
The Officiating Priesthood

from Alfred Edersheim, "The Temple," Chapter 4.

The Priesthood

Among the most interesting glimpses of early life in the church is that afforded by a small piece of rapidly-drawn scenery which presents to our view 'a great company of the priests,' 'obedient to the faith' (Acts 6:7). We seem to be carried back in imagination to the time when Levi remained faithful amidst the general spiritual defection (Exodus 32:26), and then through the long vista of devout ministering priests to reach the fulfilment of this saying of Malachi--part admonition, and part prophecy: 'For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts' (Malachi 2:7). We can picture to ourselves how they who ministered in holy things would at eventide, when the Temple was deserted of its worshippers, gather to speak of the spiritual meaning of the services, and to consider the wonderful things which had taken place in Jerusalem, as some alleged, in fulfilment of those very types that formed the essence of their office and ministry. 'For this thing was not done in a corner.' The trial of Jesus, His condemnation by the Sanhedrim, and His being delivered up to the Gentiles, must have formed the theme of frequent and anxious discussion in the Temple. Were not their own chief priests implicated in the matter? Did not Judas on that fatal day rush into the Temple, and wildly cast the 'price of blood' into the 'treasury'? On the other hand, was not one of the principal priests and a member of the priestly council, Joseph of Arimathea, an adherent of Christ? Did not the Sanhedrist Nicodemus adopt the same views, and even Gamaliel advise caution? Besides, in the 'porches' of the Temple, especially in that of Solomon, 'a notable miracle' had been done in 'that Name,' and there also its all-prevailing power was daily proclaimed. It specially behoved the priesthood to inquire well into the matter; and the Temple seemed the most appropriate place for its discussion.

The Number of Priests

The number of priests to be found at all times in Jerusalem must have been very great, and Ophel a

densely inhabited quarter. According to Jewish tradition, half of each of the twenty-four 'courses,' into which the priesthood were divided, were permanently resident in Jerusalem; the rest scattered over the land. It is added, that about one half of the latter had settled in Jericho, and were in the habit of supplying the needful support to their brethren while officiating in Jerusalem. Of course such statements must not be taken literally, though no doubt they are substantially correct. When a 'course' was on duty, all its members were bound to appear in the Temple. Those who stayed away, with such 'representatives of the people' (or 'stationary men') as, like them, had been prevented from 'going up' to Jerusalem in their turn, had to meet in the synagogues of their district to pray and to fast each day of their week of service, except on the sixth, the seventh, and the first--that is, neither on the Sabbath, nor on the days preceding and succeeding it, as the 'joy' attaching to the Sabbath rendered a fast immediately before or after it inappropriate.

Symbolism of the Priesthood / Mediation

It need scarcely be said, that everything connected with the priesthood was intended to be symbolical and typical--the office itself, its functions, even its dress and outward support. The fundamental design of Israel itself was to be unto Jehovah 'a kingdom of priests and an holy nation' (Exo 19:5,6). This, however, could only be realised in 'the fulness of time.' At the very outset there was the barrier of sin; and in order to gain admittance to the ranks of Israel, when 'the sum of the children of Israel was taken after their number,' every man had to give the half-shekel, which in after times became the regular Temple contribution, as 'a ransom (covering) for his soul unto Jehovah' (Exodus 30:12,13). But even so Israel was sinful, and could only approach Jehovah in the way which Himself opened, and in the manner which He appointed. Direct choice and appointment by God were the conditions alike of the priesthood, of sacrifices, feasts, and of every detail of service. The fundamental ideas which underlay all and connected it into a harmonious whole, were reconciliation and mediation: the one expressed by typically atoning sacrifices, the other

by a typically intervening priesthood. Even the Hebrew term for priest (Cohen) denotes in its root-meaning 'one who stands up for another, and mediates in his cause.' *

* This root-meaning (through the Arabic) of the Hebrew word for priest, as one intervening, explains its occasional though very rare application to others than priests, as, for example, to the sons of David (2 Samuel 8:18), a mode of expression which is thus correctly paraphrased in 1 Chronicles 18:17: 'And the sons of David were at the hand of the king.'

