

CHRIST

OUR HIGH PRIEST:

*Bearing the Iniquity
of Our Holy Things*



HORATIUS BONAR (1808-1889)

CHRIST OUR HIGH PRIEST,
BEARING THE INIQUITY
OF OUR HOLY
THINGS

Contents

1. A More Excellent Way	5
2. A Complete Provision	8
3. A Perpetual and Unchangeable Provision.....	10
4. A Glorious and Certain Provision	12
5. An Accessible and Free Provision.....	13
6. Conclusion.....	14

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CHRIST OUR HIGH PRIEST, BEARING THE INIQUITY OF OUR HOLY THINGS

“And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.”

—Exodus 28:36-38

THE sacrifices under the Law were of various kinds. They were not merely numerous and often repeated, but they were manifold in their nature and design. True, there was but one altar, one High Priest, one tabernacle—all foreshadowing the one Savior. But there were manifold offerings, differing the one from the other, to set forth the “manifold grace of God” (1Pe 4:10), and the manifold perfections of Him in Whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell (Col 1:19). Thus these sacrifices, by means of their diversity, were all the more exactly fitted to prefigure Him Who is the fountain opened for all sin and for all uncleanness; and the High Priest, in the continual offering up of these, as well as in the performance of the various kindred offices pertaining to the tabernacle, did the more fully exhibit Him in all His completeness as the Servant of the varied wants¹ of sinners.

The variety of these sacrifices was not an arbitrary and capricious² appointment. It was not for mere pomp and show. It was not the idle filling up of an unmeaning ritual for the sake of novelty and effect. God had a special purpose to serve in so ordaining it. It was by this means that He descended to particulars in teaching Israel His name as “the LORD God, merciful and gracious...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Exo 34:6-7). Before this He had proclaimed, by the general ordinance of sacrifice, that there was forgiveness with Him through the blood-shedding of a substitute; but now He enters into more minute detail, in order to show that there is suitable and special

¹ **wants** – needs.

² **capricious** – impulsive; unpredictable.

provision made for every kind of sin, and every class of sinners. Thus, no guilty conscience could be left with the impression that there was no offering suited to its case. And every Israelite was made to feel, that while the searching eye of God rested upon every sin with which he was chargeable, there was at the same time the most ample provision made for its being put away. A general showing forth of pardon by the institution even of one offering would doubtless have relieved the troubled soul; and though it might not dissipate every fear, would yet convey to it a precious message of peace by such a manifestation of the forgiving love of God. But this minute specification of diverse sacrifices for diverse sins was fitted to set the conscience still more at liberty, and to enable an Israelite to come to God as one who knew that his iniquity was covered. That distance from God, and distrust of His mercy, which the idea of imperfect or uncertain forgiveness necessarily produces, was thus removed, and the lingering suspicions of the sinner's doubting heart fully met and dispelled. No one could imagine that his condition had been overlooked by God, or that his case was so peculiar as to be without a remedy. No weary, burdened sinner could say that the declaration of pardon was too vague and general to yield sure and abiding comfort. Oh, how has that God Who knows not merely our sins but our suspicions and sorrows, herein manifested the greatness of His compassion towards us, and showed that His desire is not merely to forgive us, but to make us know that we are forgiven—to give us perfect peace by removing from us all our iniquities as far as the east is from the west!

But, then, in the very act of offering these sacrifices there was sin. When the sinner brought the lamb or the goat to the altar, there was sin committed in the very act of bringing it. There was, for instance, the imperfect conviction of the sin confessed—the want of a deep sense of the holiness of that God against Whom the transgression had been committed, and of the purity of that Law which had been broken. There was the coldness, the irreverence, the deadness, the wandering, the many impure motives that mingled with the act of service. There was the defective realization of divine things—the want of due solemnity—perhaps, too, the grudging of the animal offered up. These, and many similar shortcomings and sins in the way of bringing the sacrifice could not fail to make the Israelite feel that iniquity was spread over all his holy things, and must be removed before they could be accepted. The thought, too, that God saw in him far deeper sin than he himself understood or imagined must have led him to ask how the sin of his holy things was to be forgiven. If, indeed, when he came to the altar of God he could have come with a perfect heart, without a wandering thought or impure desire, then he might be content with the sacrifice itself which he presented. But when he was conscious that in every part of his holy service he was sinning still, the anxious

inquiry could not but be prompted, “How are the sins of my holy things to be put away?”

