

SUPPLEMENT.

LAMONI GAZETTE.

JUNE 1888.

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SERMON,

BY ELDER M. T. SHORT,
OF MILLERSBURG, ILL., DELIVERED AT
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“For the priests’ lips should keep knowledge, and they should speak the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.”—Mal. 2:7.

This is the basis of our remarks this morning. We shall try to ascertain something in regard to the origin of the priesthood. When we think of the text parallel to the one selected, recorded in the 110 Psalm, we remember the King of Israel spoke by the Holy Ghost in regard to Christ and said he was a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec; and Paul refers to this text three times in the book of Hebrews, and bears witness to the priesthood of the Son of God. If we can get at the beginning of forever, I apprehend we can find the origin of the priesthood. When we consider the manner of delegating authority we see that the less is blessed of the greater, as in the instance of Melchisedec blessing Abraham. Inasmuch as there never has been any greater upon the earth or in heaven than the Son of God, his Father excepted, we do not know of any power upon the earth, or that is moving among men, either angelic or human, that has the right to confer priestly authority upon Jesus Christ;

I know that the idea has been advanced by some that he received priestly authority at the time of the transfiguration under the hands of Moses and Elias; but as we further progress we apprehend you can see the policy of this position. We are informed by the Bible, that both Cain and Abel were required and authorized to offer sacrifices, and they did so; but it appears that Cain’s offering was not accepted, but Abel’s was; and Paul says that “by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.” In all the research I have given to this subject, I have not been able to separate the idea of priesthood from the altar and the altar service. When Jesus Christ enumerated the prophets who had sealed their testimony with their blood, he begins with Abel and closes with Zacharias; and when we understand the prerogatives of a prophet, a righteous man, we see that they are intimately connected with the work of God. If we concede that Abel was righteous, it follows as a consequence that he had a knowledge of the gospel of Christ; for Paul says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed.” Then I think all must consent to the fact that the righteousness of God is revealed through the gospel, and hence it includes Bro.

Abel. We might follow down the steps of time, and trace a succession of righteous men from Abel to Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who walked so circumspectly before the heavens that he was translated; but before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, a preacher of the gospel, so says the apostle Paul. The text presents these Priests as messengers of the Lord of Hosts, and Paul says He is the mediator between God and man. Some may see a difference in these two terms; but I believe they mean the same thing; they could be used interchangeably. After Noah had preached the gospel for a season, he was commanded to perform another work. "By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen, moved with fear prepared an ark" When we consider the covenant to this wonderful character, that shone forth like a vast meteor over all ages, we must conclude he was a minister of Jesus Christ. As we pass along, we read of Abraham, who had been engaged in war with the wicked heathens. He had gained much spoil, but he laid it all at the feet of Melchisedec, the king of Salem, the ancient name for Jerusalem. This character brought forth bread and wine, blessed and administered them to Abraham. The reason he administered the holy eucharist is made plain—he was a priest of the Most High. Abraham was blessed of him also. In the twenty fifth of Genesis we are informed that Abraham sent his illegitimate children away into the eastern country; but before they departed from the shades of his roof, he conferred gifts upon them. I call your attention now

to the fact that Abraham had conferred all his earthly possessions upon his son Isaac, his legitimate child according to the law of primogeniture then prevailing; and this will doubtless cause the inquiry to arise, what did he have to confer upon the children of the concubines that Abraham had?

Adam Clark is regarded as an able commentator; but it should be remembered, that spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Go with me a moment to Jesus' time. Paul said, that "Christ having ascended on high gave gifts unto men." Let us consider the nature of these gifts. "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors, and some teachers." Together with these he bestowed gifts and graces of a supernatural character, which were for the benefit of the people in a spiritual sense instead of in a temporal sense. These holy ministers were placed in the church "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, and designed by infinite wisdom to remain there as the bow in the cloud, until we all come to the unity of the faith." I do not think there is a mind so obtuse as to suppose that we have all come to a unity of the faith. The prophet Isaiah looked forward by the power of God's spirit and he saw the world enwrapped in glory, when nothing would hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, for the earth was full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea." I apprehend we would all like to have a little land in fee simple upon the earth, when it is sanctified, cleansed, redeemed and glorified, so

that we could dwell under our own vine and fig tree with no one to disturb our peace or make us afraid. This is what we call the beatific vision. Holy men and women of old looked forward to this time, and rejoiced in the thought, that if faithful unto death, God would give them a crown of life. I have brought forward these scriptures to show you something of the nature of the gifts of the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham conferred priestly authority upon his sons, and sent them away from his household. One of those Sons' names was Midian. In those days the earth was sparsely settled, and quite frequently colonies took their names from the original occupants, as; the land of Canaan called after Canaan.