For this purpose God chose the tribe of Levi, and out of it again the family of Aaron, on whom He bestowed the 'priest's office as a gift' (Numbers 18:7). But the whole characteristics and the functions of the priesthood centred in the person of the high-priest. In accordance with their Divine 'calling' (Hebrews 5:4) was the special and exceptional provision made for the support of the priesthood. Its principle was thus expressed: 'I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel'; and its joyousness, when realised in its full meaning and application, found vent in such words as Psalm 16:5, 6: 'Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.'

Holiness

But there was yet another idea to be expressed by the priesthood. The object of reconciliation was holiness. Israel was to be 'a holy nation'--reconciled through the 'sprinkling of blood'; brought near to, and kept in fellowship with God by that means. The priesthood, as the representative offerers of that blood and mediators of the people, were also to show forth the 'holiness' of Israel. Every one knows how this was symbolised by the gold-plate which the high-priest wore on his forehead, and which bore the words: 'Holiness unto Jehovah.' But though the high-priest in this, as in every other respect, was the fullest embodiment of the functions and object of the priesthood, the same truth was also otherwise shown forth. The bodily qualifications required in the priesthood, the kind of defilements which would temporarily or wholly interrupt their functions, their mode of ordination, and even every portion, material, and colour of their

distinctive dress were all intended to express in a symbolical manner this characteristic of holiness. In all these respects there was a difference between Israel and the tribe of Levi; between the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron; and, finally, between an ordinary priest and the high-priest, who most fully typified our Great High-priest, in whom all these symbols have found their reality.

The Twenty-four Courses

This much it seemed necessary to state for the general understanding of the matter. Full details belong to the exposition of the meaning and object of the Levitical priesthood, as instituted by God, while our present task rather is to trace its further development to what it was at the time when Jesus was in the Temple. The first peculiarity of post-Mosaic times which we here meet, is the arrangement of the priesthood into 'twenty-four courses,' which undoubtedly dates from the times of David. But Jewish tradition would make it even much older. For, according to the Talmud, it should be traced up to Moses, who is variously supposed to have arranged the sons of Aaron into either or else sixteen courses (four, or else eight, of Eleazar; and the other four, or else eight, of Ithamar), to which, on the one supposition, Samuel and David each added other eight 'courses,' or, on the other, Samuel and David, in conjunction, the eight needed to make up the twenty-four mentioned in 1 Chronicles 24. It need scarcely be told that, like many similar statements, this also is simply an attempt to trace up every arrangement to the fountain-head of Jewish history, in order to establish its absolute authority.*

* Curiously enough, here also the analogy between Rabbinism and Roman Catholicism holds good. Each claims for its teaching and practices the so-called principle of catholicity--'semper, ubique, ab omnibus' ('always, everywhere, by all'), and each invents the most curious historical fables in support of it!

The Courses After the Captivity

The institution of David and of Solomon continued till the Babylonish captivity. Thence, however, only four out of the twenty-four 'courses' returned: those of Jedaiah, Immer, Pashur, and Harim (Ezra 2:36-39), the course of

'Jedaiah' being placed first because it was of the high-priest's family, 'of the house of Jeshua,' 'the son of Jozadak' (Ezra 3:2; Haggai 1:1; 1 Chron 6:15). To restore the original number, each of these four families was directed to draw five lots for those which had not returned, so as to form once more twenty-four courses, which were to bear the ancient names. Thus, for example, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, did not really belong to the family of Abijah (1 Chronicles 24:10), which had not returned from Babylon, but to the 'course of Abia,' which had been formed out of some other family, and only bore the ancient name (Luke 1:5). Like the priests, the Levites had at the time of King David been arranged into twenty-four 'courses,' which were to act as 'priests' assistance' (1 Chronicles 23:4,28), as 'singers and musicians' (1 Chronicles 25:6), as 'gate-keepers and guards' (1 Chronicles 26:6 and following), and as 'officers and judges.' Of these various classes, that of the 'priests' assistants' was by far the most numerous, * and to them the charge of the Temple had been committed in subordination to the priests.