How, then, was such a case to be met? How was this to be remedied? The offering of another sacrifice would not accomplish this, for in that also there would be sin, so that another offering would be required again. No repetition of sacrifices, however numerous and costly, could provide for this; for still in the offering of each sacrifice there would be sin committed by the worshiper. Nor could this case be remedied by simply forgiving the sins connected with the sacrifice, without any special mention of the way in which this forgiveness was to come; for this would countenance the vain idea that there were some sins which did not require the intervention either of priest or sacrifice for their remission—whereas every part of that ritual was so constructed as to teach them that every sin needed special provision for its taking away, and that for every sin there was such special provision made. Besides, such a way of pardon would seem to imply that if a man but brought the appointed offering it did not matter how imperfectly he presented it. Nor would it have done merely to ordain that the high priest should bear the iniquity of the holy things of Israel. This would give the idea that he did not need that forgiveness himself—that there was something about him which exempted him from the guilt of his fellow Israelites, and that he, though a sinner like other men, could yet his own self bear iniquity.

None of these ways was at all adequate to the end designed. None of them would have given a true idea of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. None of them would have suitably set forth the provision which God has made for its complete removal. None of them would have fully satisfied the conscience of the worshiper, or given him the assurance that his imperfect services were accepted, and all the defects cleaving to them purged away. Besides, if there were no special and solemn provision made for this case, it would imply that the sins of their holy things were less heinous than others—whereas it was God’s manifest intention to declare, in the most effectual and impressive way, that these iniquities were even more hateful than the transgression itself for which the sacrifice was brought to the altar.

1. A More Excellent Way

God provided another and a more excellent way. He did not institute a new sacrifice—He did not merely announce a pardon for such transgressions, nor did He simply say the high priest shall bear these iniquities. A far more perfect method was adopted—not a sacrifice, but a person—not merely a person, but one in peculiar circumstances. The high priest was appointed to bear them, but then it was in a robe of a most peculiar kind. It was not his usual raiment, nor was it his raiment on the Day of

Atonement. It was a dress which seemed to array him with more than mortal holiness—a dress which shadowed forth the divine perfection of the Sin-bearer—a dress which at once proclaimed the need for pardon, and gave the assurance that it was all provided for and secured.

Let us attend briefly to the description given us in the text of the high priest's peculiar vesture, or rather head-dress, for the other parts of his raiment remained as before: only upon his head new adornings were to be placed, not only to add new beauty to a dress already singular for its comeliness and splendor, but especially to show forth the extent of personal holiness which a holy God required in him who was not merely to bear Israel's common sins, but to bear the iniquity of their holy things.

The first thing that strikes us here is that it is the head of the high priest that is thus adorned, the most honorable member of the body, the seat of the indwelling soul. Then, again, it is the forehead that is selected, which is the comeliness and glory of the head—the place on which the eye of the observer rests, and on which the eye of God would rest when meeting with the priest or the worshiper. On the forehead of the high priest, on “the forefront of the mitre,” was the ornament to be fastened. It consisted of a plate of pure gold, the purest and costliest of metals, to signify the purity that God demanded. On it there was to be engraved, like the engravings of a signet, distinct and deep, “HOLINESS TO THE LORD”—still farther foreshadowing the awful³ holiness of God, and the no less awful holiness which He required in the sin-bearer. Then this plate of gold was to be fastened to a “blue lace,” denoting holiness both by its texture and its color—its texture, the finest that can be woven by art and man's device—its color, the bright stainless azure of God's own firmament. All this, placed upon Aaron's forehead, in addition to his other priestly robes of service, was to fit him for being Israel's sin-bearer in what pertained to “the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts.” And then it is added, “It shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.”

