the royal priesthood, the representative priests of the Church. We are indeed sacrificing priests—not for ourselves only, but for our people—offering up our sacrifices as their representatives and in their name.

As we lead their devotions and offer with our lips the sacrifice of their united prayers and thanksgivings: as we (in the suggestive words of our Book of Prayer) reverently and humbly present their offerings to the Lord and place them on the Holy Table: as we celebrate in their name the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ, and make before God the Memorial of His Perfect Sacrifice, we are fulfilling our office and work as priests in the Church of God. For in that Holy Sacrament there is a very real sacrifice though

purely spiritual: not less real than the sacrifices of the Temple of old. And just as those sacrifices were the sacrifices of material symbols of no power in themselves, but prophetic of the one true sacrifice of the Cross, and deriving from that great sacrifice all their meaning and all their value; so in our sacrifices no longer material but spiritual, no longer prophetic but commemorative, we plead the merit of the one full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, as we lay before God the memorial of His precious death; we look back in thankful memory, as the Jews looked onward in eager hope, to the one sacrifice for the sins of the whole world: to the great peace-offering of redemption; to the burnt-offering of a perfect and spotless humanity, offered up to the Eternal Father in the Person of Man. And all this we do in our office and ministry in union with His priesthood of which we are the partakers, offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. From first to last we are nothing, for Christ is all in all.

But we must go further still. As priesthood implies a sacrifice, so sacrifice connotes an altar. Yes, "we have an altar." The royal priesthood has its altar in the humanity of the Son of God, in which He offered up His perfect sacrifice; the soul has its altar on which to offer up in its secret devotions the sacrifices of a contrite heart, or the thank-offerings of a spirit rejoicing in God its Saviour. Priest, sacrifice, and altar. There they stand and will stand for ever. Even in the world above we are to be "Priests of God and of Christ." We find the words in the Book of God, in the Book of Prayer, in the history and in teaching of the Holy Catholic Church. They may have been misunderstood, misrepresented, even misused; they may have been suspected, feared, resented; but they will not pass away. How we should love them if we rightly received them! How we should be humbled to the dust when we think of our poor selves and our services in the light of our high-calling in Christ Jesus! Yet how we should rejoice in our fellowship with Him! How we should long to do His will, and to finish His work!

There are some words of Richard Baxter, whose testimony on such a subject will hardly be suspected; words so full of wisdom and charity alike, that I cannot forbear to quote them, for the comfort and