



THE RIBAND OF BLUE

AND

THE LACE OF BLUE.

BY C. S.

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THE RIBAND OF BLUE AND THE LACE OF BLUE.

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IN these two scriptures we have a remarkable contrast. The one, the riband of blue, is a symbol or sign of man fully tested under the most favourable circumstances : what man is to God. In the other, the lace of blue : what Christ is to man.

Let us remember both were of God. Man has been tested. Christ is our great High Priest.

In turning, then, first, to the riband of blue, let us remark that the institution of the riband of blue was of God. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders A RIBAND OF BLUE: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them. . . . That ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out

of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am the Lord your God."

Thus the institution of the riband of blue was of God, and is very beautiful. It was not worn in Egypt whilst they were slaves to Pharaoh, but after God had brought them out by redemption. A riband of blue, worn by a slave of Pharaoh, or a slave of Satan, would be a contradiction, as blue is the heavenly colour, that which is of God.

Who, then, were to wear the riband of blue? The nation of Israel, and the stranger that came to dwell with them, to sojourn in the land. It was the outward visible sign of that one nation whom God had brought from Egypt, and to whom He had made known His laws and commandments. As circumcision was a mark before the eye of God, so the riband of blue was to be a constant sign of remembrance before their own eyes. "That ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them." "And be holy unto your God." It certainly was very striking: the blue on the fringe of their garments, almost touching the earth as they walked, with its heavenly colour, ever proclaiming the holy claims of God, He requiring men to walk in heavenly purity and holiness before Him.

The context of the institution of the riband of blue will shew that it was not a sign that Israel did thus walk in heavenly purity, but rather what a holy God must require. He must have a perfect

obedience to all His commandments, if man is to stand on that ground before Him.

The context is indeed remarkable. In chapter xiv. we find Israel murmuring, in rebellion so fearfully, that had God dealt with them in judgment, they would have been destroyed. Then we have the intercession of Moses. The Lord hears and pardons. Still there is continued rebellion and sin. Then grace shines out in chapter xv., and also government. They had pledged themselves to do all the commandments of the Lord, in Exodus xix. Thus the riband of blue was a badge of the pledge they had taken to do ALL the commandments of Jehovah.

The immediate context of this deeply interesting institution is still more remarkable. A man was found gathering sticks on the sabbath-day. If he had kept the law in every other point, yet he was guilty. "And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall surely be put to death." The sabbath-day being a type of the rest of soul God gives through redemption, nothing could possibly be allowed on man's part to pollute that rest. God said to Israel, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm: THEREFORE the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day." (Deut. v. 15.)

Does not God still speak in this shadow? Peace

with God and rest of soul is only to be found through the redemption we have in Christ Jesus. Hence, nothing can be allowed of our works to touch or pollute the perfect sabbath of rest we have in Christ.

This will be seen in another scripture. Never was the observance of the sabbath more strictly enforced than when Moses was just about to receive the people's contributions for the tabernacle. "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the sabbath-day." (Ex. xxxv. 2, 3.)

Does not God say to us in this, The first thing I desire is, that you may have perfect repose in my presence: then I am ready to receive your smallest works and offerings? And does not this explain why God could have no pleasure in those sacrifices which did not purge the conscience, or bring man into the holy presence of God? (See Heb. x. 1-10.) Nay, was not this God's eternal purpose to bring the sinner, perfectly purged from sins, into His holy presence in the perfect and eternal sabbath of rest? We can well see, then, why no work of man could be allowed to mar this rest.

The man had not kindled the fire, but he had presumptuously gathered the sticks. And mark,

that if a man is on the principle of law, of which the riband of blue was the outward sign, he is under the curse; for the least infraction of that law brings a curse. The gatherer of sticks, though he had not kindled the fire, must die. We shall find this fully confirmed in the New Testament.