Forming thus the most prominent part of his dress, and placed upon his forehead, it would be that on which the eye of God might be said first to rest, whether at the brazen altar, or the altar of incense, or the mercy seat, in all parts of his holy service. When standing before God, it was this peculiar adorning that presented itself, with its inscription, “HOLINESS TO THE LORD.” Thus, then, there was proclaimed to Israel a free forgiveness for the iniquities of their holy things. This forgiveness was not to depend upon their own imperfect actings or feelings. It was not to be bestowed on the

³ **awful** – awesome; awe-inspiring.

condition of their presenting their offerings in a perfect way. It was forgiveness not through their own perfection, but through the perfection of another—not through their own holiness, but the holiness of another. It was forgiveness through one whom God had selected and prepared in a most peculiar way—a way which proclaimed His own awful holiness, as much as His infinite grace. It was forgiveness through the holiness of another, as if God would teach them that while He required holiness in him who was to bear any sin, yet especial holiness was required when bearing the sins of our holy things. And then there was not merely the bare forgiveness, but there was the acceptance thus provided, both for themselves and their services, before the Lord.

All this was to Israel the shadow of “good things to come” (Heb 9:11). The Law, indeed, made nothing perfect, but it was “the bringing in of a better hope...by the which we draw nigh unto God” (Heb 7:19). This better hope has now been brought in. What was thus foreshadowed afar off by Aaron, as Israel’s high priest, has been fulfilled to us in Jesus of Nazareth, God’s own anointed Priest. We have a High Priest, as well as Israel, One to bear the iniquity of our holy things. We have a temple not made with hands. We have an altar, but not of man’s building. We have a sacrifice, but not of bulls and of goats—a sacrifice of richer blood, and mightier efficacy, than any that was ever laid on Israel’s altars. We have a High Priest, too, ministering in our name, and in our behalf, before God—a High Priest Who has passed into the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for us—a High Priest Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. This High Priest, Whose holiness is so infinite, Whose ministry is so prevailing, bears the iniquity of our holy things. He does for us what Aaron did for Israel. But He does it in substance, not in figure; He does it so effectually that “the worshipers once purged should have...no more conscience of sins” (Heb 10:2). He does it also by His own holiness, not by a figurative or typical holiness, but by that which is really and truly His own, for He is the infinitely holy One. And it is as God’s own holy High Priest, that He bears the iniquity of our holy things. It is just because He is so holy that He is so peculiarly fitted to bear iniquities like these.

God is thus teaching how much the sins of those duties and services, which we call holy, need forgiveness. We are apt to think that there is such a difference between our open sins and our religious exercises, that any defilement attaching to the latter must be so inconsiderable in itself, and so outweighed by the sacredness of the act performed, that no particular account needs to be taken of these sins. God’s estimate is very different indeed. His eye sees the sins of our religious services in another light, as being no less heinous than other iniquities, and needing special forgiveness no less than they. Not merely our open transgressions—our scarlet and crimson sins—need pardon, but our holy services, our good words and deeds, our prayers, our praises, our

worship, our breaking of bread at the table of the Lord. In every one of these there is such an amount of sin cleaving to, and mingled with, every act and feeling and thought and word, as to render them in themselves so miserably defective and defiled, as to be utterly unacceptable in the sight of the Holy One. When seeking God, we need to have our way of seeking and our act of seeking forgiven. When praying for pardon, we need to have that prayer itself forgiven. Each petition bears witness against us. There is such imperfection, such coldness, such formality, such deadness, such wandering, such half-heartedness, such a want of every thing that constitutes prayer, that, were there not forgiveness for the sins of our holy things, we might as well cease to pray. When coming to Christ, we need forgiveness for our act of coming, for the impure motives which lead us to come, as well as for the defective way in which we come. All this is provided for. There is forgiveness not merely for the sins we bring to Christ, but for our way of bringing them.

