

## PATRISTIC TEACHING ON THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE FAITHFUL

The priesthood of the faithful is a question which has received a new emphasis in recent decades. It is well known that because of the Catholic reaction to the errors of the Reformers the idea of a priesthood of the faithful was pushed into the background for centuries. The reawakened interest in this question manifests itself in various ways. Firstly, the doctrine has been taught by the Church's teaching authority. It is true that the *magisterium* has not issued any definitive pronouncement on the many problems which arise in connection with this doctrine. However, the teaching authority of the Church has taught that the faithful have a share in the priesthood of Christ and it has condemned a theory which confuses this priesthood of all Christians with the priesthood of Holy Orders.<sup>1</sup> Theologians, too, have been drawing this doctrine from the obscurity in which it has been shrouded for so long. It is true that they have not as yet arrived at a completely stabilized theology on the matter. Nevertheless, it is easy to trace a steady evolution in the teaching of theologians on the matter throughout the last thirty years — an evolution from an attitude of cautiousness to a general acceptance of the priesthood of the faithful as a reality, as something which cannot be defined in terms of the priesthood of Holy Orders but which is analogous to it, and as something which is exercised by offering the sacrifice of a holy life and by participating in the offering of the Mass.<sup>2</sup>

The present article aims at discovering to what extent the Fathers of the Church had developed a doctrine of a priesthood of all Christians, what was their teaching on the nature, origin and function of that priesthood. Any examination of the teaching of the Fathers on this must recognize the fact that the doctrine of a priesthood of the faithful is fundamentally a scriptural doctrine

<sup>1</sup> Pius XI, *Ubi Arcano*, A.A.S. XIV (1922), p. 695; *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, A.A.S. XX (1928), pp. 171-172. Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, A.A.S. XXXV (1943), pp. 232-233; *Mediator Dei*, A.A.S. XXXIX (1947), pp. 552 ff.; *Magnificate Dominum*, A.A.S. XLVI (1954), p. 669; E.-J. De Smedt, *Le Sacerdoce des Fidèles*, Lettre Pastorale adressée aux prêtres, religieux et apôtres laïcs du diocèse de Bruges, Bruges, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> Among modern studies of the doctrine M. Congar, *Lay People in the Church* (Eng. trans.), London, 1957; P. Dabin, *Le Sacerdoce Royal des Fidèles dans les Livres Saints*, Paris, 1941; Id., *Le Sacerdoce Royal des Fidèles dans la Tradition ancienne et moderne*, Bruxelles, 1950.

which Christian writers have reproduced and amplified. The most complete teaching on the priesthood of the faithful in Scripture is found in St. Peter's first epistle, which most modern commentators agree is a baptismal liturgy and a catechesis for the newly baptized.<sup>1</sup> Reproducing the thought and language used in *Exodus* in reference to the Jews,<sup>2</sup> St. Peter reminds his readers of the dignity and obligations that result from their baptism. One effect of their baptism is that Christians, by reason of their union with Christ, form a supernatural society, which St. Peter chooses to describe in terms of a spiritual temple. Christians are told to come to Christ, who is the living stone rejected by men but chosen and honoured by God, and they will then be living stones and will form a spiritual house. These newly-baptized are a "holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ". Again he says: "You are a chosen race, a βασιλειον ιεράτευμα, a holy nation, a purchased people: that you may declare his virtues who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light".<sup>3</sup> St. John in his *Apocalypse* teaches the doctrine of the priesthood of all Christians as explicitly, if not as fully, as St. Peter.<sup>4</sup>

Although St. Paul nowhere speaks of a priesthood of all Christians, one aspect of his teaching on Christians comes very close to that of St. Peter on the priesthood of the faithful. For St. Paul Christians are the continuation of Israel as God's chosen people.<sup>5</sup> As the continuation of Israel the Christian people naturally become the heirs of the privileges of the Jews. One of the prerogatives of the Jewish people was the fact that they were dedicated to the true worship of God. Their Temple at Jerusalem was *the* place of public worship. In the new dispensation the ancient material worship of Israel has been replaced by the new Christian spiritual worship. The Temple of the old Jerusalem has ended but, in its place, St. Paul turns his mind to a new spiritual temple. In St. Paul's

<sup>1</sup> For two different lines of argument that the first Epistle of St. Peter is a baptismal liturgy and a catechesis for the newly baptized see F. L. Cross, *I Peter: A Baptismal Liturgy*, London, 1954, pp. 28-35; M. S. Boismard, "Une Liturgie Baptismale dans la Prima Petri", *Revue Biblique*, LXIII (1956), pp. 182-208; LXIV (1957), pp. 161-183.

<sup>2</sup> *Exodus* 19:5-6. See also *Isaías* 61:6.

<sup>3</sup> *I Peter* 2:4-5, 9. M. E. Boismard argues that the passage 1:22-2:10 is a homily which followed the administration of baptism. *Revue Biblique*, LXIV (1957), p. 182. For a fuller study of the teaching of St. Peter in this context see E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 2nd ed., London, 1947; P. de Ambroggi, "Il Sacerdozio dei Fedeli secondo la Prima di Pietro", *La Scuola Cattolica*, LXXV (1947), pp. 52-57; A. Piolanti, "Il Sacerdozio dei Fedeli", *Euntes Docete*, VI (1953), pp. 166-168; P. Dabin, *Le Sacerdoce Royal des Fidèles dans les Livres Saints*, Paris, 1941, pp. 179-197.

<sup>4</sup> *Apocalypse* 1:5, 5:9-10, 20:4-10.

<sup>5</sup> *Romans* 9-11.

mind, it is the Christians themselves who constitute this spiritual temple.<sup>1</sup> Paul, too, exhorts Christians to offer to God the sacrifice of their bodies — a sacrifice that will be living, holy, pleasing to God.<sup>2</sup> He wishes that he himself should be made a victim of the sacrifice and worship which the Philippians offer to God. This sacrifice and worship is their faith.<sup>3</sup>

The *Epistle to the Hebrews* depicts the life of God's chosen people as a liturgical procession to the heavenly sanctuary (4:16), where they will worship God (12:28). To take part in this procession one must be docile to the word of God and His promises. To carry out this liturgical worship one must be united to the great High Priest (7:25; 10:20). This procession to the heavenly sanctuary is, at every stage, liturgical and sacred because it is conducted by a High Priest, because only people who are sanctified take part in it (2:11) and because it penetrates from outside the veil into the Holy of Holies.<sup>4</sup> In this perspective of a procession towards the heavenly sanctuary the author urges Christians to offer continuously to God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which one gives to God for His benefits and mercies. Unlike the repeated sacrifices of the Old Law, Christians offer a continuous sacrifice. The sacrifice of praise is not the only element of the worship which Christians offer to God, good works too form part of the worship which pleases God.<sup>5</sup>

It is on this teaching of the New Testament that the patristic teaching on the priesthood of the faithful is based. We will deal with the patristic teaching on the nature of the priesthood of the faithful, on the priestly anointing of Christians and finally on the manner in which Christians exercise this priesthood.

## THE NATURE OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE FAITHFUL

### *Eastern Teaching*

The fact of a general priesthood of Christians was expressly taught as early as the second century. Writers of the apostolic and post-apostolic ages teach that Christians are a people set apart

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. 3:16-17; *Ephesians* 2:19-22. For an analysis of this aspect of St. Paul's teaching see M. Fraeyman, "La Spiritualisation de l'Idée du Temple dans les Epîtres Pauliniennes", *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, XXIII (1947), pp. 378-418. See also L. Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul* (Eng. trans.), London, 1959, pp. 146-149.

<sup>2</sup> *Rom.* 12:1.

<sup>3</sup> *Phil.* 2:17.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux I*, Paris, 1952, pp. 280-283.

<sup>5</sup> *Hebrews* 13:14-16. Cf. C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux II*, Paris, 1954, pp. 429-430.

by God<sup>1</sup> and that they have an active part in the public worship of the Church.<sup>2</sup> After the Scriptures, St. Justin Martyr is the first Christian writer who explicitly describes Christians as a priestly race. Justin concludes that Christians are a high-priestly race from the fact that they have an active part in the Church's public worship. God said that the Gentiles everywhere would offer pure and acceptable sacrifices to Him. But God accepts only those sacrifices which are offered through His Priests. Therefore, those who have believed in God and have cast off their sins and have been set on fire by the divine call, are a high-priestly race.<sup>3</sup> It is rather interesting, not to say surprising, that when tradition first predicates a priesthood of all Christians, it should base this teaching not on the words of St. Peter or St. John but on the eucharistic prophecy of Malachy. Justin teaches too that this priesthood of all Christians is exercised by offering sacrifices that are pure and acceptable to God. These sacrifices have been foretold by Malachy and are prescribed by Christ and are offered at the eucharistic sacrifice.<sup>4</sup> Christians therefore exercise their priesthood by integrating their own prayers and dispositions with the Victim of the Mass.<sup>5</sup> The very trend of Justin's argument makes it clear that, whether he had any definite ideas on the nature of priesthood or not, he regarded the priestly dignity of the baptized as a reality. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that Justin finds this priesthood of Christians typified, not in the universal priesthood attributed to Jews in *Exodus* and *Isaias*, but in an individual high priest of the Old Law — Jesus, the son of Josedec.<sup>6</sup>

A different approach to the doctrine of a priesthood of all Christians is found in the works of the earliest Alexandrian writers, Clement and Origen. They base their teaching on that of St. Peter.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clement of Rome, *Epistola I ad Corinthios*, 58, PG 1, 328.

