

AL/1999

(1)

1. The specific Christian idea of Priesthood seems to be the power to make an offering acceptable to God. This offering is ^{a)} complete self devotion to God's ends, which is found to involve ^{b)} the self-sacrificing service of man.

2. (a) Our Lord does not seem to have taught anything explicitly as to the "Priestly Idea". But if the above is a correct description of that idea, His whole teaching runs round it: self-dedication ^{to God for} service is the root of His example & His teaching.

(b) In the above sense, there is much implicit teaching as to His own Priesthood. He is, fully & completely, what all His followers are in their imperfect degrees - the perpetual offer to God of the sacrifice of a life for others.

(c) His sending out of others - those who had been with Him & had imbibed most of His Spirit, was a direct means of perpetuating

in His Church the same sort of service as His own.

But more important, perhaps, in the present connection, is the constant call to all who would follow Him, to complete self dedication.

3. The Apostolic teaching is well summarized in 1 Pet. 2.5. Ye are .. an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." What these sacrifices are is stated in Heb. ^{XIII} 15. ^{15.}
 "the sacrifice of praise to God .. the fruit of an lips giving thanks to His name." But - to do good & to communicate good - not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Here & other passages seem to bear out the account of the "specific Christian idea of Priesthood" (see above, as a) conscious self-oblation to God, & b) involuntary service of man.

4. In the whole Body collectively, in so far as it is true to its profession, i.e. ideally: in the individual

members as being the life of the whole, & also as
 usually bound to the life of service involved in
 Priesthood.

5. The essential functions of Priesthood can in no
 sense be delegated: they are obligatory, as personal
 & individual, upon every Christian.

At this point in the questions it becomes
 necessary to differentiate between "Priesthood" in
 the N.J. sense, & "Priesthood" in the restricted
 & "propositional" sense. Some special functions of
 service, or ministry, can of course be delegated
 to some to perform for others, as in all departments
 of life.

Such delegation of ministerial functions a) affects
 those to whom the functions are delegated, by intensifying
 & amplifying the universal call to priestly service, &
 also by giving them the responsibility for certain definite
 kinds of service. b) It affects those to whom the

functions are not delegated by setting them free for other kinds of service, & withholding from them the right of performing special ministerial acts. It does not free them from the "priestly" obligation, nor from the duty of sharing with full participation in the acts ministerially performed by others.

b. "The Laying on of Hands" ^{a)} might be symbolic of the reception through a human channel of some divine gift or grace resident in one and passed on to another or ^{b)} it may be the recognized token of solemnly asking for an individual appropriation of a divine gift. Only in those cases where some authority or office is based on is there any "transmission". This does not mean that the laying on of hands itself "transmits", but that God transmits some grace, gift, or office, by the means of prayer, from one human being to another, and that the act of laying on of hands symbolizes the act of God.

AL/1999 Conv (5)

7. If the Holy Spirit is still really present & working in the Church, as we profess to believe, there is no reason why one period of her history should be determinative as to the methods best adapted for the carrying out of the Divine purpose in any other age. Christ left to His Church absolute freedom as to administration, & only laid down principles for guidance. So long as the Church is true to Christ's principles, she shows her faith in the Spirit best by seeking out correspondingly new ways to meet the needs of each new age. Every period has its own inspiration & its own mistakes; the Early Church period, even the apostolic period, as much as any other. Our age should be ready to learn from both the mistakes & the inspiration of all past ages, & so to gather wisdom, under the Spirit's guidance, for our day.

8. It seems very doubtful whether there is any reason, beyond the sanity of order & reverence,

12/1999 (6)

Why the Celebration of the Eucharist & the power of
promising absolution, any more than other ministerial
functions, should belong to a specialized body. Christ
gave these commissions to His Church: the Church has
thought it best to set apart a special set of officials
for these purposes. To yield to the Church other
rules would therefore prevent any unauthorized person
from performing these functions: but there is no reason
why the Church should not at any time authorize
others than those who are formally "ordained" to
perform them, as the functions themselves belong
to the Church as a whole. (H.B. What would such
liberty, wisely exercised, mean to scattered popula-
tions with few ordained ministers, e.g. in Canada?)
9110. Theoretically, it is possible to any extent
to differentiate between the sacerdotal & ministerial
& prophetic functions. Of sacerdotal functions we
hear nothing in the N.T. For the differentiation

AL/1999 cont (7)

of ministerial & prophetic functions, we have S. Paul's warrant: "having then gifts differing acc. to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy acc. to the proportion of faith, or ministry, let us wait on our ministry, &c. &c." For the reason given by S. Paul it would also seem "practically desirable" to make such differentiation. Gifts differ acc. to grace given: therefore let those who have gifts to offer offer those they have, not those they have not. The diverse gifts required e.g. for teaching, for preaching, for visiting, & for the conduct of Church services, may belong to quite different persons.

11. The consideration of Church discipline would only require that members of the Church should offer their diverse gifts to the Church for the use of the body, & exercise them in such ways as the Church shall determine. (N.B. I realize that I am begging the question of what "the Church" is).

AL 11919 cont (8)

12. The modern deaconess movement ~~seems to have~~ made a false start. A deaconess should be a "deacon who happens to be a woman". As a matter of fact she is "in a different genus" - i.e. a sort of professed "blind worker" on the deplorable old-fashioned lines (generally speaking). The existing difference is only not essential to the real notion of a deaconess: but development on right lines would be very difficult, if not impossible, without a completely fresh start.