This is a point where many stumble. They say that they know there is full pardon for them in Christ, and full provision to be found in Him for every want, but their difficulty is about the coming to Him. They think that the act of coming should be as holy as possible, and that, unless it be so, their acceptance is a very doubtful thing. They think that if they could only come in a right way, and from right motives, there would be no danger of their success; but, with so much that is defective in their way of coming, they doubt whether they can venture to do more than merely hope the best. Now, this is just to say that their acceptance depends, in part, at least upon themselves—upon their coming aright. Whereas the gospel takes for granted that there is nothing right about them, either about themselves or their way of coming, but that everything about them, and done by them, needs forgiveness. Such forgiveness is provided, and it is here prefigured by the high priest bearing the iniquity of our holy things.

Thus, there is no place left for any such misgivings. Where is there room for a single doubt to thrust itself? What point is there at which God does not meet every possible doubt that can arise? There is no room for saying, “My sins are too great to be forgiven.” Neither is there any room for saying, “My way of coming to Christ is so defective, my way of seeking pardon is so sinful, that I am doubtful whether I shall be accepted.” The full provision made for us in Christ is such as to meet us at all these points, and exclude every shadow of a doubt, from whatever quarter it may arise.

2. A Complete Provision

From all this, we gather the following most precious truths—truths, not only precious to the believer who has already found acceptance in the Beloved, but to the anxious soul when just beginning to ask the way of salvation and peace.

We learn how complete is the provision made by God for a sinner's acceptance. This provision is entirely in Him Who is our great High Priest. It is not in ourselves at all, but in Him alone. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (Col 1:19). He is the Father's infinite treasure-house of all blessing, secured for, and set open to, sinners. Nothing that a guilty soul can require is wanting in Him. Outside of Him there is nothing; in Him, there is everything: "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Co 1:30).

In our text, however, the allusion⁴ is not to His fullness in general, but to His priesthood alone, as making provision for a sinner's pardon and acceptance, and this in reference to the sins of our holy things—the sins committed in our more direct transactions with God. For every sin, and for every kind of sin, there is provision in Him on Whom our sins were laid. For all these there is a special way of pardon ordained by God, and certain sins are minutely specified in order to show us that no case has been overlooked or left without a special remedy. And as the iniquities of our holy things, the sins committed in our direct transactions with God, either in His worship or when dealing with Him regarding our souls, would form an insuperable barrier to our obtaining the forgiveness of our other sins, and would utterly mar our fellowship with a holy God—so these are singled out by name, both on account of their peculiar heinousness, and also because of the place which they thus occupy, and the obstruction which they would otherwise form in the way of our intercourse with God.

There is forgiveness, then, for the iniquities of our holy things: forgiveness not only for our omissions of duty, but for our duties themselves; forgiveness, not only for our estrangement from God, but for our sins in returning to Him; forgiveness, not only for our prayerlessness, but for our prayers; forgiveness, not only for our long rejection of Christ, but for our sins in coming to Him; forgiveness, not only for our unbelief, but for our faith; forgiveness, not only for our past enmity, but for our present cold-hearted love; forgiveness, not only for the sins we bring to Christ, but for our way of bringing them; forgiveness, not only for the sins we carried to the altar of burnt-offering, and laid upon the bleeding sacrifice, but for our imperfect way of taking them, the impure motives that defiled our service, and also for the sins mingling with our worship when standing within the veil in that sanctuary, where the majesty of the Holy One has made its abode.

Is not this, then, truly blessed? To have such complete provision made for our pardon and acceptance, as well as for the acceptance of our holy things! To have such an

⁴ **allusion** – indirect reference or subtle implication.