We will now inquire what was the first thing that took place after the touching and beautiful institution of the riband of blue. The very first thing we find in the host of the riband of blue, is the sin and rebellion of Korah and his company.

How sad this is: instead of looking at the riband of blue, and keeping all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, to be holy unto the Lord, the very leaders, the ministers of the sanctuary, are chief in this fearful rebellion. This was the first act of the army of the riband of blue. Surely it demands our attention, and especially as we know this is one of the great sins of Christendom—the way of Core, or Korah. (Jude 11.)

The sin was this: it was the ministers of God seeking also to usurp the priesthood. There was only one high priest in Israel, type of our only one great High Priest, passed into the heavens. Rebellion against Aaron was sin against the Lord. And what was the righteous judgment of the Lord on these wicked men? The earth was made to open its mouth, and swallow them up. They went down alive into the pit. Fire also came out from

the Lord, and destroyed the two hundred and fifty princes, famous in the congregation, men of renown. And if it was so fearful to sin against Aaron, is it a light matter, O ye so-called priests, famous in the congregation, to sin now against Christ, by usurping the functions of priesthood? We earnestly entreat *you* to repent before the terrible judgment, now so near at hand, overtakes you.

There is but one great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens ; what, then, will be the judgment on those who usurp his place as priests on earth ?

Thus, at the institution of the riband of blue, man was placed on the principle he had accepted, to remember and do all the commandments of the Lord ; but the gathering of sticks on the sabbath, and the sin of Korah and his company, prove, that the least presumptuous breach of that law must be punished with death.

Then, further, what was the history of those marked out from the rest of the world by this badge of blue ? Can we find one person, from Moses to Christ, that kept his pledge—that kept the holy principles of the riband of blue ? No, not one ; for “ all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” What a happy people would Israel have been, had they kept the holy walk of the riband of blue ! But, alas ! judges, priests, kings, people, all are proved, in God’s word, guilty

before Him ! Not one kept the pledge of the riband of blue !

It was to this very nation, who wore the riband of blue on the fringe of their garments, that God sent His Son. Did He find the riband of blue a true sign, that they remembered and did all the commandments of the Lord ? Did He find them a holy people to Jehovah ?

Hear what Jesus says : " All their works they do for to be seen of men : they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments." Yes, the eye of the Son of God saw that riband of blue on the fringe of their garments, as a mark of hypocrisy and self-righteousness.

The two great commandments are—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Now the Eternal God was made flesh, and dwelt among the company of the riband of blue. Did they love Him ? He who created the universe was revealed in love, He had become their neighbour. Did the wearers of that heavenly-coloured riband love Him ? They hated Him without a cause. They spat in His face. They demand that He should be crucified. And as He was offered up in divine love a sacrifice for sins, as He breathed those most tender words, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," they gnashed their teeth with rage and hatred of Him, though every

one of them may have worn the riband of blue. They were pledged by that riband to remember all the commands of that very Jehovah-Jesus, whom, with wicked hands, they crucified, and hanged on a tree.

We do solemnly ask the reader, Has not man been fully tested on the principle of law, of which the riband of blue was the outward sign? Man thus pledged himself to keep the law, but only to break it. Could the wearers of the blue have possibly been more guilty than they were in murdering the Holy One of God?

No doubt, as we shall see, God's purpose of infinite grace shone out in all this. The effect of the blue riband principle and institution was simply this: sin abounded. Sin, man's nature, abounded in open transgression. "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Rom. v. 20.) There can be no doubt, then, of the utter break-down of the principle of the riband of blue. Man was pledged to keep the law, but all were guilty.

The question, then, now is this—Would there be good or harm in combining the principle of the riband of blue with Christ? Would it be pleasing to God for a Christian to wear the riband of blue, and pledge himself to keep all the commandments of the Lord? As a principle, is it still in force, or is it abolished? What does the Spirit say as to all this in the inspired word?

