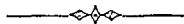


that others may share in the rapturous zeal as well as in the confident importunity which has stimulated it. The believer who wrote this psalm (whoever he was) had an unruffled peace when he knew that his prayer was answered: "Oh, how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee. . . . Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man." He had, also, his lips filled with praise: "Blessed be the Lord, for He hath showed me His marvellous kindness in a strong city." And, moreover, he was eager to confirm in all God's believing children the affectionate, energetic trustfulness which himself enjoyed: "O love the Lord, all ye His saints. . . . Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your hearts, all ye that hope in the Lord."

D. D. STEWART.

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ART. III.—CHRIST'S WORK FOR HIS PEOPLE AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

HOW can we better enter on such a study than with the words of our Communion Service: *Sursum corda: Habemus ad Dominum.* "Lift up your hearts: We have them uplifted unto the Lord." We are about to consider some of the revealed mysteries of the present work of Christ Jesus, and our consideration shall, by His grace, be carried on in the light of a believing, adoring, loving view of His person, of Himself. He is Himself the heart and life of His blessed work, whether it be done on the Cross or on the Throne.

Let us first, as we approach the subject, fix our thoughts on the simple fact of our dear Lord's presence in the heavenly world as the Incarnate Son—a most definite presence begun by a most definite entrance. Two only of the Gospels narrate the Ascension; but St. John twice, characteristically, quotes words of our Lord which signify it. And the Book of the Acts both amplifies the brief Gospel record and repeatedly refers to the Ascension in reports of apostolic sermons. The Epistles, beginning with the Thessalonians, in a long and bright catena, do the same: "We wait for His Son from heaven;" "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven;" "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of His power;" "It is Christ that died . . . who is even at the right hand of God;" "He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet;" "The Second Man is the Lord from heaven;" "The Father raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand

in the heavenly places . . . far above all heavens ;" " God hath highly exalted Him ;" " From heaven we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, [in] the body of His glory ;" " The things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God ;" " Received up into glory ;" " He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high ;" " Crowned with glory and honour ;" " The Forerunner for us within the veil ;" " Entering into heaven itself ;" " Into the holy place ;" " He is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." And in the Revelation may we not say that the ascended Lord is the figure of the whole glorious foreground ? " I overcame, and sat down with My Father ;" " The Lamb in the midst of the throne."

Nothing can be more familiar than such a chain of Scripture testimonies to the actual being and working of the Lord above. But if I may judge for others from myself, nothing at times is more stimulating and strengthening to faith than such collections from the written Word, concentrated on one luminous point of revealed truth. Often and yet oftener let us thus repair to our blessed oracle. In these days of stifling materialism in philosophy and withering naturalism in theology, let us more and yet more go there, and deliberately listen, and we shall come away realizing anew, by the grace of God, that heaven is, and that our conversation is in heaven.

But I now approach more directly the sacred theme of this brief discussion—the Work done for us above by our most blessed Lord, who is in heaven. Our consideration shall be divided under the titles of His work as *Priest*, as *Prophet*, as *King*, as *Head*, as *Forerunner*.

1. His work as **PRIEST**. That He is a Priest, that He is a High-Priest, and that He is such now in heaven in active reality, is amply certain for all who own the Epistle to the Hebrews as the Word of God, and who believe what Christ beyond all question taught, that the histories of Genesis and the ritual of Leviticus are also the Word of God, not myths on the one hand, nor fabricated after-thoughts on the other, but facts and mysteries full of Him, recorded under the supervision of His Spirit, just as they were. Observe meanwhile that we do not owe the view of Christ as our Priest to the Epistle to the Hebrews alone. We owe it directly to Himself, in the words in which he claims for Himself the 110th Psalm : " David in the Spirit calleth Christ his Lord ;" for in the immediate context, as we know, the same Christ is addressed as " a Priest, for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." And when, in the Ephesians, St. Paul speaks of the Lord as " giving Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour," he, too, presents Him (mysterious picture) as not Victim only, but

Priest. But most surely the Epistle to the Hebrews is the Scriptural *locus classicus* on this precious subject. How does that Epistle, then, shadow out to us the work of the Lord as our Priest now in heaven?