High Priest over the house of God—that house into which we, in believing, entered, and from which we shall go out no more! We are “complete in him” (Col 2:10). In ourselves most incomplete, in our duties most incomplete, in our worship most incomplete, but yet in Him *complete*! Perfect through the comeliness which he hath put upon us!

How often have we said to ourselves, “Were my prayers but more earnest and sincere, less cold and wandering, I could believe their acceptance; but this insensibility and lifelessness, these wandering thoughts and wayward desires, fill me with despair as to the possibility of my being heard at all. Is there not, however, in this state of feeling, a desire to be complete in yourselves, instead of being complete in Him—to be found in yourselves, instead of being “found in him” (Phi 3:9)? Are you not seeking to be accepted because of your fervency and feeling, instead of being accepted in the High Priest alone? Are you not forgetting the infinite perfection that God sees in Him—because of which He sees no imperfection in you, and trying to find grace in His sight by binding round your own forehead some fancied badge of personal holiness or feeling, instead of reminding Him of the High Priest of our profession, on Whose brow rests the mitre with its golden plate, and its ineffaceable⁵ engraving, “HOLINESS TO THE LORD.”

Amid the multitude of our thoughts within us, is there not consolation unspeakable in remembering that God has made most ample provision for the putting away of these very sins, over which we so bitterly and so justly mourn? So that, instead of desponding, might we not, even when most conscious of these shortcomings, thus calmly plead, “Not my impure prayer, but the pure prayer of Jesus; not me but my High Priest; not my intercessions but His; not my perfection but His; not my holiness but His; look not on me but on Him on Whom I am looking; behold, O God, my shield, look upon the face of Thine Anointed.”

3. A Perpetual and Unchangeable Provision

Let us learn how perpetual and unchangeable this provision is. It is written here, concerning the High Priest on earth: “It shall be *always* upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.” In this we have a vivid type of Him Who is “the same yesterday, and to day and for ever” (Heb 13:8); Who hath “an unchangeable priesthood” (Heb 7:24); Who “ever liveth to make intercession for” us (Heb 7:25). He Who bears the iniquity of our holy things is One Who changes not, Who is ever the

⁵ **ineffaceable** – indelible; impossible to erase.

same holy High Priest, and ever glorious in the Father's eyes. We vary, but He varies not. Our feelings change, His alter not. Our soul fluctuates, ever rising and falling, ever ebbing and flowing, but He remaineth steadfast and true. We grow cold and faithless. "He abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2Ti 2:13). His is a priesthood which endureth for ever, which never loses aught of its efficacy and value. Deriving its virtue and power from the infinitely glorious Person of the Priest Himself, and not in any degree depending upon us, our doings or our feelings, it remains ever sure, and without the shadow of a change. It is a priesthood which has already carried thousands and tens of thousands of God's Israel within the veil, and given them boldness when standing there in the immediate presence of Jehovah, and it is able to do this for tens of thousands more. It is a priesthood which has borne the iniquity of the holy things of God's worshipping ones in all time past, even from the beginning; and it will abide as infinite in its efficacy until the High Priest "appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb 9:28). What abundant consolation is this! What liberty of conscience, what tranquil confidence of spirit ought this at all times to produce when drawing near to God for worship or communion within the veil!