<sup>2</sup> Clement, op. cit., PG 1, 300; *Didache* 14; Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, 7, PG 5, 658.

<sup>3</sup> *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, 116, PG 6, 745.

<sup>4</sup> *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, 116-117, PG 6, 745; Cf. *Malachy* 1:10-12.

<sup>5</sup> This is clear from his teaching that prayers and thanksgivings made by those who are worthy are the only sacrifices which are perfect and acceptable to God and it is these that Christians make in the solid and liquid food in which Christ's Passion is remembered. The solid and liquid food in which Christ's Passion is remembered is the Mass.

<sup>6</sup> *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, 116, PG 6, 745.

<sup>7</sup> Clement, *Fragmenta, Adumbrationes in Priorem D. Petri Epistolam*, PG 9, 70; *Cohortatio ad Gentes* 4, PG 8, 160. Origen, *In Leviticum Homilia* IV, 6; VI, 2; IX, 1, 9; PG 12, 440, 467, 508-509, 521-522; *In Numeros Homilia* V, 3, PG 12, 601-602; *In Librum Jesu Nave Homilia*, I, 5, VII, 2, PG 12, 830, 853. Cf. *Contra Celsum*, VIII, 74, PG 1. 1629.

Clement teaches that Christians are chosen (ἐκλεκτοί). He believes, however, that some are chosen in a more special way than others and those more favoured ones will be admitted to priestly power as they advance in glory.<sup>1</sup> Likewise Origen teaches that Christians are consecrated to God.<sup>2</sup> He teaches also, in language which echoes that of St. Peter, that they are a people chosen to proclaim His virtues.<sup>3</sup> Christians are a kingly race<sup>4</sup> and are the living stones from which God's temple on earth is built.<sup>5</sup> Both Clement and Origen interpret the priesthood of the faithful as a consecration of Christians to God. Contrasting them with pagans Clement says that Christians are consecrated to God on behalf of Christ. Elaborating on this statement he applies the statement of St. Peter to Christians and, in language borrowed from St. John, says that Christians no longer belong to the earth but learn all things from God.<sup>6</sup> Origen expresses a similar idea when he says that a priest is a mind consecrated to God.<sup>7</sup>

Like Justin, Origen sees the common priesthood of Christians typified, not in the universal priesthood attributed to all Israelites in *Exodus* and *Isaias*, but in the priesthood of Aaron. Just as God chose the family of Aaron from amongst all Israelites and entrusted it with the priesthood of the Old Law, so from amongst all men He has chosen those who believe in Christ and has made them also a priestly race.<sup>8</sup> Origen contrasts the Temple, in which special apartments were reserved for the high priest and priests and into which the people could not enter, with the Christian Temple, into which all Christians alike can enter. He explains the contrast by pointing out that the part of the Jewish Temple which was reserved for the priests was a figure of the Christian Temple in which all would be priests, as St. Peter had proclaimed.<sup>9</sup>

The similarity which Origen sees between the Aaronic priesthood and the common priesthood of the faithful in the New Law leads him to reach a conclusion which is unique in patristic literature. It is that the priesthood of the Christian faithful is a priesthood of

<sup>1</sup> *Stromata* VI, PG 9, 328-329.

<sup>2</sup> *Contra Celsum* VIII, 36, PG 11, 1572.

<sup>3</sup> *In Genesim Homilia* III, 5, PG 12, 179-180.

<sup>4</sup> Clement, *Stromata*, VI, 2, PG 11, 501.

<sup>5</sup> Clement, *Fragmenta*, PG 9, 768-769. Origen, *In Librum Jesu Nave Homilia* IX, 1, PG 12, 871; *Comment in Joan.* X, 23, PG 14, 381.

<sup>6</sup> *Cohortatio ad Gentes*, IV, PG 8, 160.

<sup>7</sup> *In Leviticum Homilia* XVI, 3, PG 12, 561. Cf. Irenaeus's idea that all just men have a priestly dignity—*Contra Haereses* IV, 8, PG 7, 995.

<sup>8</sup> *In Leviticum Homilia* XIII, 5, PG 12, 550.

<sup>9</sup> *In Leviticum Homilia* IX, 9 PG 12, 521.

a different order from that of Christ. Christ is a priest according to the order of Melchisedech, whereas Christians are priests, not according to the order of Melchisedech, but according to that of Aaron.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this contrast seems to be to emphasize the essential inferiority of the common priesthood of Christians to the eternal Melchisedechian priesthood of Christ. Despite this contrast, Origen sees a relation of dependence between the priesthood of the faithful and that of Christ. Christians offer their prayers and sacrifices to the Father through Christ, the great High Priest, who is a mediator between God and every creature, who offered Himself a victim for the world's sin and who was anointed with the unguent of joy.<sup>2</sup> Beyond this relation of dependence Origen sees nothing common in Christ's priesthood and that of the faithful.

The teaching of Clement and Origen has been developed and, in some of its aspects, made more definite and complete by later Greek writers. Christians are said to be the community of God, the people of Christ, the flock of Christ, members of the house of the Church of God, chosen and collected by God. In Petrine language such a community is said to form a holy people and a kingly priesthood.<sup>3</sup> That the priesthood of the Christian faithful is the antitype of the Aaronic priesthood is emphasized by subsequent Greek writers just as it had been by Origen. The Aaronic priest is the type of all future priests, of those who are sanctified and of all who are anointed with the Holy Ghost. He is the type of Christians, all of whom possess the priesthood attributed to them by St. Peter.<sup>4</sup> Indeed the priesthood of the Christian faithful is the perfection of the Aaronic priesthood. In the Old Law this priesthood was a hidden figure but Christ has removed the veil and has brought the figure into the open and has given the priesthood to all.<sup>5</sup> In a further refinement of this typology some writers teach that Aaron himself prefigures Christ, the great High Priest, whereas his descen-

<sup>1</sup> *Comment in Joan. I*, PG 14, 25. Cf. *In Leviticum Homilia*, XIII, 5, PG 12, 550.

<sup>2</sup> *Libellus de Oratione* XV, PG 11, 468; *Contra Celsum* III, 34, VII, 13, VIII, 36, PG 11, 964, 1536, 1572; *In Leviticum Homilia* IV, 6; V, 3, 12; PG 12, 441, 451, 468-469, 537; *In Canticum Canticorum* I, PG 13, 91.

<sup>3</sup> Theodoret in J. A. Cramer, *Catena in Epistolas Catholicas*, Oxford, 1890, p. 51. *Ex Apostolorum Synodo Antiochiae* in F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* II, Paderborn, 1905, p. 144. *S. Artemii Passio* (written c. 700) 3, PG 96, 1253.

<sup>4</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyrorum in Numeros Liber*, PG 69, 629. Procopius, *Commentarii in Numeros*, XIX, 2, PG 87, 847. In a work doubtfully attributed to St. Athanasius, *Homilia de Semante* 13, PG 28, 161, it is pointed out that, while the Jewish people were forbidden to work on the Sabbath, the priests were not. Consequently, argues the author, it is also permissible for Christians to work on the Sabbath since they too are a kingly priesthood.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *De Oratione Dominica*, III, PG 44, 1148-1149.



dants in the priesthood prefigure the priestly race of Christians.<sup>1</sup> Although Greek writers see the priesthood of the Christian faithful as the antitype of the Aaronic priesthood, a few writers point out that the priesthood which God promised to the chosen people on Mount Sinai, is now given to Christians. On Mount Sinai God promised that He would make His chosen people a kingdom of priests. The Jews, however, through their disobedience and hardness of heart rejected this promise. Consequently, God turned to the Gentiles and, since they accepted the Son of God through faith, they themselves have received the power to become sons of God. In fact, the Son of God gave them the power to become what was natural for Himself only. For that reason St. Peter says that they are a priesthood.<sup>2</sup>

The teaching that it is rather the descendants of Aaron who prefigure the priesthood of all Christians, whereas Aaron himself prefigures Christ, suggests that just as Aaron's sons were priests because of their descent from Aaron so Christians are priests by reason of their connection with Christ. Indeed, it is clearly taught that it is because of their relationship to Christ through baptism that St. Peter could attribute a priesthood to Christians.<sup>3</sup> That the priesthood of Christians depends essentially on their incorporation in Christ is a common idea in Greek teaching. Christians share in a priestly manner in the name of Christ.<sup>4</sup> The priestly anointing of Christ with the Holy Ghost flows from Christ, the Head, on to the Church.<sup>5</sup> In Christ priesthood and kingship are united and He has chosen a priestly and kingly race. Since He is the source of priesthood and kingship Christians must necessarily derive their priesthood from Him.<sup>6</sup> Christ is the foundation stone on which Christians, as living stones, are built into a spiritual structure. This spiritual structure is a holy priesthood, the dwelling place of God and His Spirit. Christians could not be built into such a structure if Christ were not the foundation.<sup>7</sup> Here we have a fusion

<sup>1</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyrorum in Exodum*, III, PG 69, 616. Hesychius of Jerusalem, *In Leviticum*, IV, 22, PG 93, 1068.

<sup>2</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannis Evangelium*, I, PG 73, 153. Procopius, *Commentarii in Exodum*, XVIII, PG 87, 601. Both those writers also teach that the Aaronic priesthood prefigures the priesthood of all Christians.

<sup>3</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyrorum in Exodum*, III, PG 69, 616. Hesychius, *In Leviticum*, IV, 22, PG 93, 1068.

<sup>4</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XVIII, 23, PG 35, 1056.

<sup>5</sup> Athanasius, *Expositio in Psalmum CXXXII*, I, PG 27, 524. Didymus, *De Trinitate* II, PG 39, 557.