We will look for a moment at the fairest specimen of man under law that ever wore the riband of blue. Saul of Tarsus, surely, was that man. He says, speaking of the righteousness of the law, of which the blue riband was the sign, "touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless." He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a chief wearer of the riband of blue. If any man could have been justified on that principle, certainly Saul was the man. Now hear him speak, after Christ in glory had appeared to him. He says, "But what things"—yes, blue riband, and all it represented—"were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law." He had sought to stand before God wearing the blue riband, so to speak ; that is, in the righteousness of law, of which it was the outward sign ; but now he counted all this as dung, compared with being found in Christ. Yes, Christ was everything to him now, and the blue riband nothing.

If you had seen him once, how different !—not wearing a little bit of riband, but with his broad fringe, and on it the riband of blue. Thus he went along the road to Damascus, with all good conscience, a blameless man, doing the will of God,

as he thought. But what did that light from heaven reveal to him? A few words from Jesus, the Son of God, and the proud Pharisee was the convicted enemy of Christ. Yes, the wearer of the riband of blue was the greatest enemy of Christ on earth. The very first commandment of the Lord which that riband reminded him he should keep, was to love the Lord with all his heart. But he found, to his horror, that he was a hater and persecutor of that very Lord. Ah, well might he from that day count all that the riband represented to be loss and dung, for the excellency of Christ.

Beloved reader, have you ever, like Saul, discovered the deep hatred of the heart against Christ? And yet in that MAN IN THE GLORY what grace and love! The blue riband persecutor was chosen to be the messenger of Christ, the apostle of the Gentiles. Ever after, to Paul the apostle, the difference between the gospel and that of which the blue riband was the outward sign, was as wide as the poles are apart. Do we hear some reader saying, How can this be? Was not the blue riband instituted by God? Was it not to remind the people under law that they were to do all the commandments of the Lord? And is not the law just, and holy, and good? Would it not be a great blessing to keep all the commandments of the Lord, to be sober, righteous, and holy? Most assuredly this would be the case, if such a person could be found. But not only did this, the most

blameless wearer of the riband of blue, find himself to be the chief of sinners, the greatest enemy of Christ, but let us now hear what the Spirit of God says, by him, as to the whole human race.

First, he shews that those nations, the Gentiles, who, of course, were not under the law, as he shews, and therefore did not wear its sign, the riband of blue—all these were utterly sunk in the deepest lawlessness and depravity. (Rom. i.) Then he speaks of the one nation of the blue riband—Israel—who had received the law, but had not kept it, and proves from their own scriptures that they were as guilty as the Gentiles. Read his words, nay, the words of God. (Rom. iii.) Thus, after fifteen hundred years' trial of the riband of blue, all are proved guilty. This closed the trial of man in the flesh, and proved that, on that principle, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Apply all this to your own case. Suppose you say, I am a Jew, and I will wear the blue riband, the sign of it, that I may remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them. Now, if you are a guilty sinner—and can you say you are not?—what good in this case would there be in wearing the riband of blue?

No, we must not look for righteousness and justification on a totally new and different principle, "even the righteousness of God, which is by Jesus

Christ"? It is thus Christ, *or* the blue riband. The accomplished righteousness of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, *or* man working out a righteousness of his own by remembering all the commandments of the Lord, to do them.

It may now be asked, But what harm would there be in adopting both Christ and the principles signified in the institution of the riband of blue? Believe in Christ, and then wear the riband, as a pledge to keep all the commandments of the Lord —of course, praying to Him to help us to keep that pledge? Well, to the natural man, this looks very fair. But have we not an inspired epistle on this very subject? Did the Spirit of God not know that this would be the greatest danger that ever could assail the church of God? And on no subject is the apostle Paul so earnest and vehement.