It is written of our High Priest, "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb 9:24). This is our confidence. It is the knowledge of this that relieves our fears and makes us feel at home with God. If Christ, then, be still in heaven, if He be still appearing there for us, then what more do we stand in need of to speak peace to our souls? "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1Jo 2:1). To know what He is, to know what He is doing, to know that He is ever the same, to know that I am as welcome to Him as ever any sinner that came to Him—this surely is peace, which no storm without, and no corruption within, can break or ruffle! "Always upon his forehead!" It was this which spoke continual peace to Israel. It was this which assured them of acceptance. When their peace was broken, or their acceptance clouded, they would think of the high priest's mitre, and that would be enough to reassure and comfort them. They knew that its gold could not rust or grow dim—that its inscription could not be erased—and this was their consolation. They needed no more. So it is with us. We know that our High Priest remaineth the same for ever. He cannot change. It is the thought of this that preserves our peace unbroken in the midst of this changeful world and these still more changeful hearts. He is our peace; for He has made peace through the blood of His cross. By that blood He has brought us into the sanctuary, and by the all-availing ministry of His unchangeable Priesthood, He keeps us there as in our proper, our paternal home, where all is reconciliation, and from which we shall go out no more!

4. A Glorious and Certain Provision

Learn how glorious and certain is this provision. It depends upon the holiness of the High Priest. Not upon His grace or mercy or compassion, but upon His holiness. It is because there is such holiness in Him to meet and satisfy the holiness of God that our forgiveness is so secure, and the way of our obtaining it so glorious. What an ample pardon, what a sure acceptance, must that be which is secured to us by the holiness of our great High Priest! For His holiness cannot change, neither can it pass away. His mercy might be worn out by our sins; and He might forget to be gracious, but He cannot cease to be holy.

His holiness is infinitely perfect and infinitely fragrant in the Father's eyes. All the perfection of creature holiness and all the perfection of divine holiness are to be found in Him. The Father's eye discerns no flaw in Him. All is perfection in holiness—holiness not merely refulgent⁶ on His forehead, but pervading His whole person, and shining forth in every part. He is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb 7:26). And this is our security. True, we see but little of that holiness, and can appreciate it but feebly. Let us remember, however, that it is not what we see, but what the Father sees, that is our security. It is the Father's estimate of His perfection, not ours, that forms the ground of our acceptance, and the acceptance of our holy things. It is the perfection that the Father sees in Him, and in which He is well pleased, that is our foundation and resting-place. This perfection cannot change. Its glory abideth for ever. The Father's estimate of it and delight in it can never alter. The Son can never become less precious, less glorious, less holy, or less perfect in the Father's eyes.

How certain, then, must our acceptance be! It is not the holiness of our gifts and services that secure their acceptance; neither is it the holiness of the persons presenting them. It is Jesus, as our High Priest, presenting His infinitely holy Person before God—appearing in the sanctuary above, with holiness engraven upon His priestly brow—Who does for us what Aaron did for Israel of old. Unless God had disowned Aaron, and commanded the plate of gold to be torn from his forehead, Israel could not doubt their acceptance. So, unless the Father were to disown His Son, and take from Him His divine priesthood, we have no cause for doubting, nor room for uncertainty.

Our imperfect services, our defective prayers, might well excite displeasure, and draw down upon us, not an answer of peace, but of wrath. But the Father looks away from us and our unholiness—He gazes on the spotless forehead of His own holy Son, and His anger is turned away. He sees no iniquity in our persons, and no imperfection

⁶ **refulgent** – shining; radiant; glowing.

in our prayers. No imperfection in us can make Him less the Perfect One. No sin in us or our services can make it less true that He is the altogether Holy One—holy in His person, holy in His priesthood, holy in His intercession for us before the Father’s throne. Ever bearing the names of His purchased ones upon His jeweled breast, and ever bearing upon His brow the symbol of perfect holiness as their Sin-bearer and Substitute, He stands before God glorious all over in His garments of beauty, presenting the holy things which His Israel “hallow in all their holy gifts...that they may be accepted before the LORD.”

5. An Accessible and Free Provision

Learn how accessible and free is this provision. It is set open to all. Its benefits are wide and unrestricted: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isa 45:22). In this respect the High Priest stands before us like the brazen serpent, that all may look and live. It is but looking on that forehead on which the Father’s eye is fixed—turning our eye to that holiness in which God delights, and making that our plea—that brings us into the possession of all this full provision, and gives us the standing of accepted one in His sight.