<sup>6</sup> Pseudo-Didymus, *Enarratio in Epistolam I Petri*, II, PG 39, 1763. Severus of Antioch in J. A. Cramer, *Catena in Epistolas Catholicas*, t. VIII, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannis Evangelium*, X, PG 74, 333.

of the Petrine and Pauline concepts of Christians as a spiritual priesthood and as the spiritual temple which replaces the Temple of the Jewish dispensation. This visualizing of the community of Christians as a single spiritual structure, this linking of their priesthood with their incorporation in Christ leads logically to another common aspect of Greek theology on the priesthood of the faithful. It is that the whole Mystical Body itself is a single collective priesthood.<sup>1</sup> Greek tradition, however, would also maintain that each individual Christian possesses a priestly dignity himself. This follows from the teaching of Greek writers that this priesthood is conferred in baptism or confirmation<sup>2</sup> and that each Christian exercises it by immolating himself.<sup>3</sup>

It is evident therefore that, from a very early date, eastern tradition teaches that there is a priesthood of the faithful. This is the priesthood which has been proclaimed by St. Peter. It is the antitype of the priesthood of the family of Aaron and is essentially connected with the Christian's incorporation in Christ and his membership of the Mystical Body. Valuable as it is, this is not the most explicit and most developed patristic teaching on the priesthood of the Christian faithful. For that we must turn to the writers of the West.

### *Western Teaching*

The earliest western teaching on a priesthood of the laity comes from Tertullian. Tertullian's teaching on this matter is unique among early writers. As he changed from an orthodox though vigorous Catholic to a heterodox and puritanical Montanist, his teaching on the priesthood of the faithful changed too so as to conform with his new ecclesiology. In his Catholic days Tertullian taught that there is a priesthood of the laity. Christians, he says,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Athanasius (?), *Homilia de Semante*, 13, PG 28, 161. *Ex Apostolorum Synodo Antiochiae* in F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, II, p. 144. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannis Evangelium*, I, PG 75, 153. Theodoret in J. A. Cramer, *Catena in Epistolas Catholicas*, p. 51. Procopius, *Commentar. in Exodum*, 18, PG 87, 601. S. Artemii Passio, 3, PG 96, 1253. John Damascene, *Homilia in Sabbatum Sanctum*, 36, PG 96, 640.

<sup>2</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Epist. II ad Cor. Homilia III*, 7, PG 61, 417-418. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyrorum in Genesim*, IV, PG 59, 196. *In Joannis Evangelium*, X, PG 74, 333. Hesychius, *In Leviticum*, II, 10, VI, 22, PG 93, 898, 1068, 1070. Further evidence will be adduced later when we deal with the priestly anointing of Christians.

<sup>3</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Epist. II ad Cor. Homilia III*, PG 61, 417-418, 441, *Opus Imperfectum in Matthaum*, Homilia, XLIII, PG 56, 876. (It is at least doubtful if this work belongs to Chrysostom; it is difficult even to establish that it is of eastern origin). Isidore of Pelusium, *Epistola ad Theodosium*, PG 78, 784.



are true adorers and true priests.<sup>1</sup> The baptismal anointing enabled him to make the common comparison of the simple Christian with the priest of the family of Aaron.<sup>2</sup> This priesthood of the laity is associated with prayer and a virtuous Christian life and is also related to the Church's liturgy.<sup>3</sup> Like Origen, Tertullian says that Christ is the priest through whom Christians exercise their priesthood.<sup>4</sup> This priesthood of the laity is essentially distinct from, and inferior to, the divinely instituted hierarchical priesthood, which has definite authority and definite powers.<sup>5</sup> The sacred functions which belong to priests may not be carried out by the laity. Disregard for this fundamental distinction between priests and laymen was one element of the conduct of heretics which was severely censured by Tertullian.<sup>6</sup>

As a Montanist, Tertullian arrived at a concept of a Church whose members are all saints, directly inspired by the Holy Ghost and free from the stranglehold of a hierarchical organisation. This naturally led him to dismiss the idea of a hierarchical priesthood with powers that are superior to those possessed by the rest of the faithful and to attribute to the faithful the powers which belong to ordained ministers. All the saints of the Montanist Church are priests and they all possess the same priesthood without any distinction. The distinction between the clergy and the laity is of ecclesiastical institution only.<sup>7</sup> Happily these aberrations of Tertullian did not influence any other writer on the priesthood of the faithful throughout the patristic era.

The teaching of Latin writers on the priesthood of the faithful is, in its broad outlines, parallel to that of the easterns. Two facts emphasize its superiority to that of the east. The first is the prominence which this doctrine holds in western tradition from the earliest centuries. The second is the fuller understanding on the part of western writers of this dignity of Christians. This deeper penetration into the nature of the priesthood of the laity enables them

<sup>1</sup> *De Oratione*, 28, CSEL 20 (1), pp. 198-199.

<sup>2</sup> *De Baptismo* 7, CSEL 20 (1), pp. 206-207.

<sup>3</sup> *De Oratione* 28, CSEL 20 (1), pp. 198-199.

<sup>4</sup> *Adversus Iudaeos* 6-7, CSEL 70 (2), pp. 266-271.

<sup>5</sup> *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, 20-21, 32-36, CSEL 70 (2), pp. 23-25, 39-47; *De Baptismo*, 17, CSEL 20 (1), p. 214. For a rather comprehensive study of Tertullian's Catholic teaching on the powers conferred by the sacrament of Holy Orders and on the distinction between the laity and those in Holy Orders see G. Zannoni, "Il Sacramento dell' Ordine in Tertulliano", *Euntes Docete* X (1957), pp. 185-210.

<sup>6</sup> *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 41, CSEL 70 (2), p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, 7, CSEL 70 (2), pp. 138 and *De Monogamia*, 7, 12, PL 2, 847, 938.

to make more explicit some aspects of the doctrine which are latent in the teaching of Greek writers but to which these Greek writers themselves did not advert. Furthermore, it enables us to get a clearer idea of the essence of this priesthood and of how there really can be such a priesthood at all.

Western writers, like those of the east, base their teaching on the New Testament. The words of St. Peter and St. John are frequently quoted as evidence of the priesthood of Christians.<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of a priesthood of the faithful is not merely taught by ecclesiastical writers of the western Church, but is also contained very expressly in her liturgy.<sup>2</sup> Latin writers, no less than Greek, see the priesthood of the faithful foreshadowed in the Old Testament. They visualize certain statements and events in the Old Testament as looking forward to the priesthood of the Christian faithful. Abraham's priesthood is looked on as foreshadowing the kingly priesthood of the Church.<sup>3</sup> The action of the harlot, Rahab, who covered two Israelite spies with flax,<sup>4</sup> is applied to the Christian people because flax is regarded as a priestly garment and St. Peter has said that Christians are a kingly priesthood.<sup>5</sup> David's anointing is looked on as a figure of the kingly priesthood of the Church.<sup>6</sup> These individual comparisons with Old Testament events do not mean that God or the sacred writer intended them as a figure of a priesthood of the faithful. What they show is that the writers who attribute such a typological character to these events in Old Testament history see a similarity between type and antitype.

Like their counterparts in the east, the writers of the west find

<sup>1</sup> To refer only to passages which affirm a priesthood of the laity or quote the words of Scripture without further elaboration on the nature and qualities of this priesthood. St. Peter: Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmum LXXVII*, 42, PL 36, 1006; *Enarratio in Psalmum CXVIII*, Sermo XX, 1, PL 37, 1557; *Contra Faustum*, XXII, 89, CSEL 25, p. 694. Marius Mercator, *Liber Subnotationum in Verba Juliani*, VIII, 19, PL 48, 156. Leo the Great, *Sermo XXIV*, 6, PL 54, 207. Justinian of Valencia, *Liber de Cognitione Baptismi*, 28, PL 96, 124. Gregory the Great, *Super Cantica Cantorum Expositio*, 6, PL 79, 528. The *Apocalypse*: Fulgentius, *De Veritate Praedestinationis*, III, 13, PL 65, 662. Caesar of Arles, *In B. Joannis Apocalypsim Expositio*, PL 35, 2448. Primasius, *Commentar. in Lib. Apocalyp.*, II, 5, PL 68, 833.

<sup>2</sup> H. A. Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, Oxford, 1894, pp. 93, 109. H. M. Bannister, *Missale Gothicum, A Gallican Sacramentary*, London, 1917, Missa Paschalis, Tercia Feria, p. 84. *Missale Mixtum* I, PL 85, 480. *Breviarium Gothicum: In Laet. Diei Pasch. Resurr.* PL 86, 637; *In Ramis*, PL 86, 564.

<sup>3</sup> Pseudo-Prosper of Aquitaine, *Liber de Promissionibus et Praedicationibus Dei*, I, 12, PL 51, 743.

<sup>4</sup> *Josue* 2:6.