I would remark, in answer, first, that it gives us not one but two great personal types of our glorious Priest—Aaron and Melchisedech, or otherwise the Jewish High-Priests (of whatever date), and the one Priest-King of Salem. And when we come to study, in the Hebrews, the present, the heavenly, sacerdotal functions of our Lord, the Levitical type wholly, or almost wholly, loses itself in the Melchisedechian. The true Aaron enters within the veil, and as faith follows Him thither (for the Word of God, sharper than two-edged sword, not only pierces the heart, but divides, as it were, the curtain of the Holiest) we behold Aaron transfigured into another. He takes regal place upon the throne, the throne of grace. He sits a Priest upon His throne. He sits there to do the most royal of all sacerdotal functions, to dispense with benignant sovereignty the benedictions He has won. This cannot be too carefully remembered in our study of the Hebrews. In the first place we need to limit carefully and reverently our views of the Aaronic type as given us in the Epistle. We need to recollect that the Lord appears (above all in chap. ix., but this really governs the whole Aaronic element of the Epistle), not merely as a priest, but as the High-Priest, and not merely as the High-Priest, but as the High-Priest on the Atonement Day, that one day in the year in which (see Lev. xvi.) all inferior priesthood fell into abeyance, and the Aaron, or Eleazar, or Phinehas, or Eli, or Zadok, *alone* sacrificed, and *alone* entered any part, even the outer chamber, of the Holy House. I hardly need comment, save in passing, on the extreme importance of this, as bearing on the alas! burning and inflaming question of the sacerdotal character of the Christian ministry. If we take our views of the character of the ministry from the special New Testament directory on such subjects, the Epistle to the Hebrews, we see a picture in which priests (even in the ancient ritual) disappear, to let the High-Priest stand and sacrifice alone. We see the High-Priest gathering up all ritual priesthood into Himself. And now when the sacrificing is done, where does He go, and what does He carry there? He enters within the curtains, beyond which there was no altar but that of incense, and in whose true sanctuary there was no altar at all. And He carries in not a victim, but the red proof that the victim had been slain. And in every possible form of reiteration the Epistle lays it down that this sacrificing and offering and entering is a thing done once and done for ever. It has no *simile aut secundum*. There is not

one hint of repetition of sacrifice, and just as little of re-presentation of it. How could it be? Was the Victim sufficient? Was the High-Priest called of God? Was the ritual fully done according to the eternal law? Was the entrance into the Holiest accomplished rightly? Then the cause is complete, and only the effects are to follow. The Priest has done His blessed work as Propitiator. He now abides for ever, as the wrought and perfected Propitiation (1 John ii. 2), to mediate and to dispense in sacerdotal majesty the resulting benediction.

Thus is ushered in the great Melchisedech; the transfigured Aaron; another and the same. Aaron was commanded to hide himself in the incense cloud before the Shechinah. But our High-Priest *appears* in glorious openness, face to face, in the presence of God for us. Aaron dared but sprinkle the ark with the victim's blood. But our High-Priest ascends the ark, and sits upon it between the cherubim, so that if we want Him we go to find Him on the mercy-seat—the "throne of grace." Thus at once He fulfils Genesis and Zechariah, the two ends of the Old Testament, and Psalm cx., its middle point—King of Righteousness, King of Peace, Priest for ever, Priest upon His throne.

It is in the Melchisedechian character that the great Epistle represents our Lord, accordingly, as engaged for us now as our Priest. Nowhere in the Epistle does He appear as *now* standing before an altar, or even before a throne. He is *seated* on the throne. He is at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens as to His personal exaltation. He is on the throne of grace, the blessed seat of covenanted peace and glory, as to His spiritual relations with His Israel. Is He less a priest there, at the right hand, than when on the mount of sacrifice, the awful and blessed Jehovah-Jireh of Golgotha, He once for ever offered up Himself? No, He is not. Even in human priestoods the principle holds that, though a priest to be such must be a sacrificer, he is not less a priest when he is not actually sacrificing. The Romanist *sacerdos* in the confessional; for example, claims to be as fully sacerdotal as at the moment when he consecrates his wafer. He has, in his theory, somewhat to offer, and has offered it; now being a sacrificer, and an offerer, he addresses himself as priest to another function. If the glorious reality may be illustrated without irreverence by such a distorted type, even so it is with our Aaron-Melchisedech. He has somewhat to offer, even His all-blessed self in atoning death; and He has offered it once—once for ever. And now in everlasting sequel He sits (not stands) to bless. He sits to hearken, to receive, to apply remission, to convey life and peace. He sits to sprinkle with His blood, not any longer the heavenly sanctuary, but the penitent believer's conscience. The