It is simply as sinners that we have to do with the Sin-bearer; it is simply as lost ones that we have to do with the Savior. It is simply as diseased ones that we have to do with the Healer—and so it is here simply as sinners that we have to do with the High Priest Who bears the iniquity of our holy things. It is not that which is good about us that gives us a claim upon Him, but that which is evil. It is not that part of our prayers and services which is better than the rest that warrants us to come to Him, or makes us welcome, or entitles us to expect that what is evil in them may be forgiven. No. It is the evil that is in us that is our only claim. It is the evil that is in our prayers that, on the one hand, makes Him so necessary and so precious, and on the other, assures us of a gracious welcome; for, He “came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mar 2:17). It is the evil and not the good about us that makes the sinner and the Savior so suitable to each other—making the sinner so welcome to the Savior, and the Savior so welcome to the sinner.

Oh, what an open door is this for each sinner to enter by! Oh, what a sure refuge is this for each sinner to flee to! You who are still unsheltered, will you not flee and be saved? What riches of pardon are here treasured up in the person of our glorious High Priest! You who are still unpardoned, will you not come this day, this hour, and be forgiven? It is your evil, and not your good, that fits you for coming. It is your unholiness, and not your holiness, that you are to carry with you. It is your darkness that makes you so welcome to Him who is “the light of the world” (Joh 8:12). It is your ignorance

that fits you for Him Who has “compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way” (Heb 5:2). It is the consciousness of your imperfect prayers, no less than of your past prayerlessness, that should draw you without delay, and with willing footsteps, to Him Who is at the right hand of the Father, to bear the iniquity of your holy things. Put your case into His hands. Take Him for your sin-bearer and substitute. There is no holiness which the Father will accept but His. There is no name that you can plead but His. Take it, and go in with it to the Father, and you shall know not merely the peace of being forgiven, but the higher blessedness of being “accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6).

Someone may say, in reference to these remarks, “Oh, all this is most true, and to those who know themselves to be children of God, must be most blessed; but I do not yet know this, and therefore I have no right to rejoice.” Well, but what is it that makes a child of God? Is it not the believing what the Father has testified of His well-beloved Son, His anointed Priest and Intercessor? You say, “Oh, I believe all that, but I do not know whether I have any interest in Him.” Now, herein you err, for God has identified these two things which you would make different; He has joined together what you would put asunder. You say, “I believe, but I do not know whether I have an interest in Him.” God says he that believeth has the interest; so that to speak of believing, and yet not having an interest, is to make void the plain Word of God, which says, “by him all that believe are justified” (Act 13:39).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, let me remark how fully all this provides, not only for the sinner’s peace, but for his holiness. Having put on Christ, and being thus accepted in Him upon believing, we find that the raiment with which we are clothed contains in its divine texture a healing virtue which goes forth from it for the renewing of our souls. The blood, with which we are sprinkled all over, not merely shields us from wrath, and hides our sins beneath its crimson covering, but sends forth a purifying influence throughout the whole man. “With his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5).

But, in addition to this, there are other considerations connected with the type before us fitted to weigh with the believing soul, and to serve as motives for stimulating us to seek conformity to the image of the Lord.

Let us consider the honor thus put upon us in having such an High Priest to minister for us, and such raiment to clothe and adorn us. Who is there in heaven or earth besides that has a representative at court like this? What angel is there that hath a robe like that wherewith the Father’s hand has invested us on the day wherein He said, “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him” (Luk 15:22)? Who is there that hath