<sup>5</sup> Caesar of Arles, *Sermo CXVI*, 3, ed. G. Morin, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, CIII, par. 2, ed. 2 Turnholt, 1953, p. 484.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *Sermo CCCLII*, 5, XII, PL 39, 154.

the most expressive figure of the priesthood of the faithful in the Aaronic priesthood.<sup>1</sup> Christians are compared with the priestly rod of Aaron. Just as Aaron's rod blossomed in the inner sanctuary of the Temple so Christians are said to blossom at baptism. The reason for this comparison is that Christians too are a priestly people, as St. Peter has said, because they are anointed into a priesthood.<sup>2</sup> Especially the rite of anointing by which the Aaronic priest was established in his office is a type of the Christian's inauguration into the kingly priesthood of the Church.<sup>3</sup> In explaining the nature of the relationship between the Aaronic priesthood and that of Christians these writers point out that the priesthood of Aaron and his descendants is one numerical priesthood, which prefigures immediately and directly the unique priesthood of Christ and mediately and indirectly the priesthood of those who share in Christ's priesthood. The kings and priests of the Old Testament were figures of Christ, who was both King and Priest. The anointing of the priest in the old economy was a figure of the priestly anointing of Christ and that priestly anointing of Christ is shared in some way by all Christians.<sup>4</sup> The Aaronic priesthood is but an imperfect figure of the priesthood of the faithful in the New Testament. It is imperfect in its extent. The type was restricted to the members of a single tribe; the antitype is verified of all Christians because all share in Christ's priesthood.<sup>5</sup> The priesthood of Aaron is imperfect too in that it was but a temporary institution which lasted for a few years. The priesthood of the faithful, once it is conferred, can never end.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, the Aaronic priesthood is essentially a carnal priesthood in that it was concerned with the offering of carnal sacrifices. Christians, on the other hand, have a priesthood that is spiritual because it offers to God a worship in spirit and in truth.<sup>7</sup>

The most valuable contribution made by western patristic tradition to the theology of the priesthood of the faithful is its

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Augustine, *Quaestionum Evangeliorum*, II, 40, PL 35, 274-275.

<sup>2</sup> Ambrose, *De Sacramentis*, IV, 1, PL 16, 436-437.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *Quaestionum Evangeliorum*, II, 40, PL 35, 1355.

<sup>4</sup> Augustine, loc. cit., *Enarratio in Psalmum XVI, Sermo* II, 2, PL 36, 199-200, *Fragmenta Sermonum*, PL 39, 1734-1735. Justinian of Valencia, *Liber de Cognitione Baptismi*, 122-123, PL 96, 162. Isidore of Seville, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, II, 26, PL 83, 823-824.

<sup>5</sup> Pseudo-Ambrose, *Commentaria in Epistolam ad Ephesios*, 4, PL 17, 388-389.

<sup>6</sup> Pseudo-Augustine (Italian bishop of 6th century), *De Unctione Capitis et de Pedibus Lavandis*, PL 40, 1211. Pseudo-Maximus of Turin (anonymous Italian bishop, c. 550), *Tractatus III de Baptismo*, PL 57, 777-779.

<sup>7</sup> Ambrose, *De Sacramentis*, IV, I, PL 16, 436-437. Fulgentius, *Contra Fabianum Fragmenta*, 16, PL 65, 769.

teaching on the relationship between the priesthood of the faithful and that of Christ. The first great exponent of this aspect of the theology of a lay priesthood was St. Augustine. For Augustine the priesthood of the faithful is an extension of the priesthood of Christ and is identical with membership of the Mystical Body. The Church is the Body of Christ; its members are all members of Christ, the Priest. For that reason St. Peter applies a priestly title to the Church and speaks of Christ's priesthood as communicated to the Church and as shared in by all the members; and so the members of the Church are all priests.<sup>1</sup> Christ's priestly anointing extends to the whole Mystical Body. Augustine applies to Christ and his Church the psalmist's statement that the unction flowed from Aaron's head on to his beard and on to the fringe of his garment.<sup>2</sup> The unction in question is Christ's priestly and kingly unction, which flows from Christ, the Head, on to His priestly garment, the Church. Because of the unity of texture which exists in this garment the unction which reaches its fringe confers a priestly dignity on the entire robe. All the members of Christ's Body are anointed whereas in the Old Testament only kings and priests were anointed. This universal sharing in Christ's anointing shows that Christians are the Body of Christ. This anointing which flows from the Head on to the garment is symbolized by the post-baptismal chrismation, which is a sacred sign just as baptism is.<sup>3</sup> Just as the priesthood of the Old Testament and its anointing was a figure of the priesthood of Christ so too was it a figure of the priesthood of the Mystical Body.<sup>4</sup> From all this it is clear that for Augustine there is but one priesthood — that of Christ. This priesthood extends to the "whole Christ" and it is only because Christians are members of Christ that they share in this priesthood. In this way Augustine emphasizes the essential unity which exists in the priesthood of the members of the Mystical Body. In fact, he speaks of the Church itself as a priesthood.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fragmenta Sermonum*, PL 39, 1735; *Quaestionum Evangeliorum*, II, 40, PL 35, 1355; *De Civitate Dei*, XX, 10, CSEL 40 (2), p. 455; *Enarratio in Psalmum XVI*, Sermo II, 2, PL 36, 199-200; *Enarratio in Psalmum LI*, 3, PL 36, 601.

<sup>2</sup> *Psalms* 132:2.

<sup>3</sup> *Enarratio in Psalmum XVI*, Sermo II, 2, PL 36, 199-200; *Enarratio in Psalmum CXXXII*, 7, PL 37, 1733; *Contra Litteras Petilianas*, II, 104, CSEL 52, pp. 152-154.

<sup>4</sup> *Quaestionum Evangeliorum*, II, 40, PL 35, 1355; *Fragmenta Sermonum*, PL 39, 1734-1735.

<sup>5</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, XVII, 5, CSEL 40 (2), p. 225; Cf. *Fragmenta Sermonum*, PL 39, 1734. This, however, does not mean that Augustine would not apply the concrete term "priests" to the individual members of the Mystical Body. *De Civitate Dei*, XX, 10, CSEL 40 (2), p. 445.

Although in one context Augustine teaches that all the saints from Abel to the end of the world constitute a single body of which Christ is the Head,<sup>1</sup> his teaching on the priesthood of the faithful visualizes a priesthood of the Christian faithful only. Several aspects of his doctrine of the priesthood of the faithful make that clear. This priesthood has been typified by the Aaronic priesthood and the anointing which accompanied it, both of which ceased when the antitype came into existence. This priesthood, prefigured in the Old Testament, is explicitly said to exist in the Church and to be something which, in relation to the Old Testament, is future in time. It will come into existence after Christ's Resurrection. It exists now. The unction which constitutes all Christ's members priests extends to all Christians in the new dispensation whereas in the old only the ministerial priests and kings were anointed. It was of the Christian people that St. Peter predicated the title *king by priesthood*.<sup>2</sup>

Augustine must be given credit for placing the priesthood of the faithful in its proper relationship to the priesthood of Christ. However, we also find the essence of this teaching in less clear terms in the works of two of Augustine's contemporaries. Ambrose spoke of the anointing which followed baptism as reminiscent of the unction which flowed on to the beard of Aaron and as symbolical of a spiritual unction by which all are anointed into the kingship and priesthood of God.<sup>3</sup> Jerome points out that Christ's priesthood has no end but He has donated it to Christians that they might become a kingly and priestly race.<sup>4</sup>

Latin theology in the succeeding centuries continues the twofold teaching of Augustine that Christians share in Christ's priesthood and that this is an effect of their incorporation in the Mystical Body. The Church is the Body of Christ, the great High Priest.<sup>5</sup> All the members of the Mystical Body are therefore members of Christ, *the Priest*.<sup>6</sup> Since the Head of the Mystical Body is a King

<sup>1</sup> *In Psalmum XC Sermo II, PL 37, 1159.*

<sup>2</sup> *Quaestionum Evangeliorum, II, 40, PL 35, 1355; Enarratio in Psalmum XVI, Sermo II, 2, PL 36, 199-200; Fragmenta Sermonum, PL 39, 1734; Contra Litteras Petiliani II, 104, CSEL 52 (2), p. 152-153; Quaestionum, IV, 23, CSEL 28 (2), p. 344.*

<sup>3</sup> *De Mysteriis, 6, PL 16, 398.*

<sup>4</sup> *Epistola LXXIII, 9, PL 22, 681.*

<sup>5</sup> *Gelasius, Epistola Adversus Andromachum, CSEL 35 (1), pp. 455-456.*

<sup>6</sup> *Claudius of Turin, Commentarii in Libros Regum, III, 21, PL 50, 381. Gelasius (?), Epistolae et Decreta, De Anathematis Vinculo, PL 59, 109. Gregory the Great, Moralium XXV. In Caput XXXIV B. Job, 15, PL 76, 328; Homiliar. in Evangelia II, XXXI, PL 76, 1231-1232. Justinian of Valencia, Liber de Cognitione Baptismi, 123, PL 96, 162. Isidore of Seville, De Ecclesiasticis Officiis, II, 26, PL 83, 823-824.*

and a Priest the members are also kings and priests.<sup>1</sup> Each one who has been regenerated has put on Christ and so shares His Priesthood.<sup>2</sup> The priesthood which belongs to Christ as man now belongs to the whole Mystical Christ. Consequently, the Church itself — the Body of Christ, the Priest — is said to be a priesthood.<sup>3</sup> That Christians can possess this priestly dignity is one of the magnificent effects of Christ's redemptive activity.<sup>4</sup> The share which Christians have in Christ's priesthood is identical with the priesthood which the New Testament attributes to Christians.<sup>5</sup> Christians are God's temple and never cease to offer a spiritual sacrifice to God. It is for that reason that St. Peter describes them as a temple and as priests.<sup>6</sup>

### PRIESTHOOD OF THE FAITHFUL AND HOLY ORDERS

One of the first reactions of the modern mind to the expression "priesthood of the laity" is to compare it with, and try to define it in terms of, the priesthood of Orders. Patristic writers approach the question of the priesthood of the faithful from a different angle. No writer of the patristic age ever defined the priesthood of the faithful in terms of the priesthood of Orders. The term of comparison of the priesthood of the baptized is not the priesthood of those in Holy Orders, but rather the absence of a priesthood in those who are not baptized. No eastern writer ever confused the priesthood of the faithful with the ministerial priesthood. In the west Tertullian alone erred in this respect.