If the reader would understand the danger of the Christian going back, or combining the principles of the riband of blue, though once instituted by God, with the gospel, let him most carefully study the Epistle to the Galatians. He will find that the very thing symbolised by the riband of blue, that is, righteousness by works of law, is the very leaven that the Judaising teachers wished to introduce, in order to neutralise the grace of Christ. Now mark, deliverance from sins, according to the will of God, is through our Lord Jesus Christ, "who gave himself for our sins, that he might

deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father." (Gal. i. 4.) This is all of grace, free favour. Well might the apostle marvel that they were so soon, and so easily, turned from the grace of Christ unto another gospel, "which was not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." If any man or angel did this, he was to be accursed.

He had not received his gospel from man, or by man, but from the Lord. False brethren had come in, seeking to bring them again into bondage. Nay, in this very matter he had had to withstand Peter to his face, because he was to be blamed. The gospel was endangered. Then the argument of the apostle is very striking; he says, "We who are Jews by nature"—the very people who wore the blue riband—"and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Thus the very wearers of the riband of blue had given up works of law for justification, that they might be justified by faith of Christ. Surely this exposed the folly of those who would persuade those justified by Christ to mix with Christ the principles of the riband of blue. Nay, the apostle says, if I do so,

I make myself a transgressor. He says, "I am crucified with Christ." Now a crucified person needs no blue riband as a sign that he is keeping the law. The old man who wore the blue riband no longer lives. It is now Christ: "but Christ liveth in me." The life he now lives is not on the old principle at all, but entirely new. "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." This is not on the principle of the old man, the old *I* keeping the law. How can it be, if "*I am crucified*"? A dead man needs no riband of blue. To wear it again would be to frustrate the grace of God. I do not do that, Paul says.

But if I am saved by Christ, may I not adopt the blue, and so seek righteousness before God by keeping the commandments? "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." The foolish Galatians were forgetting that the law (or riband of blue) had not been set before them, but "Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified among you." Yes, it was by what He had done that they had received the Spirit of God. Think of their bodies being the temples of the Holy Ghost, and then so foolish as to seek perfection by works of law for that old man of the riband which had been crucified with Christ. We can only point out a few facts now.

Abraham lived long before the law, and the institution of the riband of blue. He believed God,

and it was counted to him for justification, or righteousness.

As many as are of the works of the law, the sign of which was the riband of blue, are under the curse (see Gal. iii. 10), "for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Christ redeemed those who had been under the law. (Ver. 13.)

The promise to Abraham was confirmed in the Seed, which is Christ, four hundred and thirty years before the law, or the blue riband. The scripture hath concluded all under sin. (Ver. 22.) We are now saved, not by the law, but by redemption. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Chap. iv. 5, 6.)

To return back to the beggarly elements was enough to make the apostle doubt whether they had ever been truly converted. (Chap. iv. 9-11.)

Circumcision was one of the commandments under the institution of the riband of blue. "Behold I, Paul, say unto you, That if ye [the Galatians] be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. . . . Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Thus man has been tried, and found guilty, and, according to the institution of the riband of blue, he cannot be saved. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet

offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James ii.) The whole Epistle to the Galatians is on this subject, as it was there especially that the false teachers sought to introduce the institution of the riband of blue, that is, righteousness by the law, and man in legal bondage to keep it. Let us examine the blessed contrast of the priesthood of Christ and

THE LACE OF BLUE.

We have seen man fully tested under law, as symbolised by the riband of blue, and found him only guilty. We have also seen that to go back to the institution of the riband of blue is to give up grace, and to make the death of Christ of none effect.

We now desire to consider the priesthood of Christ and the lace of blue. "And they shall bind the breastplate by rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with **A LACE OF BLUE**, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart continually. And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue."

Here, in this chapter, all points to Christ, the great High Priest passed into the heavens. The riband of blue shewed what we ought to have been to God, and were not; the lace of blue, what Christ is to us, having first glorified God on the cross.