* Apparently it numbered 24,000, out of a total of 38,000 Levites.

It had been their duty to look after the sacred vestments and vessels; the store-houses and their contents; and the preparation of the shewbread, of the meat-offerings, of the spices, etc. They were also generally to assist the priests in their work, to see to the cleaning of the sanctuary, and to take charge of the treasuries (1 Chronicles 23:28-32).

In the Temple of Herod

Of course these services, as also those of the singers and musicians, and of the porters and guards, were retained in the Temple of Herod. But for the employment of Levites as 'officers and judges' there was no further room, not only because such judicial functions as still remained to the Jews were in the hands of the Sanhedrim and its subordinate authorities, but also because in general the ranks of the Levites were so thinned. In point of fact, while no less than 4,289 priests had returned from Babylon, the number of Levites was under 400 (Ezra 2:40-42; Nehemiah 7:43-45), of whom only 74 were 'priests' assistants.' To this the next immigration, under Ezra, added only 38, and that though the Levites had been specially

searched for (Ezra 8:15,18,19). According to tradition, Ezra punished them by depriving them of their tithes. The gap in their number was filled up by 220 Nethinim (Ezra 8:20), literally, 'given ones,' probably originally strangers and captives, * as in all likelihood the Gibeonites had been the first 'Nethinim' (Joshua 9:21,23,27).

* This is also confirmed by their foreign names (Ezra 2:43-58). The total number of Nethinim who returned from Babylon was 612--392 with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:58; Nehemiah 7:60), and 220 with Ezra (Ezra 8:20).

Though the Nethinim, like the Levites and priests, were freed from all taxation (Ezra 7:24), and perhaps also from military service (Jos. Anti. iii. 12; iv. 4, 3.), the Rabbinitists held them in the lowest repute--beneath a bastard, though above a proselyte--forbade their intermarrying with Israelites, and declared them incapable of proper membership in the congregation.

Duties of Priests and Levites

The duties of priests and Levites in the Temple may be gathered from Scripture, and will be further explained in the course of our inquiries. Generally, it may here be stated that on the Levites devolved the Temple-police, the guard of the gates, and the duty of keeping everything about the sanctuary clean and bright. But as at night the priests kept watch about the innermost places of the Temple, so they also opened and closed all the inner gates, while the Levites discharged this duty in reference to the outer gates, which led upon the Temple Mount (or Court of the Gentiles), and to the 'Beautiful Gate,' which formed the principal entrance into the Court of the Women. The laws of Levitical cleanness, as explained by the Rabbis, were most rigidly enforced upon worshippers and priests. If a leper, or any other who was 'defiled,' had ventured into the sanctuary itself, or any priest officiated in a state of 'uncleanness,' he would, if discovered, be dragged out and killed, without form of process, by 'the rebels' beating.' Minor punishments were awarded to those guilty of smaller offences of the same kind. The Sabbath-rest was strictly enforced, so far as consistent with the necessary duties of the Temple service. But the latter superseded the Sabbath law (Matthew 12:5) and defilement on account of death. If the time for offering a sacrifice was not fixed, so that it might

be brought on one day as well as another, then the service did not supersede either the Sabbath or defilement on account of death. But where the time was unalterably fixed, there the higher duty of obedience to a direct command came in to supersede alike the Sabbath and this one (but only this one) ground of defilement. The same principle applied to worshippers as well as priests.