Some western writers, however, did advert to the fact that there is a relationship between the priesthood of Orders and that of the faithful. They mention explicitly that priesthood can be predicated in a real sense both of those who have received the sacrament of Orders and of all those who are baptized. Since the faithful are members of Christ, the one Priest of the New Testament, they too, as well as those in Holy Orders, can be called priests in some real

<sup>1</sup> Claudius of Turin, *Commentarii in Libros Regum*, III, 21, PL 50, 1142. Primasius, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, V, 20, PL 68, 918. Isidore, *In Exodum*, 59, PL 83, 320; *In Leviticum*, 12, PL 83, 331.

<sup>2</sup> Prosper of Aquitaine, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Gelasius, *Epistola Adversum Andromachum*, CSEL, 35 (1), pp. 455-456. Justinian of Valencia, loc. cit. Isidore of Seville, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, II, 26, PL 83, 823-824.

<sup>4</sup> Paulinus of Nola, *Epistola XX*, 5, CSEL 29 (1), p. 147. Primasius, op. cit. PL 68, 798. Cassiodorus, *Complexiones in Apocalypsim*, 10, PL 70, 149.

<sup>5</sup> Gelasius, op. cit., pp. 455-456. Primasius, op. cit., PL, 68, 918.

<sup>6</sup> Fulgentius, *Contra Fabianum Fragmenta*, 16, PL 65, 769. Cf. Ildephonsus, *Liber de Itinere Deserti*, 52, PL 96, 182-183.



sense.<sup>1</sup> The title *priest* does not belong exclusively to the ministers of the altar; it can be applied also to all those who by their virtuous lives offer their bodies as a sacrifice to God.<sup>2</sup> All the faithful, as well as the ministers of the altar, are prefigured by the priesthood of the old dispensation.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, by their use of concrete methods of expression these writers show that there is an essential distinction between the priesthood of Orders and that of the faithful. No writer — apart from Tertullian in his Montanist days — attributes to the clergy and laity indiscriminately the powers which belong exclusively to those in Holy Orders. We find that those in Holy Orders are priests *proprie*, but the faithful are also priests.<sup>4</sup> The same teaching is clearly expressed by those who say that priesthood belongs to those in Holy Orders more fully and in a more special way than it does to lay people.<sup>5</sup> Although these writers do not write with scientific precision we can see that they succeeded in expressing in concrete terms that priesthood cannot be predicated univocally of the laity and the ordained.

#### *The Priestly Anointing of Christians*

So far our enquiry has shown that for patristic writers Christians, in virtue of their incorporation in Christ, share in the very priesthood of Christ. Early writers give us valuable information also as to how this sharing in Christ's priesthood is conferred on Christians. Christian tradition has consistently regarded the chrismation which followed the conferring of baptism as symbolical of the priesthood of the faithful. In fact, ecclesiastical writers place an almost necessary connection between the post-baptismal anointing and the priesthood of the faithful. This anointing initiates all Christians into a priesthood; the priesthood of Christians is an effect of their anointing. This anointing makes Christians members of Christ, the High Priest, and consequently gives them a share in His priesthood. In this post-baptismal anointing Christians receive that priesthood

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XX, 10, CSEL 40 (2), pp. 454-455. Gelasius, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Bede, *De Templo Salomonis*, 16, PL 91, 776.

<sup>3</sup> Bede, *De Tabernaculo et Vasis Ejus*, III, 14, PL 91, 497.

<sup>4</sup> Augustine, loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Prosper of Aquitaine, loc. cit. Caesar of Arles, *Sermo I*, 19, ed. by G. Morin, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, CIII, Pars 1, p. 15. Isidore of Seville, *In Exodum* 59, PL 83, 320; *In Leviticum*, 12, PL 83, 331.

which St. Peter and St. John attributed to them.<sup>1</sup> Beginning with Augustine Christian writers teach quite definitely that the priestly anointing of ancient Israel is a figure of a priestly anointing in the new Israel but whereas the ancient anointing was restricted to certain individuals the new extends to all those who are baptized.<sup>2</sup> Likewise ancient liturgies proclaim that the anointing which takes place in the baptismal ceremony makes the newly baptized members of the new priesthood of the Church, of which St. Peter has spoken.<sup>3</sup>

It is easy to see why Christian writers should attach a priestly significance to the anointing which followed baptism. It is merely a corollary of their teaching that the priestly anointing of Christ flows on to the entire Church. The external rite of chrismation symbolizes a spiritual priestly anointing.<sup>4</sup> This spiritual priestly anointing of Christians is a sharing in the priestly anointing of Christ; the unguent with which Christ was anointed flows on to all who are incorporated in Him just as the unguent with which Aaron was anointed priest flowed from his head on to his beard and on to the fringe of his robe. This spiritual unguent which flows from Christ on to Christians is the Holy Ghost.<sup>5</sup> The spiritual anointing with the Holy Spirit, which overflows from Christ on to

<sup>1</sup> Origen, *In Leviticum Homilia IX*, 9, PG 12, 521. Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii Lucae*, V, 33, CSEL 32 (4), p. 195. Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum*, II, 40, PL 35, 1355; *Enarratio in Psalmum XVI*, Sermo II, 2, PL 36, 199-200; *Enarratio in Psalmum LI*, 3, PL 36, 601; *Fragmenta Sermonum*, PL 39, 1734-1735. Pelagius, *Liber de Vita Christiana*, I, PL 40, 1033. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XVIII, 23, PG 23, 1056. Pseudo-Augustine, *De Unctione Capitis*, PL 40, 1211. Pseudo-Maximus, *De Baptismo*, PL 57, 777. *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, III, XVI, 3-4, ed. F. X. Funk, I, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum*, id. loc. *Enarratio in Psalmum XVI*, id. loc. *Enarratio in Psalmum LI*, id. loc. *Fragmenta Sermonum*, id. loc. Pelagius, loc. cit. Procopius of Gaza, *Commentarii in Leviticum*, VII, PG 87, 717-720. Isidore, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, II, 26, PL 83, 823-824.

<sup>3</sup> Eastern: Liturgy of St. Basil, in J. Goar, *Euchologion sive Rituale Graecorum*, Venice, 1730, pp. 135, 402. cf. Dabin, *Le Sacerdoce Royal des Fidèles dans la Tradition ancienne et moderne*, pp. 619-620. H. Denzinger, *Ritus Orientalium Coptorum, Syrorum et Armenorum*, Würzburg, 1863, I, pp. 326, 372, 382. *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, III, XVI, 3-4, ed. F. X. Funk, I, p. 211. Western: H. A. Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, Oxford, 1894, p. 69. *The Gregorian Sacramentary*, London 1915, p. 50. H. M. Bannister, *Missale Gothicum*, London, 1917, p. 78. *Missale Mixtum*, I, PL 85, 583. Gerbert, *Monumenta Veteris Liturgiae Alemannicae*, St. Blaise, 1777, II, pp. 211, 293, as found in Dabin, op. cit., pp. 610-611.

<sup>4</sup> Ambrose, *De Mysteriis*, VI, 29-30, PL 16, 398. Augustine, *Contra Litteras Petilianis*, II, 104, CSEL 52, (2), pp. 152-154.

<sup>5</sup> Athanasius, *Expositio in Psalmum CXXXII*, 1, PG 27:523-524. Cyril of Jerusalem, Didymus, Ambrose, Augustine, Hesychius, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret, Prosper of Aquitaine, Justus of Urgel, Cassiodorus express the same view.

His Body, confers a priestly dignity on His members.<sup>1</sup>

The interpretation of the post-baptismal anointing in terms of a priesthood of the faithful and the description of this priesthood as a sharing in the priestly anointing of Christ was, of course, suggested by the practices of anointing in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament anointing was the rite of consecration by which men were set aside for a sacred office and by which the powers of that office were conferred on them. Priests, kings and sometimes prophets were inaugurated in their office by anointing.<sup>2</sup> The altar, tabernacle and sacred vessels were also consecrated by means of anointing.<sup>3</sup> The rite of anointing symbolized that the Holy Ghost was conferred on the person who was anointed.<sup>4</sup> Christian writers teach constantly that the anointing of priests and kings in the old economy is a type of the priestly and kingly anointing of Christ. Indeed, in the light of the whole divine economy this Old Testament rite of anointing derives its sole significance from this figurative role. This material anointing was but a shadow of the spiritual reality which was accomplished in Christ — the anointing of Christ's humanity with the divinity.<sup>5</sup> The anointing of priests and kings in the Old Testament is also a figure of the unction with which Christians are anointed. This Old Testament anointing foreshadows that twofold anointing of Christians of which Christian writers speak. It prefigures the spiritual anointing with the Holy Ghost which flowed from Christ to all His members.<sup>6</sup> It prefigures too the visible external anointing of Christians in the rite of initiation.<sup>7</sup> Some writers look on anointing in the Christian liturgy as a rite taken over from the old dispensation.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii Lucae*, VIII, 52, CSEL 32 (4), p. 17. Athanasius, loc. cit. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyrorum in Numeros Liber*, PG 69, 629. Leo the Great, *Sermo IV*, 1, PL 54, 148-149. Cassiodorus, *Expositio in Psalterium*, Psal. CXXXII, PL 70, 955-956. Procopius of Gaza, *Commentarii in Numeros*, XIX, PG 87 (1); 847.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 29:7, 29; and *passim* in O. T.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 29:36.