We must now drop over into Egypt and follow Moses in his flight. He comes over into the land of Midian, and there he finds evidently a descendant of Midian, who was the son of Abraham, and he was a priest of the Most High.

His first introduction was to the female portion of the household. They were trying to water their flocks, and the rude Sabians disturbed them; and Moses being a man of chivalric spirit, he assisted these ladies, so that they returned and told their good fortune unto Jethro. He told them to go out and find that man, and bring him into the house. All through the dispensations of God's providences, we cannot get along without love. Moses offered his hand to one of these ladies, and was soon after married to her; and it is evident to my mind that Jethro was not a heathen priest, else he would have objected to this alliance as wicked; for according to an-

cient history they were always opposed to mingling with strange flesh. Forty years he dwelt in that country; and while he was leading his father's flocks, he came to Mount Sinai, and God called to him from the flaming bush, and made known to him that he should go down and deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. He went down with his brother Aaron, and by signs and miracles begot unto himself a great name. And after their deliverance from the Egyptians, the people praised God for his goodness. But they would go every day from morning until evening, to have Moses adjust every little difficulty. But here comes Jethro and proceeds to give instructions with which we find Moses complied. If this man was not speaking what was ordained of God, and did not hold true priestly authority, in the true priestly line, do you suppose the chosen ones of God would have taken part in the altar service directed by this man. He instructs Moses to select men from the congregation, of good report, men that feared God and heeded government, and place them as captains over hundreds and fifties and tens. This does not sound to me like the mutterings of a heathen priest. The great Hebrew law giver reorganized the whole commonwealth in conformity with the advice of Jethro. The blessings of Jehovah were upon them. A cloud by day, a pillar by night. They were God's chosen people.

Now let us inquire into the institution of the Aaronic priesthood. The Lord told Moses to set apart Aaron and his sons to minister in the priest's office forever. This is called the Levitical as well as Aaronic priesthood because Aaron was a descendant of Levi. When these priests were set apart they were directed how to proceed. Their appar-

el was to be made in a certain way, and over Aaron's heart was to be placed the Urim and Thummim. Why do you talk about that instrument? Because the prophets have spoken of it, and the Lord said through Moses that it was to be over his heart, so that he would have judgment when he went out and came in before Israel. We pass along and we learn that a certain man and woman wrought a species of folly, and others partook of it. A certain man saw this folly and the princes engaged in it, and he slew him. The Lord saw what he had done for Israel, and he said He would confer upon him a gift, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. Therefore we argue from this scripture and others, that the priesthood of Aaron was to run through all ages in time and through the ages of eternity, as also the priesthood of Melchisedec, which is also an everlasting priesthood. When we get over to the book of Malachi, the Lord speaks to Israel in an apostate condition, when their priests had been defiled; but he declares the time will come when he will purge and purify the sons of Levi, so that they may offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness, hence they will stand in their priestly lot and office, and offer an offering unto God through Jesus Christ. I have no disposition to doubt this scripture. I know that Paul was arraigned before the people, because he believed all things written in the law. Some may wonder why I bring so many quotations from the Old Testament; but remember that Jesus said, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me," evidently referring to what we denominate the Old Testament. Paul said to Timothy, that from a child he had known the scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation." All scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good

work." "Man should not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." We can find a vast array of evidence that will warrant us in drawing from the vast storehouse of God's word, both the Old and the New Testament. We never would have known anything about the priesthood, its powers and duties, if it had not been for those whom God called as priests. But He has revealed it unto us and our children forever. You cannot separate priest and priesthood; and if the people are not willing to receive the law at the mouth of the priest, they are not willing to receive it at all. That is the way God says they shall receive it. People may fancy that they would receive it, if it would come some other way; but when the Lord sends a message to men, he surely would send it in the best way. Men should not dictate ways and means to their creator. We are finite, He is infinite. We ought to remember that the Savior said, after he had triumphed over death, hell and the grave, that all power was given into his hands. That the apostles should have the supervision of his work throughout the world, and should teach the people to observe all things that he had commanded them. When he addresses the apostles in person he says, "I have chosen you and ordained you." To Peter he said, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." In Matt 18:18, Jesus says something about the power of the apostles, which we will read:

Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Jesus said he had commandment from his father what he should teach. These words are a part of those commandments of God the Father through the blessed Savior. When the servants of God keep his commandments, we find that they are very powerful because God is with them. In their office and calling they are omnipotent if you please. The Savior said: "Whatsoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whatsoever sins ye retain they are retain-

ed." Some people say, Dont this smack a little of Catholicism? Yes, but I would rather be Catholic and be right, than be anti-Catholic and be wrong.