The Week's Service

Each 'course' of priests and of Levites (as has already been stated) came on duty for a week, from one Sabbath to another. The service of the week was subdivided among the various families which constituted a 'course'; so that if it consisted of five 'houses of fathers,' three served each one day, and two each two days; if of six families, five served each one day, and one two days; if of eight families, six served each one day, and the other two in conjunction on one day; or, lastly, if of nine families, five served each one day, and the other four took it two in conjunction for two days. These divisions and arrangements were made by 'the chiefs' or 'heads of the houses of their fathers.' On Sabbaths the whole 'course' was on duty; on feast-days any priest might come up and join in the ministrations of the sanctuary; and at the Feast of Tabernacles all the twenty-four courses were bound to be present and officiate. While actually engaged on service in the Temple, the priests were not allowed to drink wine, either by day or by night. The other 'families' or 'houses' also of the 'course' who were in attendance at Jerusalem, though not on actual duty, were, during their week of ministry, prohibited the use of wine, except at night, because they might have to be called in to assist their brethren of the officiating 'family,' which they could not do if they had partaken of strong drink. The law even made (a somewhat curious) provision to secure that the priests should come up to Jerusalem properly trimmed, washed, and attired, so as to secure the decorum of the service.

These Functions Not Sacerdotal

It would be difficult to conceive arrangements more thoroughly or consistently opposed to what are commonly called 'priestly pretensions,' than those of the Old Testament. The fundamental principle, laid down at the outset, that all Israel were 'a kingdom of priests' (Exodus 19:5,6), made

the priesthood only representatives of the people. Their income, which even under the most favourable circumstances must have been moderate, was, as we have seen, dependent on the varying religious state of the nation, since no law existed by which either the payment of tithes or any other offerings could be enforced. How little power or influence, comparatively speaking, the priesthood wielded, is sufficiently known from Jewish history. Out of actual service neither the priests nor even the high-priest wore a distinctive dress (comp. Acts 23:5; see also chapter 7), and though a number of civil restrictions were laid on priests, there were few corresponding advantages. It is indeed true that alliances with distinguished priestly families were eagerly sought, and that during the troubled period of Syrian domination the high-priest for a time held civil as well as religious rule. But the latter advantage was dearly bought, both as regarded the priests and the nation.

Nor must we forget the powerful controlling influence which Rabbinism exercised. Its tendency, which must never be lost sight of in the study of the state of Palestine at the time of our Lord, was steadily against all privileges other than those gained by traditionary learning and theological ingenuity. The Pharisee, or, rather, the man learned in the traditional law, was everything both before God and before man; 'but this people, who knoweth not the law,' were 'cursed,' plebeians, country people, unworthy of any regard or attention. Rabbinism applied these principles even in reference to the priesthood. It divided all priests into 'learned' and 'unlettered,' and excluded the latter from some of the privileges of their own order. Thus there were certain priestly dues which the people might at will give to any priest they chose. But from some of them the 'unlettered' priests were debarred, on the ostensible ground that in their ignorance they might have partaken of them in a state of Levitical uncleanness, and so committed mortal sin.

Training of Priests

In general, the priests had to undergo a course of instruction, and were examined before being allowed to officiate. Similarly, they were subject to the ordinary tribunals, composed of men learned in the law, without regard to their descent from

one or another tribe. The ordained 'rulers' of the synagogues, the teachers of the people, the leaders of their devotions, and all other officials were not necessarily 'priests,' but simply chosen for their learning and fitness. Any one whom the 'elders' or 'rulers' deemed qualified for it might, at their request, address to the people on the Sabbath a 'word of exhortation.' Even the high-priest himself was answerable to the Sanhedrim. It is distinctly stated, that 'if he committed an offence which by the law deserved whipping, the Great Sanhedrim whipt him, and then had him restored again to his office.' Every year a kind of ecclesiastical council was appointed to instruct him in his duties for the Day of Atonement, 'in case he were not learned,' or, at any rate, to see to it that he knew and remembered them. Nay, the principle was broadly laid down--that 'a scholar, though he were a bastard, was of far higher value than an unlearned high-priest.' If, besides all this, it is remembered how the political influence of the high-priest had decayed in the days of Herod, and how frequently the occupants of that office changed, through the caprice of the rulers or through bribery, the state of public feeling will be readily understood.