<sup>4</sup> I Kings 16:13. Isaias 61:1. Cf. H. Lésêtre, "unction", *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, IV, 1806-1807.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio XXX*, 21, PG 36, 132. Pseudo-Jerome, *Breviarium in Psalmos*, XLIV, PL 26, 958. Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmum XVI*, *Sermo II*, 2, PL 36, 199-200. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, I, 8, PG 74, 961. Hesychius, *In Leviticum II*, VI, 21, PG 93, 851, 879, 1059. Cassiodorus, *Expositio in Psalterium*, Psal. CXXXII, PL 70, 955-956.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Didymus, *De Trinitate*, II, PG 39, 712.

<sup>7</sup> Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum*, II, 40, PL 35, 1355; *Enarratio in Psalmum LI*, 3, PL 36, 601; *Fragmenta Sermonum*, PL 39, 1734-1735. Germanus of Constantinople (?), *Rerum Ecclesiasticorum Contemplatio*, PG 98, 385-388.

<sup>8</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, VII, CSEL 20 (1), pp. 206-207. *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, III, XII, 2-3, ed. F. X. Funk, I, p. 210.

What is this post-baptismal anointing which in the teaching of the Fathers symbolizes and even causes the sharing by Christians in the priesthood of Christ? This question presupposes that we have some idea of the precise place and significance which the anointing with chrism holds in the baptismal liturgy of the early Church. Chrismation has been used in Christian ritual at least since the second half of the second century.<sup>1</sup> From the early third century we are certain that it was used as an element in the Christian rite of initiation.<sup>2</sup> In the early centuries this single rite of initiation included both baptism and confirmation. The precise place of the chrismation in this rite, its exact relationship to the other parts of the rite and its precise significance are difficult to determine. This is so because the nature, sequence, importance and significance of the various ceremonies varied with place and time. Consequently, scholars have disagreed on the place and significance of some of the actions in this rite. In particular, the significance of the post-baptismal anointing was an acutely controverted question at an earlier period in the present century and is still unsolved.<sup>3</sup>

In the eastern Church there was one chrismation after baptism and this was the rite of confirmation.<sup>4</sup> In the west the situation is much more complex. In the early Roman Church an anointing by a simple priest intervened between the baptismal immersion and the imposition of the bishop's hands. There can be scarcely any doubt that confirmation was administered by the imposition of hands alone or together with a further anointing by the bishop.<sup>5</sup> The anointing which took place between the rite of baptism and the imposition of hands does not seem to have been part of the rite of confirmation. In Africa a similar anointing intervened between the immersion and the imposition of hands. From a consideration

<sup>1</sup> Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum*, I, 12, PG 6, 1041 (written after 180).

<sup>2</sup> Origen, *In Epistolam ad Romanos*, I, V, 8, PG 14, 1038.

<sup>3</sup> P. Galtier, "La Consignation à Carthage et à Rome", *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses*, 1911, pp. 350-382; Id. "La Consignation dans les Eglises d'Occident", "Onction et Confirmation", *Revue d'Histoire Ecclesiastique*, XIII (1912), pp. 257-301 and 467-476; "Imposition des Mains", *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, VII, 1315-1393. P. de Puniet, "Baptême", *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et Liturgie*, III (1), 331; "La Liturgie Baptismale en Gaul avant Charlemagne", *Revue des Questions Historiques*, LXXII (1903), pp. 328-405; "Onction et Confirmation", *Revue d'Histoire Ecclesiastique*, XIII (1912), pp. 450-466.

<sup>4</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* II, 3; LV, 18, PG 8, 941-944, 1325; *Paedagogus*, I, 12; II, 8, PG 8, 360, 465-468; *Quis Dives Salvetur*, 42, PG 9, 648. Origen, *In Leviticum Homilia*, VI, 2, PG 12:468. In *Epistolam ad Romanos*, I, V, 8, PG 14, 1038. Athanasius, *Epistola I ad Serapionem*, 23, PG 26, 584; *Oratio I Contra Arianos*, 47, PG 26, 109.

<sup>5</sup> *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, ed. G. Dix, London 1937, pp. 34-39. Cf. *Canones Hippolyti*, ed. L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution*, London, 1904. Appendix, pp. 533-534.

of the evidence of Tertullian and Cyprian it would appear that in the African Church in the third century this anointing was looked on as completing the graces of baptism, as marking a transition from baptism to confirmation and as preparing the soul for the reception of confirmation at the imposition of hands.<sup>1</sup> However, with St. Augustine there comes a change in the significance attached to the anointing. The bishop of Hippo certainly considered the anointing a part of the rite of confirmation.<sup>2</sup> In the case of the other western liturgies we have no definitive evidence for some time concerning the meaning of the post-baptismal unction. The matter becomes more difficult when we realize that in some cases we cannot be sure of the existence and significance of each of the other actions which traditionally have been part of the baptismal rite. After some centuries, however, the baptismal ritual of the western church became stabilized. This was due to the widespread acceptance of the liturgy of the Roman Church, which coincided largely with the introduction of the Gelasian and Gregorian Sacramentaries into the other Churches of the west. According to this Roman usage the baptismal ceremony contained two anointings, one of which was performed by a simple priest and was a transition from baptism to confirmation while the other was reserved to the bishop and certainly belonged to the rite of confirmation.<sup>3</sup>

This brief survey of the varying significance of anointing indicates the difficulty of trying to discover to what precise sacrament patristic tradition attributes the priesthood of the faithful. If this ancient tradition distinguished adequately the two sacraments which constituted the single baptismal rite together with their effects we should find a very fluctuating concept of the immediate source of the priesthood of the faithful. In the east this participation in Christ's priesthood would be an effect of confirmation. Similarly in St. Augustine's teaching it would be an effect of confirmation. The uncertainty which surrounds the precise role of the anointing in some western Churches would make it impossible to determine conclusively whether the priesthood of the faithful is caused by baptism or confirmation. In the writings from those ages and

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *De Carnis Resurrectione*, 8, CSEL 47 (3), pp. 36-37; *De Baptismo*, 7, CSEL 20 (1), pp. 207-208. Cyprian, *Epistola LXX*, 2, CSEL 3 (2), p. 768; *Epistola LXXII*, 1, CSEL 3 (2), p. 775 and other places.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. e.g., *Tractatus in I Epist. Joannis*, III, 5, PL 35, 2000; *Sermo CCXXVII*, PL 38, 1100. Cf. J. Coppens, *L'Imposition de Mains et les Rites Connexes dans le Nouveau Testament et dans l'Eglise ancienne*, Wetteren, 1925, pp. 297-303.

<sup>3</sup> This is the conclusion of Coppens, who has written the most satisfactory work on the significance of the various ceremonies in the rite of Christian initiation, op. cit., pp. 341-45, 355-60.

places which had a double anointing the question would depend on which anointing was associated with priesthood.

In the midst of all this uncertainty there is one steady feature. It is that the priesthood of the faithful was consistently associated with the post-baptismal anointing irrespective of whether the anointing belonged to baptism or confirmation. Because of the close connection between priesthood and anointing in Christian thought early tradition would naturally associate the priestly effect of the rite of initiation with the anointing. Early tradition recognized that this priesthood is an effect of the rite of initiation. Since, however, the sacraments of baptism and confirmation were both conferred on the same occasion early ecclesiastical writers did not seek to determine which effects of the entire rite should be attributed to each sacrament and in what measure those effects which are common to both should be attributed to each.

One could, however, point to some aspects of the evidence of early tradition which would seem to indicate that the priesthood of the faithful is an effect of baptism alone.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the spiritual anointing of the faithful is sometimes associated with baptism.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless we must remember that writers of those ages use the term "baptism" to designate the entire baptismal ceremony. We must remember, too, that this spiritual anointing is sometimes explicitly associated with confirmation.<sup>3</sup> There is, however, a great deal of implicit evidence that the priesthood of the faithful is an effect of the sacrament of baptism. Some writers associate the priestly dignity of the faithful with regeneration in Christ, with putting on Christ. Above all it is associated with membership of Christ.<sup>4</sup> There is St. Jerome's well-known description of baptism as "the priesthood of the layman".<sup>5</sup> The theologian of later ages can easily see in this teaching an implicit

<sup>1</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyrorum in Exodum*, III, PG 69, 616, Cf. *Glaphyrorum in Genesim* IV, PG 69, 196. Hesychius, *In Leviticum*, IV, 22, PG 93, 1068. Hilary of Poitiers, *Tractatus in Psalmum CXVIII*, 9, CSEL, 22, p. 479. Prosper of Aquitaine, *Psalmorum a C ad CL Expositio*, Psal. CXXXI, PL 51, 381. Fulgentius, *Epistola* XII, II, PL 65, 390. Cassiodorus, *Complexiones in Apocalypsim*, 29, PL 70, 1415. Luculentius, *Comment. XVI in c. II ad Titum*, PL 72, 852. H. A. Wilson, *Gregorian Sacramentary*, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Didymus, *De Trinitate*, II, 83, PG 39, 557. Cassiodorus, *Expositio in Psalmum CXXXII*, PL 70, 956.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Augustine, *Contra Litteras Petilian*, CSEL, 52 (2), pp. 152-154. Theodoret, *In Canticum Canticorum*, I, 1, PG 81, 60.

<sup>4</sup> See *supra*, pp. 35-38.

<sup>5</sup> *Dial. cont. Lucif.*, 4, PL 23, 158.



association of the priesthood of the faithful with baptism — an association to which the authors of this teaching themselves would not have adverted.