Whatever excellencies and glories of Christ we see shadowed in the dress of the high priest, let us not forget that gold, the emblem of divine righteousness, has the first place. "Gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine-twined linen." He is all this for us. What Jesus was in the flesh was typified in the materials of the veil—as the royal Sufferer, as the Messiah, as the One in whom the Father delighted; all was perfect. But He was not a priest on earth; He must first suffer; the fine gold must pass through the fire. As our Substitute, He must bear *the judgment* due to us once, and then pass into heaven, our great High Priest. "Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, WHEN HE HAD BY HIMSELF purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

There is another fact of all-importance to Christians expressed in two words—"WE HAVE." "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." We have not to come and pray that He would be our Priest. Whatever tender sympathy, whatever security—all, all we see in our

great High Priest—is ours, whether we know it, or not. (Heb. iii. 1; iv. 14–16; viii. 1; x. 21.)

It is, however, important not only to look at and learn the precious lessons set before us in the dress of the high priest, but also to seek to understand the contrasts between Aaron and Christ.

There were two places on which the names of the children of Israel were set in gold—on the shoulder, and on the heart. (Ex. xxviii. 12, 29.) “Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial.” Thus we see all Israel represented before the Lord on the two shoulders of the high priest. Is not this a striking picture of every child of God placed in security and strength, like the sheep that He laid on His shoulder?

The priesthood of Christ is not to meet us when we sin, but rather to preserve us from sinning, our names being ever on His shoulders, and He having an abiding, unchangeable priesthood. “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost [evermore] that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” What a contrast this is to putting ourselves under law, or taking the pledge, to save ourselves from sin!

But not only were all Israel written, nay, engraved, on the shoulders of Aaron, we must pass on to the *lace of blue* and the breastplate of judgment. The names of all Israel must also be engraved like the engraving of a signet, and placed

on precious stones in that breastplate of judgment on the heart of Aaron. Why did the Lord give such minute instructions as to the materials and the security of the breastplate? What a place gold has in all this! It is like the glad tidings of the revelation of the righteousness of God. What chains of gold and rings of gold! "And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the ephod with a *lace of blue*." Blessed security! fastened on the heart of the high priest with a heavenly tie—the heavenly colour, blue. Thus, whilst the riband of blue reminded Israel of the heavenly, holy claims of God on them*—claims which they never met—the lace of blue points to those who are given by the Father, and ever accepted in the Son. And how secure the fastenings: "that the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod."

What a sight! Look at our great High Priest. Who are they engraved on His tender heart? Let us hear Him tell. He says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which

* It may interest some of our readers to know that "riband of blue" and "lace of blue" are the same in the original. How useless, then, for man to be doing his best. If God declares what He requires from man, it cannot be less than what would suit heaven itself, where all is holy, just, and true—as truly "blue," heavenly—as the lace on the forehead of our great High Priest.

he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

Do you not see the lace of blue in all this? All is of the Father's will. Perhaps you say, How am I to know that the Father hath given me to Christ? Have you come to Him, or are you trusting in your own resolutions? He says, further, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life," &c. Have you by faith seen the Son of God, and believed on Him? Then rest assured you are bound on His heart with the lace of blue. It is the Father's heavenly hand. Again, He says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John vi., x.) Thus have we the answer—ALL that the Father has given to Christ are placed in abiding security on His heart. Rings and chains of gold, and lace of blue—all, all are of God. Now read Romans viii. 29-39. What a chain of pure gold! What rings of everlasting love! Predestinated, called, justified, glorified. Who shall condemn? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Yes, all is the lace of blue; all is of God—from eternity to eternal glory. Engraved like the en-

graving of a signet—bound with a lace of blue in everlasting security, that they be not loosed.

It may, indeed, be asked, How can such lost sinners as we be placed on the heart of Christ, never to be separated from His love? On what ground can this be in righteousness? For an answer to this question, we ask your careful attention to these words: "And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of JUDGMENT upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." (Ex. xxviii. 29.) Still more: "And thou shalt put in the breastplate of JUDGMENT the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before the Lord: And Aaron shall bear the JUDGMENT of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually."