At the same time, it must be admitted, that generally speaking the high-priest would, of necessity, wield very considerable influence, and that, ordinarily, those who held the sacred office were not only 'lettered,' but members of the Sanhedrim. According to Jewish tradition, the high-priest ought, in every respect, to excel all other priests, and if he were poor, the rest were to contribute, so as to secure him an independent fortune. Certain marks of outward respect were also shown him. When he entered the Temple he was accompanied by three persons--one walking at each side, the third behind him. He might, without being appointed to it, officiate in any part of the Temple services; he had certain exceptional rights; and he possessed a house in the Temple, where he lived by day, retiring only at night to his own home, which must be within Jerusalem, and to which he was escorted by the people after the solemnities of the Day of Atonement, which devolved almost exclusively upon him.

Office Hereditary

Originally the office of high-priest was regarded as being held for life and hereditary; * but the

troubles of later times made it a matter of cabal, crime, or bribery.

* According to the Rabbis, he was appointed by the Sanhedrim.

Without here entering into the complicated question of the succession to the high-priesthood, the following may be quoted from the Talmud (Talmud Jer. Ioma, I.), without, of course, guaranteeing its absolute accuracy: 'In the first Temple, the high-priests served, the son succeeding the father, and they were eighteen in number. But in the second Temple they got the high-priesthood for money; and there are who say they destroyed each other by witchcraft, so that some reckon 80 high-priests during that period, others 81, others 82, 83, 84, and even 85.' The Rabbis enumerate 18 high-priests during the first Temple; Lightfoot counts 53 from the return from Babylon to Matthias, when the last war of the Jews began; while Relandius reckons 57. But there is both difficulty and confusion amid the constant changes at the last.

There was not any fixed age for entering on the office of high-priest, any more than on that of an ordinary priest. The Talmudists put it down at twenty years. But the unhappy descendant of the Maccabees, Aristobulus, was only sixteen years of age when his beauty, as he officiated as high-priest in the Temple, roused the jealousy of Herod, and procured his death. The entrance of the Levites is fixed, in the sacred text, at thirty during the wilderness period, and after that, when the work would require less bodily strength, but a larger number of ministers, at twenty-five years of age. *

* It is thus we reconcile Numbers 4:3 with 8:24, 25. In point of fact, these two reasons are expressly mentioned in 1 Chronicles 23:24-27, as influencing David still further to lower the age of entrance to twenty.

Disqualifications for the Priesthood

No special disqualifications for the Levitical office existed, though the Rabbis insist that a good voice was absolutely necessary. It was otherwise with the priest's office. The first inquiry instituted by the Sanhedrim, who for the purpose sat daily in 'the Hall of Polished Stones,' was into the genealogy of a candidate. Certain genealogies

were deemed authoritative. Thus, 'if his father's name were inscribed in the archives of Jeshana at Zipporim, no further inquiry was made.' If he failed to satisfy the court about his perfect legitimacy, the candidate was dressed and veiled in black, and permanently removed. If he passed that ordeal, inquiry was next made as to any physical defects, of which Maimonides enumerates a hundred and forty that permanently, and twenty-two which temporarily disqualified for the exercise of the priestly office. Persons so disqualified were, however, admitted to menial offices, such as in the wood-chamber, and entitled to Temple support. Those who had stood the twofold test were dressed in white raiment, and their names properly inscribed. To this pointed allusion is made in Revelation 3:5, 'He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.'