Paul says, "Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." It is our duty to seek light, get the grain from the chaff. When Paul was at Athens, they were bowing down to about 30,000 deities according to a Grecian historian. He found a truth that had been expressed by one of their poets, and he took it for his text. So we as a people have accepted of truth wherever we have found it.

We want to notice the apostles at Jerusalem, and ascertain how they could remit or retain sins. Jesus said, repair to Jerusalem, and wait until you are endowed with power from on high. These fishermen could not preach the gospel with any degree of eloquence, or any hope of success in their own language. But when they received this miraculous endowment from God, the people heard them declaring the word of life and salvation with power and authority, and with the Holy Ghost sent down from God; the people rushed together and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do." Peter stood up, and did he tell them they had nothing to do, Christ had done it all? That is the modern idea. Peter had an audience of devout men out of every nation, but he gave them no such delusive idea. He said, "Repent every one of you and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." What for? The remission of sins, "and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is unto you, and your childrer, and unto all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." It is not my intention to deliver a discourse upon the principles of the gospel; but only to show that by an administration of the law only could the apostles remit or retain sins. It is the operation of the law that brings a remission of sins. That law was called "the law of the spirit of life," and it makes us free from "the law of sin and death." Every man and woman is either under one of these or the other. If you do not gather with Christ, you will scatter. If you are not for him, you will be against

him. Then the apostles, while they kept the commandments, were mighty in their sphere; but when they forsook the law, and sought to lord it over God's heritage, they became as weak as Samson.

Some have concluded there was no priesthood in the Christian Church. What do they do with the language of Peter second chapter first Peter, fifth verse.

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

He tells us we are offering up sacrifices. But we are not offering the bodies of birds or beasts, but we are under the new dispensation, and are required to "present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. If it is reasonable for us to do so, it is altogether unreasonable for us not to do so. People say, We want our liberty. I am just as fond of liberty as any man. But I do not want liberty to break the law. When we obey the gospel we become conformed to the holy life contemplated in it, and will finally be prepared to enter into the society of the redeemed with the general assembly and church of the first born.

If this is not freedom I can not understand what is freedom. There is no such thing as freedom to do wrong. Some people are asking for license to do everything they wish.

When we do anything of a derogatory character, the yoke of sin is fastened upon us. In the mad rush of life, we often seek for happiness in illegitimate channels; but the reaction comes off and our hearts are sick with shame, our constitutions are wasted, and our spirits broken down. But when we are obedient to the laws of God as revealed to us by his servants, then we go forward in every good work.

In the ninth verse of the same chapter the Apostle says, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him that hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light". Whenever you see we become important factors in this chosen generation, this royal priesthood, we

bask in the marvelous light. Some people will object if the idea of priesthood in the Christian Church is mentioned, but when they see that it is inseparably connected with the work of God, then they will turn and say that we are all priests, every man, woman and child is a priest. That which proves too much in law, does not prove anything. God said to ancient Israel, that they were a kingdom of priests. Ex. 19, but that does not say that every man, woman and child was a priest, but simply that the Master who was a king ruled over the kingdom blessed with the priesthood. That was confined to one tribe, and if a stranger was to reach unto the altar, he should be put to death. We have an instance of this in the case of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. They took too much honor upon themselves saying that all the Lord's people were holy. It is a shameful thing in any one to profess and not possess. These men did this, and they rebelled and drew away 250 princes. Moses said come before us on the morrow and the Lord will show whom he has chosen. They came and with all that appertained to them were swallowed up by an earthquake, and the very next day those murmurers came around and said, "You have killed the Lord's people." Did Moses and Aaron kill them? Did they take anything upon themselves? No. You wont claim that. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. As long as they worked in righteousness and in accordance with God's will He stood by them, slew the wicked, and would not hear their prayers. If men worship God and do his will, he will hear their prayers, but if they will not he will not hear their cries. But when the righteous ones of the Lord cried unto Him as the flames and smoke went up to heaven, the Lord stayed the plague.

The Apostle Paul is very pointed and explicit upon the subject of priesthood: "No man taketh this honor upon himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron." When we read how Aaron

was called, we learn he was called by the prophetic spirit through Moses. This brings us to the thought that if no man can be called to the priesthood but in this way, how can priests be properly called without a prophet. If they are called, it must be by men becoming a law unto themselves.

Amos says the "Lord God doeth nothing, but what he reveals his secrets unto his servants the prophets." Whenever the Lord God of Hosts moves among the nations of the earth to do a work, he must reveal himself through his servants the prophets.