### THE FUNCTION OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE FAITHFUL

#### *The Sacrifice of a Holy Life*

In discussing the question of a priesthood of Christians one naturally asks how is this priesthood exercised. St. Peter, we know, mentioned "spiritual sacrifices" as the proper function of the priesthood of the faithful.<sup>1</sup> The New Testament uses sacrificial terminology to describe acts of virtue<sup>2</sup> and St. Paul refers to the complete dedication of himself to God by the Christian as a sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> Although it uses sacrificial language to describe acts of virtue the New Testament does not explicitly relate those acts of virtue to the priesthood of the faithful. Patristic writers develop this spiritual teaching on the sacrificial character of a virtuous life dedicated to God. They point out that carnal sacrifices are now obsolete and that the sacrificial worship of God has now been raised to a new spiritual level. Instead of the obsolete carnal sacrifices of the Old Testament, Christians should offer sacrifices of prayer, self-immolation and virtue.<sup>4</sup> This teaching of early tradition on the sacrificial value of a holy life reaches its climax in Augustine's classic definition: *verum sacrificium est omne opus, quod agitur ut sancta societate inhaereamus Deo, relatum scilicet ad illum finem boni, quo veraciter beati esse possimus.*<sup>5</sup> Augustine makes it clear that this concept of sacrifice is perfectly in line with St. Paul's teaching on the sacrificial character of offering oneself to God. He points out that a man who consecrates himself to God, preserves

<sup>1</sup> I Pet. 2:5.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 15:16. Phil. 4:18. II Tim. 4:6. Hebr. 13:15. Apoc. 8:3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 12:1.

<sup>4</sup> *Epistle of Barnabas*, 2, PG 2, 730. Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis*, 13, PG 6, 916. Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 32, PL 3, 339-340. Clement of Alexandria, *Fragmenta, Adumbrationes in Priorem D. Petri Epistolam*, PG 9, 730; *Stromata* IV, 25, PG 8, 1365-1368. Origen, *In Genesim*, VII, 810, PG 12, 207-209. Tertullian, *De Oratione*, 28, CSEL 20 (1), pp. 198-199; *Adversus Iudaeos*, 6-7, CSEL 70 (2), pp. 266-271. Cyprian, *Epistola* LXXVI, 3, CSEL 3 (2), p. 830. Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones*, VI, 24, CSEL 19 (1), pp. 576-578. Basil, *Regulae Brevius Tractatae*, 265, PG 31, 1261-1263. John Chrysostom, *In Cap. I Genesis Hom.* IX, PG 53, 80; *Expositio in Psalmum* IV, 9, PG 55, 53, *In Matthaeum Hom.* XLV al. XLVI, PG 58, 44; *In Epistolam ad Romanos Hom.* XX, 1, PG 60, 596; *In Epistolam II ad Corinthios Hom.*, XX, 2-3, PG 61, 539-540. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio II, Apologetica* XCV, PG 39, 497. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Oratione Dominica, Oratio III*, PG 44, 1149.

<sup>5</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, X, 6, CSEL 40 (1), p. 454.

his body from evil, uses it as an instrument of his soul and refers it to God thereby offers a sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> In the light of this definition, Augustine and others continue the traditional idea that the dedication of oneself to God, which is embodied in self-abnegation, prayer, personal and social virtues, apostolic acts and martyrdom is a sacrifice.<sup>2</sup>

In emphasizing the sacrificial significance of the practice of virtue early writers sometimes present such activity in the imagery of Old Testament sacrificial worship. The faithful themselves take the place of all the ritualistic garments, vessels and instruments which are part of the sacrificial worship in the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup> The person who dedicates himself to God is also the altar of his sacrifice.<sup>4</sup> He is, in fact, the temple in which he offers his sacrifice.<sup>5</sup>

The reality of the sacrificial character of the virtuous lives of the faithful is implicitly contained in the traditional teaching on the relation between the sacrificial dignity of the Christian life and the official priestly worship of the old dispensation. In the teaching of ecclesiastical writers we find essentially the same idea as that contained in St. Paul's concept of Christians as the continuation of the Jewish temple and of its worship. Christian writers do not expressly emphasize the fact that the Mystical Body of Christ is really a spiritual temple. They do, however, express the same basic Pauline teaching by comparing and contrasting the virtuous lives of Christians with the ritualistic worship of the Jewish Temple. In patristic teaching on the relation between the spiritual sacrifices of

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *De Baptismo Contra Donatistas*, II, XIV, 19, PL 43, 138. Cyril of Alexandria, *De Adoratione in Spiritu et Veritate*, XII, PG 68, 824-825. Hesychius, *In Leviticum*, I, 1, PG 93, 196. Peter Chrysologus (?), *Sermo CVIII*, PL 52, 500. Cassiodorus, *Expositio in Psalterium, Psal. IV*, PL 70, 50. Ambrosiaster, *Commentaria in Epistolam ad Romanos*, 12, PL 17, 156.

<sup>3</sup> Origen, *In Exodum* XI, 6, PG 12, 381. Tertullian, *De Oratione*, 28, CSEL 20 (1), pp. 198-199. Basil, loc. cit. Pseudo-Basil, *De Baptismo*, II, VIII, 3, PG 31, 1602. Peter Chrysologus (?), loc. cit. Procopius of Gaza, *Commentarii in Exodum*, 12, PG 87, 567-568. Leo the Great, *Sermo IV*, 1, PL 54, 148-149.

<sup>4</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VII, 6, PG 9, 444. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VIII, 17, PG 11, 1541-1543. Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones*, VI, 24, CSEL 19 (1), pp. 576-577. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, X, 3, CSEL 40 (1), pp. 449-450. John Chrysostom, *Expositio in Psalmum IV* 9, PG 55, 53; *In Epist. II Ad Cor. Homil. XX*, 3, PG 61, 539-540. Gregory the Great, *Moralium Liber XXV—In Caput XXXIV. B. Job*, 15, PL 76, 328. Peter Chrysologus (?), loc. cit. An examination of these passages will show that some writers regarded the individual Christian as the altar of his sacrifices while others regarded all Christians together as the altar of the sacrifices of Christians. See especially PG 61, 539-540, where Chrysostom argues that the altar on which the sacrifice of almsgiving is offered has a greater dignity than the altar of the sacrifice of the Mass.

<sup>5</sup> Paulinus of Nola, *Epistola XX*, 5, CSEL 29 (1), p. 147. Hesychius, *In Leviticum*, I, 1, PG 92, 796. Fulgentius, *Contra Fabianum Fragmenta*, 16, PL 65, 769.

Christians and the Temple worship of the Old Law we find two distinct but related lines of thought. Firstly, early writers, in particular, emphasize that the external carnal sacrifices of the Jewish dispensation are now obsolete and have been replaced by a new spiritual worship. God no longer seeks blood sacrifices or burnt offerings or the fragrance of flowers and incense. This new spiritual worship includes the sacrifice of Christian virtue.<sup>1</sup> According to the second line of thought the spiritual sacrifices of Christians are the continuation of this Temple worship. The sacrifices of the Jews can no longer be offered in the flesh but they can be offered spiritually.<sup>2</sup> Christians are visualized as entering the inner sanctuary of the Temple and offering the sacrifice of a holy life.<sup>3</sup> The sacrifice of a holy life, however, is superior to the sacrifices of the Jewish religion. The holy lives of Christians are a spiritual sacrifice whereas the sacrifices of the Old Law were carnal. They are clean and living sacrifices whereas those of the Temple were not.<sup>4</sup> In the Old Testament only priests could raise their hands in prayer. Now, however, all men are commanded to pray in virtue of their priesthood.<sup>5</sup>

Christian writers teach very emphatically that offering the sacrifice of a holy life is the correlative function of the priesthood of the faithful. They teach explicitly that the sacrifice of self-dedication which St. Paul requests of Christians is the proper function of the priesthood which St. Peter and St. John attribute to Christians.<sup>6</sup> The faithful derive this sacrificial function from the fact that they are members of Christ, the Priest. By reason of their incorporation in Christ the faithful share in His priesthood, in virtue of which they are bound to offer the sacrifice of a holy life. This offering of a holy life is the proper function of that participation in Christ's priesthood which is conferred on Christians in the baptismal ceremony.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis*, 13, PG 6, 916. Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones*, VI, 24, CSEL 19 (1), pp. 576-577. See p. 46 note 4 *supra* for further references.

<sup>2</sup> Origen, *In Exodum Hom.* XI, 6, PG 12, 381.

<sup>3</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *De Adoratione in Spiritu et Veritate*, 9, PG 68, 629. Isidore of Seville, *In Exodum*, LIX, 14, PL 83, 321.

<sup>4</sup> Origen, loc. cit. Lactantius, loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Epistolam ad Romanos*, XX, 1, PG 60, 595-596. Theodoret, *Interpretatio Epist. I ad Tim.*, II, 8, PG 82, 800-801.

<sup>6</sup> Ambrose (?), *In Apocalypsim Expositio: De Visione Prima, Tertia, Sexta*, PL 17, 767-768, 810, 931. Gregory the Great, *In Primum Regum Expositiones*, II, III, 28, PL 79, 124.

<sup>7</sup> Origen, *In Leviticum* IX, 9, PG 12, 521-522. John Chrysostom, *In Epist. II ad Cor. Hom.* III, 7, PG 61, 417-418. Gregory the Great, *Moralium Liber XXXV—In Caput XXXIV. B. Job*, 15, PL 76, 328.