The Investiture

Thus received, and afterwards instructed in his duties, the formal admission alike of the priest and of the high-priest was not, as of old, by anointing, but simply by investiture. For even the composition of the sacred oil was no longer known in the second Temple. They were called 'high-priests by investiture,' and regarded as of inferior rank to those 'by anointing.' As for the common priests, the Rabbis held that they were not anointed even in the first Temple, the rite which was applied to the sons of Aaron being valid also for their descendants. It was otherwise in the case of the high-priest. His investiture was continued during seven days. In olden days, when he was anointed, the sacred oil was not only 'poured over him,' but also applied to his forehead, over the eyes, as tradition has it, after the form of the Greek letter X. The coincidence is certainly curious. This sacred oil was besides only used for anointing such kings as were of the family of David, not other Jewish monarchs, and if their succession had been called in question. Otherwise the royal dignity went, as a matter of course, by inheritance from father to son.

The Dress of the High-Priest

The high-priests 'by investiture' had not any more the real Urim and Thummim (their meaning even being unknown), though a breast-plate, with

twelve stones, was made and worn, in order to complete the eight sacred vestments. This was just double the number of those worn by an ordinary priest, viz. the linen breeches, the coat, the girdle, and the bonnet. To these the high-priest added other four distinctive articles of dress, called 'golden vestments,' because, unlike the robes of the ordinary priests, gold, the symbol of splendour, appeared in them. They were the Meil, or robe of the ephod, wholly of 'woven work,' of dark blue colour, descending to the knees, and adorned at the hem by alternate blossoms of the pomegranate in blue, purple, and scarlet, and golden bells, the latter, according to tradition, seventy-two in number; the Ephod with the breast-plate, the former of the four colours of the sanctuary (white, blue, purple, and scarlet), and inwrought with threads of gold; the Mitre; and, lastly, the Ziz, or golden frontlet. If either a priest or the high-priest officiated without wearing the full number of his vestments, his service would be invalid, as also if anything, however trifling (such, for instance, as a plaster), had intervened between the body and the dress of the priest. The material of which the four vestments of the ordinary priest were made was 'linen,' or, more accurately, 'byssus,' the white shining cotton-stuff of Egypt. These two qualities of the byssus are specially marked as characteristic (Revelation 15:6, 'clothed in pure and shining linen.'), and on them part of the symbolic meaning depended. Hence we read in Revelation 19:8, 'And to her--the wife of the Lamb made ready--was granted that she should be arrayed in byssus vestments, shining and pure; for the byssus vestment is the righteousness of the saints.'

Allusions to the Dress in the New Testament

We add some further particulars, chiefly in illustration of allusions in the New Testament. The priest's 'coat' was woven of one piece, like the seamless robe of the Saviour (John 19:23). As it was close-fitting, the girdle could not, strictly speaking, have been necessary. Besides, although the account of the Rabbis, that the priest's girdle was three fingers broad and sixteen yards long (!), is exaggerated, no doubt it really reached beyond the feet, and required to be thrown over the shoulder during ministration. Hence its object must chiefly have been symbolical. In point of fact, it may be regarded as the most distinctive

priestly vestment, since it was only put on during actual ministration, and put off immediately afterwards. Accordingly, when in Revelation 1:13, the Saviour is seen 'in the midst of the candlesticks,' 'girt about the paps with a golden girdle,' we are to understand by it that our heavenly High-Priest is there engaged in actual ministry for us. Similarly, the girdle is described as 'about the paps,' or (as in Revelation 15:6) about the 'breasts,' as both the girdle of the ordinary priest and that on the ephod which the high-priest wore were girded there, and not round the loins (compare Ezekiel 44:18). Lastly, the expression 'golden girdle' may bear reference to the circumstance that the dress peculiar of the high-priest was called his 'golden vestments,' in contradistinction to the 'linen vestments,' which he wore on the Day of Atonement.