Here, then, is the ground of our security on the heart of Christ. He who bears our names on His heart has first borne the judgment due to us; yea, bore that judgment according to Urim and Thummim. He has met the claims of the light and perfection of God. Other foundation for my soul than this would I have none. Before He sat down in the radiance of the glory of God, He purged our sins. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He was delivered for our iniquities. He made atonement for sins. Christ died for the sins of many. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Yea, if we turn to the epistle, on this

subject, we shall find this pressed more than anything else. The infinite value of that one sacrifice, when He offered Himself as the ground of the immutable security and perfection, as to the conscience, of those sanctified unto God by that one offering.

To return, then, to our chapter, and type of our great High Priest, two things are evidently set forth in that breastplate, bound by the lace of blue. Christ, the Substitute, bearing our judgment, and Christ, our Representative, in whom we are immutably accepted.

In the principle of the riband of blue we see man tested, and proved utterly guilty, under judgment. In the principle of divine righteousness and grace, set forth in the lace of blue, we see the Substitute taking our place, bearing our judgment, both as to sins and sin, so that we can say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" Now mark the order: "It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. viii. 34.) We say, how beautiful the order: first, He died on the cross; He bare our judgment; God has raised Him from among the dead for our justification. So that God is our Justifier! Then, next, He is even at the right hand of God. There we see Him our High Priest: He maketh intercession for us. So that all is removed that unfitted us, and we are

accepted in the Beloved. We now see Him who was our Substitute, bearing the full judgment of God due to us, now our Representative, bearing our names upon His heart in the full light and perfection of God. Bound by a lace of blue, to be unloosed no more—engraved there, to be never effaced. The robe of the ephod ALL of blue. Yes, all this of God. If the riband of blue shews what we ought to have been, and failed; the lace of blue, and the robe ALL of blue, reveals what God has made Christ to be to us. And He never fails.

We can only, in this short paper, dwell on one thing more. “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.”

Who is worthy, we ask—who in His own Person is worthy to wear the blue lace before the eye of God? It is that glorious, peerless Man who sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He whom God has made to be righteousness unto us—He who has established the throne of God in righteousness, yet perfect grace to us. Oh, Holy, Holy, Holy One, Thou alone art HOLINESS TO THE

LORD, Thou alone art worthy to wear the lace of blue. We bow and adore Thee, and cast the riband of blue at Thy feet. Thou hast borne the iniquity of the things of Thy people, and now they are accepted in Thee before the Lord.

What a wondrous picture! all the redeemed people of God accepted, and presented in the holiest, immutably on the heart of Christ, bound there by the lace of blue.

In considering the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, as set before us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, let us bear in mind the remarkable place that gold had in the dress of the high priest. The names of Israel were set in gold on the shoulder, and fastened by rings of gold and the lace of blue to the heart of Aaron. That lace of blue, as we have seen, by its heavenly colour, speaks to us, and says, all is of God. We are given and fastened to the heart of our great High Priest by the loving hand of God.

This epistle is in perfect harmony with these typical thoughts. It is God speaking to His people, not now by His prophets, as in the past, but God speaking in the Son. The glory of His Person introduces and crowns His finished work. The appointed Heir of all things, He, the eternal, self-existent Son, by whom the universe was made. He did not *become*, but, “who *being* the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power,