In his teaching on the priestly dignity of Christians, St. Peter says that their spiritual sacrifices should be offered "by Jesus Christ".<sup>1</sup> A number of ecclesiastical writers repeat this aspect of St. Peter's teaching and emphasize that the faithful should offer their sacrifices through Christ and in union with Him. By His passion Christ united all Christians into His Mystical Body. Christians should offer themselves as a sacrifice in the sense spoken of by St. Paul. This one complete sacrifice of Christ's Mystical Body should be offered through Christ, the High Priest.<sup>2</sup> We offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving through Christ and it is because it is offered through Christ that our victim is acceptable to God. Christ became a priest and through Him we offer a holy, living and pleasing victim. We could not offer our victim if Christ had not been made a victim for us.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Priesthood of the Faithful and the Mass*

In view of the teaching of present-day theologians one naturally asks to what extent did the Fathers associate the priesthood of the faithful with their role in offering the Mass. Early tradition teaches that the Mass is offered by the Mystical Body.<sup>4</sup> It also attributes to the faithful who assist at Mass a special part in offering the Mass at which they are present. In particular, tradition regards the presentation of material gifts by the faithful for the matter of the Mass or for the maintenance of the clergy or poor as part of the liturgical action.<sup>5</sup> That the faithful who perform those actions are, in some sense, offerers of the Mass is taught both by early liturgies<sup>6</sup> and by ecclesiastical writers.<sup>7</sup> Early writers also teach that at Mass

<sup>1</sup> I Pet. 2:5.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmum CXXX*, 4, PL 37, 1706; *De Civitate Dei*, X, 6, CSEL 40 (1), p. 456. Pseudo-Didymus, *Enarratio in Epistolam I S. Petri*, 2, PG 39, 1762. Quodvultdeus, (Pseudo-Prosper of Aquitaine), *Liber de Promissionibus et Praedictionibus Dei*, II, 27, PL 57, 801.

<sup>3</sup> Fulgentius, *Epistola XIV*, 36, 37, PL 65, 424-425. Cf. *Contra Fabianum Fragmenta*, 16, PL 65, 769.

<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *Sermo CCLI*, IV, 7, PL 39, 1543; *De Civitate Dei*, X, CSEL 40 (1), p. 456. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyrorum in Exodum*, III, PG 69, 521. Theodoret, *In Psalmum CIX*, 4, PG 80, 1773.

<sup>5</sup> See J. A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origin and Development II*, (Eng. Trans.), New York, 1955, pp. 1-70.

<sup>6</sup> The Roman Liturgy, the Liturgy of St. Mark, the Anaphora of Serapion, the Liturgy of St. James. See M. de la Taille, *The Mystery of Faith II*, London, 1950, p. 258.

<sup>7</sup> Tertullian, *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, II, CSEL 70 (2), p. 147. Cyprian, *De Opere et Eleemosyna*, 15, CSEL 3 (1), pp. 384-385. Augustine, *Epistola CXI*, 8, PL 33, 426. Caesar of Arles, *Sermo CCLIV*, 2, PL 39, 2238. Gregory the Great, *Dialogus IV*, 57, PL 76, 424; *Homilia XXXIII in Evangelia*, 8, PL 76, 1279. Cf. *Concilium Nicaenum*, J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, Paris, Arnheim and Leipsig, 1901-1927, II, 673, coll. 680; Ambrose, *Epistola LI*, 15, PL 16, 1163.

the faithful unite their personal prayers and sacrifices with the sacrificial action of the priest.<sup>1</sup> Other writers attribute to the laity a more intimate and direct share in offering the Mass. The faithful share in the Mass intimately and directly since they join with the priest in reciting the prayers of the Mass and by answering "Amen" at various stages of the Mass, express their assent to the sacrificial action of the priest.<sup>2</sup> Because of the laity's part in the Mass they are sometimes explicitly said to offer the Mass.<sup>3</sup> The most conclusive evidence for the part of the faithful in offering the Mass is found in the development of the Mass liturgy itself. That the faithful share in offering the Mass is especially evident from an analysis of the form and development of the *Orate Fratres*, the secret prayers, the dialogue which introduces the Canon and a portion of the Canon itself.<sup>4</sup>

One might reasonably conclude that the active role of the faithful in the Church's sacrifice is part of their priestly function. Yet the explicit evidence of early tradition on the relation of the part of the faithful at Mass with their participation in Christ's priesthood is comparatively sparse. There is, however, some evidence from patristic writers and from the liturgy that the priesthood of the faithful is associated with their role at Mass. This evidence, though small in volume, is quite explicit and definite.

The first explicit testimony of a universal priesthood of Christians in non-canonical Christian literature associates the priesthood of the faithful with the sacrifice of the Mass. Indeed St. Justin argues that Christians are a priestly race precisely because they offer the Eucharist.<sup>5</sup> In his pre-Montanist days Tertullian taught that the sacrificial function of the priesthood of the faithful is exercised most perfectly when the faithful unite their spiritual sacrifices with the Mass.<sup>6</sup> Cyril of Alexandria regards the sacrifice of the covenant, which Moses offered, as a figure of the Mass and he visualizes the

<sup>1</sup> Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, 116-117, PG 6, 745-747. Tertullian, *De Oratione*, 28, CSEL 20 (1), pp. 198-199. Ambrose, *Epistola* LI, 15, PL 16, 1163. Eusebius, *Demonstrationes Evangelicae*, I, 10, PG 22, 92-93.

<sup>2</sup> Ignatius, *Ad Ephes.* 14, PG 5, 648; *Ad Magnes.* 7, PG 5, 658. Justin, *Apologia I Pro Christianis*, 67, PG 6, 429, Cf. PG 6, 428. For a study of the usage and significance of the word "Amen" see F. Cabrol, "Amen", *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et Liturgie*, I, 1, Cols. 1555-1556.

<sup>3</sup> *Didache* 14; Cyprian, *De Oratione Dominica*, PL 4, 538. Leo the Great, *Epistola* IX, 2, PL 54, 627.

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent study of the development and significance of the various rites of the Mass see J. A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origin and Development* (Eng. trans.), 2 vols, New York, 1951-1955.

<sup>5</sup> *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, 116, PG 6, 745.

<sup>6</sup> *De Oratione*, 28, CSEL 20 (1), pp. 198-199.

twelve stones as the figure of the Christian people, who are a holy priesthood.<sup>1</sup> Again, he teaches that the reception of the Blessed Eucharist is a function of the priesthood of the faithful. It is a function of this priesthood precisely because the reception of sacrificial food is considered to be a peculiarly priestly act. Only those who perform sacred functions are permitted to consume victims immolated for sin. Profane souls cannot partake of the sacred Body of Christ but only those who are chosen and pure and to whom the eulogy "you are a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a people of acquisition" might be addressed.<sup>2</sup> According to an early liturgy the priest offers the Mass on behalf of the people so that God may show that, in the praise of Christ, they are a kingly priesthood and a holy nation.<sup>3</sup> Another liturgy places an essential link between the role of the faithful at Mass and their priesthood: it is because Christians have received a kingly priesthood in baptism that they share in offering the Mass.<sup>4</sup>

### CONCLUSION

One could not but be impressed by the prominence which the doctrine of the priesthood of the faithful held in the minds of patristic writers. The imposing array of statements which can be drawn from their writings shows how deeply conscious these teachers of the Christian religion were of this dignity of Christians. It shows too how anxious they were to keep the faithful aware of this dignity of theirs. These writers had no fears of being misunderstood when they expressly attributed a priesthood to the laity. Certain aspects of their teaching leave no doubt that for them the faithful possess what is, in some sense, a real priesthood. These are the frequent comparisons which they make between the priesthood of Aaron and the priesthood which they attribute to the Christian laity, the relationship which they place between the priesthood of the faithful and that of Christ and their associating the priesthood of the faithful with their inauguration into the Mystical Body of Christ.

The Fathers built their doctrine of the priesthood of the faithful on the solid basis of the teaching of the New Testament. Yet one

<sup>1</sup> *Glaphyrorum in Exodum*, III, PG 69, 521.

<sup>2</sup> *De Adoratione in Spiritu et Veritate*, 13, PG 68, 864.

<sup>3</sup> *Constitutiones Apostolorum* VIII, 12, L. 44, ed. F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, I, p. 512.

<sup>4</sup> *Sacramentarium Gelasianum*, LXV, ed. H. A. Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, p. 109.



of the most striking aspects of their teaching is the manner in which they developed it beyond the simple affirmations of St. Peter and St. John. Especially did they develop this scriptural teaching by proclaiming that the priesthood of the faithful is a participation in the priesthood of Christ which the baptized derive from their mystical union with Christ. In this way they indicate the unity and essentially collective nature of the priesthood of the members of the Mystical Body. By developing the Pauline concept of the cultural nature of a virtuous life they have made a further notable contribution to the understanding of this doctrine. Above all, they have contributed to the development of this teaching in showing that by living a truly Christian life the faithful offer the "spiritual sacrifices" which St. Peter mentions as the function of the priesthood of the baptized. In this way they have shown the very close link there is between the teaching of St. Paul and that of St. Peter.

In addition, these patristic writers have provided the beginnings of a theology on the relation between the priesthood of the faithful and the layman's role at Mass. Yet it is true that this is one of the aspects of the theology of the priesthood of the Christian laity which did not receive a proportionate prominence from the Fathers. Other aspects of the doctrine which were not fully developed were the precise relationship of this priesthood to the sacraments of baptism and confirmation and to the priesthood of Holy Orders and also the relationship of the sacrifice of a holy life with the layman's share in the Mass. These are aspects of the doctrine which have been left to later theologians to elucidate.

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