Paul says, "As the Lord hath called every one, so let him work, and so ordain I in all the churches." To Timothy he says, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, and the laying on of hands of the Presbytery." We find, therefore, when we come to canvass this subject just how Timothy received a gift from God—when he was being confirmed in the church. The spokesman upon that occasion was moved upon by the Spirit of the living God to speak in regard to his usefulness in the Church of Christ, and Paul wanted him to take care of that pearl of great price. He also told him to "stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. Timothy received the laying on of hands at least twice, as you will find by the first and second books of Timothy. In each instance he received a blessing. We are informed that Joshua the successor of Moses, was full of the spirit of the Lord, because Moses had laid his hands upon him. That is why he was so full of wisdom to lead the hosts of Israel into the promised land.

A great many people do not think the prophetic and apostolic office should continue in the church, but when we turn to the organic law, there we learn that "God set in the church first apostles, secondarily prophets, and we nowhere learn that the connection the disciples had with his work had ceased, that he

had made a mistake, and had to do his work over again. This would not be divine. Apostles, prophets, high priests, bishops, seventies, evangelists, elders, priests, teachers and deacons are all spoken of and provided for in the organic law, and in addition to these officers, we have helps, governments and diversities of tongues. Some of these helps come from the opposite side of the house. We read that women of old did vallant service for the Lord. In the last days we read that he will pour out his spirit upon all flesh. The blessings of the Lord are not confined to the male side of the house. But when we read of these wonderful blessings, we nowhere find in all the scriptures from one end to the other, of women who held the priestly office in the church. Aaron's sons, not his daughters, were to minister in the priestly office.

To prove that the apostles were to continue in the church along with other officers, we have only to refer you to a quotation of scriptures where it is declared that God has placed these apostles in the church, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ until they all come into the unity of the faith unto the stature of the fulness of Christ." If that quotation was not there we could find from the history in the New Testament when vacancies occurred, that the Lord God ministered and told them how these vacancies could be filled. When Judas went the way of all the earth, Mathias was ordained to take his place, and when James was slain, God said, "separate me Paul and Barnabas unto the work whereunto I have called them." He spoke by his Spirit because we are informed that there was a prophet and teachers in the church at Antioch. They were mediums through which God could speak; and he would not do anything before revealing his secrets to his servants. So Paul and Barnabas were ordained and sent forth by direction of the Holy Spirit. Mention is made in the fourteenth verse of the

fourteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, which looks very much like an apostle. In the 19 verse of the first chapter of Gallatians honorable mention is made of his epistle as the apostle of the Gentile world. He declares, "If any man thinks himself a prophet or spiritual let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord". I will mention one or two more apostles. In the last chapter of Romans Paul says: "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles." These men, then, were apostles, for Paul says so. Paul says in Thessalonians 2:6, "When we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ."

The first verse of this epistle reads, "Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus, unto the church." I might become burdensome to the town of Independence, but I could not become burdensome as an Indian or a Negro, because I do not belong to either of those races. If these men were not apostles, they could not have become burdensome as such. The word apostles is used in the plural. Paul you all acknowledge was an apostle. By parity of reasoning you must acknowledge that Silvanus and Timotheus were also.

Now a word about prophets. After Jesus Christ ascended, visions prevailed among the people of God. Paul speaks of prophecy in the fourteenth chapter of first Corinthians. This was the gift vouchsafed to certain ones who lived worthy before God, and received of the spirit unto the enjoyment of this power. This was the gift mentioned in olden times, when Moses blessed the Elders of Israel and they all began to prophesy. Some said "forbid these men to prophesy." What did Moses do? Did he put a kind of yoke upon them? He did not wish to monopolize the grace of God. Moses said "I would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets and that he would put his

spirit upon them." If they were living pure and holy lives, they might receive richly from the celestial One; but if they departed from the counsels of heaven they would become darkened in their minds. What was the key of knowledge to that people. Let Christ answer. He says to these teachers, "Ye wout enter into the kingdom of God yourselves, neither suffer those that would to enter." They darkened counsel without knowledge. They suffered the key of knowledge to depart from them by disobedience. They lost the spirit, which was the key of knowledge. Paul ministered in the Spirit, and in the course of his career he came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples there. He instructed them in the way of truth more perfectly. After he had baptized them, and laid his hands upon them, he ministered to them of the Spirit, that is, he was instrumental in the hands of God, in giving them the Holy Spirit, which "searcheth all things, even the deep things of God: When the

children of men hear the gospel and yield obedience thereto, they become translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear son.

In conclusion, be true to your God, and your covenants. Be living epistles to be known and read of all men. Be clothed upon with the Christian graces; and "add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance," etc. May God bless you, that you may never lose your hold upon eternity, in the name of Christ, Amen.

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SERMON

—BY—

W. J. SMITH

On the first principles of the Gospel,

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GENERAL CONFERENCE.

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