WHEN he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Could any mere man, or creature, be the self-existent brightness of the glory of God? Could any mere creature be the upholder of all things? He is truly God! "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." And yet as truly perfect man. "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Thus is the Person of our great High Priest set before us. But mark, before He became our High Priest how completely His atoning work was finished; and, as we learn elsewhere, divine righteousness was accomplished! It was "when he had purged our sins." He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." This was in direct contrast with Aaron, or the high priest in Israel. He never had finished his work. He never could offer a sacrifice that purged our sins. He never, therefore, sat down. Scarcely need we say that the law, as symbolised by the riband of blue, knew nothing of this. Man did not keep all the commandments of the Lord, and the law could never purge our sins, but only curse the transgressor. But the lace of blue points to a Priest who has first of all purged our sins by His own blood. "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Having, then, by that one

sacrifice opened the way for us into the holiest, even into heaven itself, and having obtained eternal redemption for us, it is evident we need no other sacrifice. Can anything be superior to eternal redemption? Can anything be additional to that which for ever perfects? Oh, the blasphemy of the man that can pretend to be superior to Christ! —to pretend to offer sacrifices for the living and the dead. We ask you, reader, Have you eternal redemption through the blood of Christ? Then what other sacrifice can you need?

It is most important to be quite clear about this, that the one sacrifice of Christ is the ground of His Priesthood. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." God had no pleasure in those sacrifices which could never take away sins. (Heb. x. 1-9.) It was the blessed will of God that our sins should be so put away, that He in righteousness should remember them as against us no more.

The Lord Jesus came to do that will. He has done it, and the Holy Ghost now bears witness that God will remember our sins no more. This brings us back to the all-important fact that all this was accomplished before He sat down. "But this man, AFTER he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." Mark, He settled the whole question of the believer's sins before He sat down; in this sense, that they never could, or would, be imputed to believers. The Priesthood of Christ begins there.

But then, is not this the very opposite of all human ideas of priesthood? Of course it is. You see that poor woman, or rich one either. She is going to her priest. What is she going to him for? About her sins. She wants him to intercede for her with God—maybe to offer a sacrifice for her sins. She will pay him to do this. She knows nothing of eternal redemption, nothing of a purged conscience. Her sins, her sins, these drive her to the priest. Or she may have seen the dreadful wickedness of a man pretending to be a priest, and to have power, either to offer sacrifices for sins, or to forgive them. And she may try to come to Christ, that He may do something, as the only Priest, to relieve her. Centuries of false teaching as to priesthood have almost obliterated the truth, that the believer is for ever perfected. (Heb. x. 14.) In ignorance of that fact, a person then looks to Christ to be his Priest when he has sinned, and to intercede with God for him; or to let him have a fresh application or sprinkling of blood; or do something to relieve the conscience as to sins. All this is entirely erroneous, and utterly contrary to the fact that all is done, and the worshipper once purged needs nothing more to perfect that one sacrifice by which he is immutably perfected as to the conscience.

Search through this epistle on the priesthood of Christ, and you will be struck with this—it is not priesthood before God *if we sin*. Should that be

the case, He meets us as Advocate with the Father, not as Priest with God. (See 1 John ii.) But even then it is on the ground that He is our righteousness, having made propitiation for our sins. And mark as to that also, it is not if we repent and come to Him, that then, perhaps, He may be our Advocate, if we repent enough, and so merit His intercession. No, He is our Advocate. We have such an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. It is wholly of the Father—the lace of blue. We repent, utterly judge ourselves, because we have such an Advocate.

Peter sinned deeply, did he not? Had he to repent before Jesus prayed for him? Before Peter repented, yes, before he sinned, Jesus said, I HAVE prayed for thee. Yes, whether it be as Advocate with the Father, or as our great High Priest before the face of God, all is of God; it is the heavenly blue, the lace of blue. The Priesthood of Christ, then, is to “succour them that are tempted,” “to help in time of need.”

Let us now by faith look up, and see Jesus, our great High Priest, before the face of God for us. Let us dwell on the tenderness and glory set forth in the dress of the high priest. The gold is there. The righteousness of God is now accomplished. He is our subsisting righteousness. The purple is there. As the altar was to be covered with purple, so was He, the royal Sufferer. Yes, the body prepared was once covered with purple. Scarlet

was there : David's royal Son, now in heavenly glory. Fine-twined linen was there; the ever-righteous One.