work, the act of propitiation, of atonement, is for ever over; it was done outside, done below, in the days of His flesh. The victim-state, the sacrifice-state, it is in its actuality no more. What abides is its everlasting fruit of grace and of glory for His people. And He, Victim and Priest—He, Aaron passed into Melchisedech—lives now “in the power of an indissoluble life,” upon the throne, to administer with a love, and authority and faithfulness, most personal and most direct, the blessings “which by His most precious bloodshedding He hath obtained for us.”

So the glory of the High-Priest blends with that of the Intercessor, Mediator, and Surety of His people. As accepted Victim-Priest, as the Lamb on the throne, he *intercedes*—eternally receiving for His Israel.

In the same character He *mediates*—eternally conveying to His Israel.

And in the same character He is their *Surety*; they know that all they need is lodged for them in perfect right and perfect security in their enthroned Priest.

“With cries and tears He offered up
His humble suit below;
But with authority He asks,
Enthron'd in glory now.”

I cannot leave this part of the subject without an acknowledgment of my great debt to two books, small in size, weighty in matter and argument: “Our Great High-Priest,” by Archdeacon Perowne, and “The Finished Offering of Christ,” by the Rev. C. H. Waller. I may also point to the last two chapters, and especially the last chapter, of Dean Lefroy’s very valuable work, “The Christian Ministry.”

2. His work as PROPHET. I place this second, for the sacerdotal work of Christ is the basis of His prophetic. It is pre-eminently as Prophet that the Lord appears in Rev. v., and, indeed, very largely throughout the Revelation. He takes the seven-sealed Book, and opens it—a scene which indicates to us at once that, whatever is disclosed to the Church of the things to come, He supremely is the Foreteller.

Meantime, though this belongs to another head of our subject, He—as not only foretelling, but *holding*, the mysterious future—is not only its Seer, but its Master. And when we turn to the rest of the book, it is the same. The book itself is “the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him;” *i.e.*, the revelation made by Jesus Christ, as the Son of the Father, and supreme Prophet from the Father to His Church. In it we study the mysterious perspective of coming history, not as evolved from the reveries or conjectures of John, but as prophesied by Jesus Christ ascended and glorified. (And may we not reverently add that nothing less than His personal guidance

and blessing, by the Holy Ghost, who conveys His voice to us, is to be sought by His servants who would read in any measure aright the awful and blessed view here given of the unfolding of the Purpose of the Ages?) But the ideal Prophet, as we are often now reminded, is not only the Foreteller, but the Forth-teller—the convincing, awakening, appealing Messenger of eternal spiritual truth. Some in their spiritual blindness, compatible alas! with the utmost intellectual acumen, make prophecy to be just nothing but forthtelling, and deny the foretelling altogether. Not so, indeed. Christ, our Prophet, predicts; and that for us is proof enough that prediction is. But then He also forthtells, preaches, in His heavenly exaltation. It is the glorified Christ in His heavenly majesty who (by the Spirit, but none the less personally) tells truth to Laodicean souls, and to Ephesian and Smyrnæan, and calls on all that have an ear to hear. And so, from His sacerdotal royal throne, He prophesies to us to-day. Through His Word, by His Spirit, He—and none other—is the Teller of truth to each member of His Israel. Those strong convictions, those deep contritions, those indescribable insights into our need and our Lord's supply, that hearing of His voice and opening the door for His entrance, that glad, wondering soul-vision of His glory—it is of Him. It is the Prophet from His death-won throne. Blessed be His name, blessed be His voice, whether it wounds or heals!