The Breastplate/Mitre/Phylacteries

Of the four distinctive articles in the high-priest's dress, the breast-plate, alike from its square form and the twelve jewels on it, bearing the names of the tribes, suggest 'the city four-square,' whose 'foundations' are twelve precious stones (Revelation 21:16,19,20). The 'mitre' of the high-priest differed from the head-gear of the ordinary priest, which was shaped like the inverted calyx of a flower, in size and probably also somewhat in shape. According to the Rabbis, it was eight yards high (!). Fastened to it by two (according to the Rabbis, by three) ribbons of 'blue lace' was the symbol of royalty--the 'golden plate' (or Ziz), on which, 'Holiness unto Jehovah' was graven. This plate was only two fingers wide, and reached from temple to temple. Between this plate and the mitre the high-priest is by some supposed to have worn his phylacteries. But this cannot be regarded as by any means a settled point. According to the distinct ceremony of the Talmud, neither priests, Levites, nor the 'stationary men' wore phylacteries during their actual service in the Temple. This is a strong point urged by the modern Karaite Jews against the traditions of the Rabbis. Can it be, that the wearing of phylacteries at the time of Christ was not a universally acknowledged obligation, but rather the badge of a party? This would give additional force to the words in which Christ inveighed against those who made broad their phylacteries. According to Josephus, the original Ziz of Aaron still existed in his time, and was

carried with other spoils to Rome. There R. Eliezer saw it in the reign of Hadrian. Thence we can trace it, with considerable probability, through many vicissitudes, to the time of Belisarius, and to Byzantium. From there it was taken by order of the emperor to Jerusalem. What became of it afterwards is unknown; possibly it may still be in existence. *

* When Josephus speaks of a triple crown worn by the high-priest, this may have been introduced by the Asmoneans when they united the temporal monarchy with the priesthood. Compare Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, i. 807a.

It only requires to be added that the priests' garments, when soiled, were not washed, but used as wicks for the lamps in the Temple; those of the high-priest were 'hid away.' The high-priest wore 'a fresh suit of linen vestments' each time on the Day of Atonement.

The Fourteen Officers

The priesthood ministering in the Temple were arranged into 'ordinary' priests and various officials. Of the latter there were, besides the high-priest, * the 'Sagan,' or suffragan priest; two 'Katholikin,' or chief treasurers and overseers; seven 'Ammarcalin,' who were subordinate to the Katholikin, and had chief charge of all the gates; and three 'Gizbarin,' or under-treasurers.

* The Rabbis speak of a high-priest ordained 'for war,' who accompanied the people to battle, but no historical trace of a distinct office of this kind can be discovered.

These fourteen officers, ranking in the order mentioned, formed the standing 'council of the Temple,' which regulated everything connected with the affairs and services of the sanctuary. Its members were also called 'the elders of the priests,' or 'the counsellors.' This judicatory, which ordinarily did not busy itself with criminal questions, apparently took a leading part in the condemnation of Jesus. But, on the other hand, it is well to remember that they were not all of one mind, since Joseph of Arimathea belonged to their number--the title by which he is designated in Mark 15:43 being exactly the same word as that applied in the Talmud to the members of this priestly council.

Their Duties

It is difficult to specify the exact duties of each of these classes of officials. The 'Sagan' (or 'Segen,' or 'Segan') would officiate for the high-priest, when from any cause he was incapacitated; he would act generally as his assistance, and take the oversight of all the priests, whence he is called in Scripture 'second priest' (2 Kings 25:18; Jeremiah 52:24), and in Talmudical writings 'the Sagan of the priests.' A 'Chananjah' is mentioned in the Talmud as a Sagan, but whether or not he was the 'Annas' of the New Testament must be left undecided. The two Katholikin were to the Sagan what he was to the high-priest, though their chief duty seems to have been about the treasures of the Temple. Similarly, the seven Ammarcalin were assistants of the Katholikin, though they had special charge of the gates, the holy vessels, and the holy vestments; and again the three (or else seven), 'Gizbarin' assistants of the Ammarcalin. The title 'Gizbar' occurs so early as Ezra 1:8; but its exact meaning seems to have been already unknown when the LXX translated that book. They appear to have had charge of all dedicated and consecrated things, of the Temple tribute, of the redemption money, etc., and to have decided all questions connected with such matters.