Now look a little closer, if only a little child whose sins are forgiven; see your name engraved, and placed on His shoulder, set fast there in righteousness complete. Nay, look again, and never cease to look. Your name engraved, set upon His heart, in the light and perfection of the glory of God. Oh, that lace of blue ! It is God the Father that has tied you fast with the heavenly lace of blue—no more to be separated, no more to be loosed. It is the heart of Him who has borne the judgment due to you ; it is the heart of infinite, unchanging love. Oh, look at the Person of your great High Priest, blessed, only holy One, the plate of pure-gold righteousness before the face of God—holiness to Jehovah. Yes, and—blessed words !—*we have* such a High Priest. Consider our High Priest.

If it be the riband of blue, in our efforts and pledges to keep all the commandments, we have failed, and shall fail to keep them. But it is the lace of blue : Christ, our great High Priest, will never fail to keep us safe to the end. Did He not pass by the angels, and take hold on our nature, that He might be a faithful and merciful High Priest ? that He might first make reconciliation for our sins, and also, having suffered being tempted, He might succour us when tempted ? We have not

to do one thing that He may become our Priest; no, "*we have* a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God." Sometimes we are so tempted, so tried, by the world, and still more by false brethren, that we wonder what will come next. He who watches over and cares for us never so wonders. "All things are naked and open unto his eyes." All is known to Him. He has trod every step of the way. As man He learnt His lesson perfectly. So that, being in that sense made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him. Nothing, present or future, can ever loose us from that breastplate of light and perfection. Nothing can ever unloose those rings of gold and chains of love. Nothing can untie what God has tied, that lace of blue. God gave Him this blessed Priesthood, and God gave us to Him.

Not a temptation can come, not a single need or trial, but He sees it all beforehand; and He is well able to help in time of need. Yes, He is all we need before the face of God, having borne our judgment once. Having once purged our sins, He is all we need in passing through this wilderness to succour and sustain. And *we have* such an High Priest whose priesthood is unchangeable. "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Thus the riband of blue is a symbol of that which saves

never. The lace of blue shews us fastened to Him who saves to the uttermost, even for ever.

Have you seen the dignity of our great High Priest, the Son of God? Then, also, have you seen the wondrous dignity of those placed, through the riches of His grace, on the very heart of this great High Priest? Think of these words: "For such an high priest BECAME US, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." How we have forgotten our heavenly calling! What has God purposed us to be? Or what the height of His eternal purpose, for such an High Priest to become us? Yes, through infinite grace, we too are to be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and finally with Him, for whom we wait, made higher than the heavens. (Eph. i.) Who but our great High Priest could thus save us to the end?

How much still remains to be unfolded of the priesthood of Christ in this epistle! However, this is the sum: "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;" and therefore we need no other. Such a High Priest excludes all others. If we believe His one sacrifice has put away all our sins from the sight of God, then such a sacrifice excludes all others. In like manner such a High Priest excludes all need of another.

The priesthood of Israel made nothing perfect with its oft-repeated sacrifices and its annual day

of atonement. These sacrifices could never take away sins. Man was still shut out of the holiest. The institution of the riband of blue made nothing perfect, for no one kept all the commandments of the Lord, to do them. All were guilty. What a contrast in Christ, our great High Priest! By His own blood He has entered in, having obtained eternal redemption for us. The veil is now rent from top to bottom. He ever bears our names upon His heart. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He ever appears in the presence of God for us. He is ever set down in perfect repose. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Now, if we believe this testimony of the Holy Ghost, we repeat, what need have we of the hosts of pretending, usurping priests?

If God thus spake by Moses, when men sought to usurp the priesthood of Aaron: "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men," what is the wickedness of those now in His sight who dare to usurp the priesthood of Christ, and deny the eternal efficacy of His one sacrifice, by offering false sacrifices of their own? May God, by the Holy Spirit, keep our hearts true to Christ, and deliver His people from every form of deception in these last days. C. S.



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