O Celestial Prophet, speak on to us, and give us ears to hear. And oh, remember Thou the perils which (from our view-point) now beset among men the Divine volume of Thy prophecies. Let Thy voice, the voice of Thy Spirit, call all Thy true Israelites out to a holy loyalty to Thy written Word, and enable them for a deeper insight into its mysteries, that they may *know* it is not of man, but of God. And if it please Thee, Prophet and King, Holder and Opener of the seven-sealed book, so order the fulfilments of Thy foretellings that in these last days the world, which makes haste to cast off faith in Thee and in things eternal, may in mercy be arrested and constrained to say: "This is the finger of God;" "A prophet—the Prophet—is among us of a truth."

3. His work as KING. We have already glided in some measure into this glorious topic. We have seen the Priest as King of Righteousness and of Peace, the Priest on His throne. We have seen the Prophet, as He not only foretells, but is Lord over, the unfolding march of things. All I would say upon His celestial royalty is but an emphasis on that last thought: He is Lord over the unfolding march of what to us so often seems an ocean-torrent of confusion, but which from the point of view of the throne of the Lamb is not. It is a truth necessary often to lay hold of in these days of portentous upheaval, from without and

from within the Church. *Ni Dieu, ni maître*, was the cry not very long ago at Paris, and it is the more or less articulate cry of myriads in so-called Christendom. Ay, but the glorified Christ is God and is Master; He sitteth a King for ever. The infinite maze of second causes, with all their collisions, lies so in His management, as He is the Lamb upon the throne, having all power in heaven and earth, that little need His people fear really for His cause, or for their own so far as it is His. This is no rhetoric, nor spiritual bravado. It is the soberest faith, upon the most solid grounds. The Conqueror of sin and death must be, in the nature of things, what He is revealed to be in the pages of His Book—Master of the universe. And what a Master!

Of the eternal future of His kingdom it is not my province to speak. A time is coming, with absolute certainty, when *all* His enemies will be His footstool, and *all* his friends will be glorified in His glory. A time is coming when He will somehow hand over the kingdom to the Father; yet so that it will be eternally true that the throne of heaven will be the throne of God *and* of the Lamb. But on this I do not enter, as my concern is to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ's royal action for us *now* at the right hand.

Only let me so far diverge as to say what all the saints know, but need always to be knowing again and better, that the providential, mediatorial kingdom of Christ in history must, if we are His, ever be finding its counterpart in His most real and gracious kingdom in the heart. If we would not muse and speculate to worse purpose than none, thus it must be with us. "Sanctify Christ to be Lord in your heart," says St. Peter, in the right reading of a very solemn passage. "Every thought in captivity to the obedience of Christ."

"Reign over me, Lord Jesus,
And make my heart Thy throne;
It shall be Thine, dear Saviour,
It shall be Thine alone.

"Oh, come and reign, Lord Jesus,
Rule over everything;
And keep me always loyal
And true to Thee, my King."

To Christians innumerable it has made a difference in life beyond description, as to inner experience, to realize in something like its fulness the significance of the personal and internal sovereignty of our glorified KING.

4. His work as HEAD. Here is indeed one of the great treasures of the Gospel; but its very richness forbids me to do more than indicate it. I need not show in detail how largely the truth of the headship of Christ comes out in the Epistles

to Ephesus and Colossæ, Epistles in which, if I may express myself without misunderstanding, the progress of inspired insight in St. Paul seems to reach its acme. Shadowed forth in Romans and Corinthians, the function of the glorious Head shines forth without reserve in those later Letters. Christ is Head as presiding over His true Church—"Head over all things." He is Head as organizing, unifying, giving relation and meaning to the body in its parts: "there is one Body, one Lord." He is Head as vitalizing, energizing, each member and the whole complex—"the Head, from which all the body by its joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth; with the increase of God," into whom each member accordingly is to "grow in all things," bringing every capacity for reception into fuller and fuller contact with Him, the vital Fountain-head. Yes, we are the limbs of Christ; and what is a limb? A living vehicle of the purposes of the head, worse than useless and meaningless dissociated from the head, and having its spring of life and power in the head alone, and in no wise in itself. Such are we.