such a standing before God—that is accepted as we are accepted—that is loved with such a love, or honored with an honor equal to ours? Who is there that occupies such a position before God, and such a relationship to His eternal Son as that in which we even now rejoice? Who is there that hath a hope of glory such as we possess, and can look forward to an inheritance so rich, a crown so bright as ours—a crown which the darkly ominous events of the passing day show to be near at hand; it may be within this generation’s reach? “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1Jo 3:2-3). It is His robe that we shall wear, and is not His robe the fairest? It is His crown that we shall put on, and is not His crown the brightest? It is upon His throne that we shall sit down, and is not His throne the most exalted of all? It is with the love wherewith the Father hath loved Him that He hath loved us—and what love is there in the universe like that which the Father bears to the beloved Son? It is as His Bride that we are to share His joy as well as His glory—and what joy of affection can be compared to that with which He shall rejoice, in unhindered love, over the purchased partner of His throne? For if in this the time of her betrothment there has been joy unspeakable and full of glory—oh, what will there be “in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart” (Song 3:11)! If, then, these things be so, “what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2Pe 3:11).

And then, think of the dishonor which our unholiness casts upon Him. The apostle thus reasons with the Corinthians: “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid” (1Co 6:15). So we may well reason; shall we take the garments of our High Priest and make them a cloak of lasciviousness?⁷ Shall we drag them through the mire of earth and defile them with the spots of the flesh? Shall we trample them beneath our feet, or present them to the world for their mirth, as were the vessels of the sanctuary to Belshazzar in the night of his revelry? Shall we undo the mitre from the High Priest’s head? Shall we tear off the plate of gold from His forehead, and erase the inscription graven so deeply there? Shall we thus incur the awful guilt of bringing reproach and dishonor upon the only Begotten of the Father? Shall we not rather seek to honor Him Who has put such honor upon us, and Who only asks this in return that we should honor Him before a world that denies and disowns Him?

⁷ **lasciviousness** –lustful or lewd behavior.

It may appear difficult to honor Him aright in a world like this, where all without is sin and darkness, and all within so carnal and impure. And perhaps we shrink from the post assigned to us. We see no difficulty in glorifying Him perfectly amid “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12:23), when we shall be without spot or wrinkle, not one stain or scar of mortality left upon us; when, with no enemy to assail us, and no corruption to trouble us, we shall perfectly honor Him as we desire to do. And sometimes this bright prospect of coming perfection, coupled with despondency and unbelief as to our present effort, impedes us in present duty, and prevents us from maintaining the conflict as we ought.

But let us remember that the peculiar honor which Christ receives from us arises from those very circumstances that awaken the despondency. We shall doubtless glorify Him in heaven; but then we cannot glorify Him there as we can do on earth. We shall, no doubt, have new opportunities, maturer faculties, and more ample scope for doing so above; but our present opportunities shall be all over then. We shall honor Him before His friends, but we shall no longer be able to honor Him before His enemies. We shall honor Him before angels, but no longer before a world that lieth in wickedness. And this is the peculiar honor which He is seeking now at our hands, an honor which we shall not be able to render Him hereafter. Hence it was just in his infirmities that the apostle gloried, in order that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Hence it was that he sought to approve himself as a minister of God “in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings...By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good” (2Co 6:4-5, 8).

Oh, brethren, it will be nothing difficult to glorify Christ when all sin is gone forever! It will be nothing marvelous that He should be honored perfectly by us when all His enemies have been put to shame. But the marvelous thing is that He should be thus glorified on earth where He is despised and rejected of men. This is His peculiar glory. And this is what He expects at our hands.

Oh, then, let us see that while enjoying the benefit of His standing in the presence of God for us, and while living in the land of enemies, we render to Him that honor which is so righteously His due, and which throughout all eternity we shall never be able to render Him in heaven! He represents us well above; let us see that we as faithfully and truly represent Him below. And instead of wearying too eagerly for the end of the warfare and the cessation of present weariness and sorrow, let us rejoice that He is thus affording us a season in which we may glorify Him in a way that angels cannot do, in a way that the perfected spirits of the just cannot do, in a way which we ourselves

shall be no longer able to do, when the wilderness and the warfare are at an end, and the everlasting rest begun.