Lower Officials

Next in rank to these officials were the 'heads of each course' on duty for a week, and then the 'heads of families' of every course. After them followed fifteen overseers, viz. 'the overseer concerning the times,' who summoned priests and people to their respective duties; the overseer for shutting the doors (under the direction, of course, of the Ammarcalin); the overseer of the guards, or captain of the Temple; the overseer of the singers and of those who blew the trumpets; the overseer of the cymbals; the overseer of the lots, which were drawn every morning; the overseer of the birds, who had to provide the turtledoves and pigeons for those who brought such offerings; the overseer of the seals, who dispensed the four counterfoils for the various meat-offerings suited for different sacrifices; the overseer of the drink-offerings, for a similar purpose to the above; the overseer of the sick, or the Temple physician; the overseer of the water, who had charge of the water-supply and the drainage; the overseer for

making the shewbread; for preparing the incense; for making the veils; and for providing the priestly garments. All these officers had, of course, subordinates, whom they chose and employed, either for the day or permanently; and it was their duty to see to all the arrangements connected with their respective departments. Thus, not to speak of instructors, examiners of sacrifices, and a great variety of artificers, there must have been sufficient employment in the Temple for a very large number of persons.

Sources of Support for the Priests

We must not close without enumerating the twenty-four sources whence, according to the Talmud, the priests derived their support. Of these ten were only available while in the Temple itself, four in Jerusalem, and the remaining ten throughout the Holy Land. Those which might only be used in the Temple itself were the priest's part of the sin-offering; that of the trespass-offering for a known, and for a doubtful trespass; public peace-offerings; the leper's log of oil; the two Pentecostal loaves; the shewbread; what was left of meat-offerings, and the omer at the Passover. The four which might be used only in Jerusalem were the firstlings of beasts, the Biccurim, * the portion from the thank-offering (Leviticus 7:12; 22:29,30), and from the Nazarite's goat, and the skins of the holy sacrifices.

* To prevent mistakes, we may state that the term 'Therumoth' is, in a general way, used to designate the prepared produce, such as oil, flour, wine; and 'Biccurim,' the natural product of the soil, such as corn, fruits, etc.

Of the ten which might be used throughout the land, five could be given at will to any priest, viz. the tithe of the tithe, the heave-offering of the dough (Numbers 15:20; Romans 11:16), the first of the fleece and the priest's due of meat (Deuteronomy 18:3). The other five, it was thought, should be given to the priests of the special course on duty for the week, viz. the redemption-money for a first-born son, that for an ass, the 'sanctified field of possession' (Leviticus 27:16), what had been 'devoted,' and such possession of 'a stranger' or proselyte as, having been stolen, was restored to the priests after the death of the person robbed, with a fifth part additional. Finally, to an unlettered priest it was

only lawful to give the following from among the various dues: things 'devoted,' the first-born of cattle, the redemption of a son, that of an ass, the priest's due (Deuteronomy 18:3), the first of the wool, the 'oil of burning' (a term meaning 'defiled Therumoth. '), the ten things which were to be used in the Temple itself, and the Biccurim. On the other hand, the high-priest had the right to take what portion of the offerings he chose, and one half of the shewbread every Sabbath also belonged to him.

Thus elaborate in every particular was the system which regulated the admission, the services, and the privileges of the officiating priesthood. Yet it has all vanished, not leaving behind it in the synagogue even a single trace of its complicated and perfect arrangements. These 'old things are passed away,' because they were only 'a shadow of good things to come.' But 'the substance is of Christ,' and 'He abideth an High-Priest for ever.'

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