It is an ancient, familiar truth of the spiritual Gospel. But it is a truth whose very familiarity calls aloud for such research into its realities as shall constitute it a perpetual and blessed surprise. And one means for such research must be a closer and more adoring contemplation of our beloved and glorious Head as He is for us above—Son of the Father, Son of Man, Bearer of Sin, Conqueror of Death, Surety of eternal covenant, Reservoir unfathomable of the Holy Spirit, Life of our life, "Soul of our inmost soul." "Because He lives, we live also;" because He possesses the righteousness of a boundless merit, I, being in Him, possess it too before the Father. Because on Him is poured out without measure the eternal Spirit, I, His member, found in Him, have for my utmost need, up to my whole capacity of being, that same blessed Spirit by Whom to live and walk. Because He is the Head of all the true body, of all who everywhere and of every time have been joined in faith to Him by the Holy Ghost, I have part and lot, in life and love, with them also. And all this He is, and does, as the Son at the right hand of the Father. Not till Ascension was He *historically* constituted His people's Head. It is as the Lamb slain, and on the throne, that He has the seven eyes—the seven-fold Spirit sent forth into all the earth—the Spirit who makes to us His Presence, His Face; who makes us one with Him.

"My son" (says Bishop Hall, in the last lines of his treatise called *Christ Mystical*), "if ever thou look for sound comfort on earth and salvation in heaven . . . put thyself upon thy Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; leave not till thou findest thyself firmly united to Him, so as thou art become a limb of that Body whereof He is Head, a spouse of that Husband, a branch of that Stem, a stone laid upon that Foundation.

Look not, therefore, for any blessing out of Him; and in, and by, and from Him, look for all blessings. Let Him be thy life. . . . Find in Him thy wisdom, thy righteousness, sanctification, redemption; thy riches, thy strength, thy glory. Apply unto thyself all that thy Saviour is or hath done. Wouldst thou have the graces of God's Spirit? Fetch them from His anointing. Wouldst thou have power against spiritual enemies? Fetch it from His sovereignty. Wouldst thou have redemption? Fetch it from His passion. Wouldst thou have absolution? Fetch it from His perfect innocence. . . . Cleansing from sin? fetch it from His blood; mortification? fetch it from His grave; newness of life? fetch it from His resurrection. . . . Wouldst thou have all? Fetch it from Him. . . . And as thy faith shall thus interest thee in Christ thy Head, so let thy charity unite thee to His body the Church, both in earth and heaven. Hold ever an inviolable communion with that holy and blessed Fraternity. Sever not thyself from it either in judgment or affection. Make account there is not one of God's saints on earth but hath a propriety in thee; . . . so that thou canst not but be sensible of their passions, and be freely communicative of all thy graces, and all serviceable offices; by example, admonition, exhortation, consolation, prayer, beneficence, for the good of that sacred community. And when thou raisest up thine eyes to heaven, think of that glorious society of blessed saints who are gone before thee, and are now there, triumphing and reigning, in eternal and incomprehensible glory. Bless God for them, and wish thyself with them. Tread in their holy steps, and be ambitious of that crown of glory and immortality which thou seest shining on their heads."

5. On our beloved Lord's work as FORERUNNER, one briefest comment in closing shall be all. "Within the veil is entered, as Forerunner, Jesus, made an High-Priest for ever." I know the main reference of that great passage is to our blood-won *title* to enter along with our High-Priest, with Whom we are one. But does it not also cast out of its abundance a ray of glory on the shadows and mysteries of the brief dark valley and what lies beyond? Blessed be His name, He died not for us only, but before us. When we approach the veil, we find it rent by His entrance in. When we come to the river, we shall find it cleft by His steps passing through. And as by faith we look beyond, we see the land unseen, we know the land unknown; for the forerunning "Lord is there." Not least of His works for us His people in the eternal country is that He there "prepares a place for us," by having entered thither, and by being there, slain, risen, glorified, before us.

H. C. G. MOULE.

