

Old Testament books. But if there be no good grounds for holding them, if they have grown up from want of light, if different opinions can be supported by trustworthy evidence, then it is well that, though hallowed by age, mistakes should be cleared out of the way. If we will but show our faith in Christ by obeying His command, He who bade us search will send us light, and make ever clearer His own saying, which is what gives their value to the Old Testament records, that they bear witness unto Him.

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THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

IX. CHRIST NOT A SELF-ELECTED, BUT A GOD-APPOINTED  
PRIEST (CHAP. V. 1-10).

AT length the priesthood of Christ, already three times alluded to, is taken up in earnest, and made the subject of an elaborate discussion, extending from this point to chapter x. 18. The writer begins at the beginning, setting forth first of all that Christ is a legitimate priest, not a usurper: one solemnly called to the office by God, not self-elected. For this is the leading thought in this introductory statement. It seems indeed to be only one of two. *Prima facie* one gets the impression that the writer's object is to specify, as of equal and co-ordinate importance, two fundamental qualifications for the office of a high priest, and then to show that these were both possessed in a signal manner by Jesus. Every perfectly qualified high priest, he appears to say, must both sympathise with men, and have a call from God: accordingly Jesus had such a call, and was also eminently sympathetic. And he evidently does regard sympathy as, not less than a Divine call, indispensable, the terms in which he speaks of it being quite remarkable for emphasis and vividness. Nevertheless he does not put the

two on the same footing. The chief thing in his mind here is the call or appointment; the sympathy is referred to, in connexion with its source, personal infirmity, as explaining the need for a call, so as to suggest the question, Who, conscious of the infirmity which is the secret of sacerdotal mildness, would dream of undertaking such an office without a Divine call? Hence in the application of the general principles enunciated regarding the high-priestly office (vers. 1-4) to the case of Christ (vers. 5-10) no reference is made to His sympathy, but only to His call, and to experiences in His earthly life which showed how far He was from arrogating to Himself the priestly office. These experiences were indeed a discipline in sympathy, but that aspect is not spoken of.

If sympathy is not co-ordinate with the call in the writer's mind, still less is it his main theme. Yet it is apt to be regarded as such by those who assume that the Hebrew Christians were familiar with the doctrine of Christ's priesthood, and stood in no need of its being *proved* to them, or even elaborately expounded, but only of its being *used* for their encouragement under trial. To such chapter v. 1-10 will naturally appear a pendant to the statement in the close of last chapter concerning the sympathy of Christ as the great High Priest, containing some such line of thought as this: Compassion may be counted on in every high priest, for he is conscious of his own infirmity, and moreover he is called to office by God, who knows whom to call, and takes care to call only such as are humane in spirit. On both grounds you may rest assured of the sympathy of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> As I understand the passage, its drift is rather this: Sympathy is congruous to the high-priestly office in general. It arises out of the sense of personal infirmity; whence also it comes that no right-minded man would undertake the office except as

<sup>1</sup> So Professor Davidson.

called of God. Jesus assuredly undertook the office only as called of God. He was called to the priesthood before His incarnation. He came to the world under a Divine call. And during the days of His earthly life His behaviour was such as utterly to exclude the idea of His being a usurper of sacerdotal honours. All through His incarnate experiences, and especially in those of the closing scene, He was simply submitting to God's will that He should be a priest. And when He returned to heaven He was saluted High Priest in recognition of His loyalty. Thus from first to last He was emphatically One called of God. Thus viewed, the passage before us is obviously the proper logical commencement of a discourse on the priesthood of Christ, intended to instruct readers who had next to no idea of the doctrine, and needed to be taught the very rudiments thereof. Was this their position, or was it not? It is a question on which it is very necessary to make up our minds, as the view we take of it must seriously influence our interpretation of the lengthy section of the epistle of which the passage now under consideration forms the introduction.<sup>1</sup>

What is said of the sympathy that becomes a high priest, though subordinate to the statement concerning his call, is important and interesting. First, a description is given of the office which in every clause suggests the reflection, How congruous sympathy to the sacerdotal character! The high priest is described as taken *from among* men, and the suggestion is that, being a man of like nature with those for whom he transacts, he may be expected to have fellow-feeling with them. Then he is further described as ordained

<sup>1</sup> The views of recent expositors on this important subject are widely divergent. Thus Mr. Rendall in *THE EXPOSITOR* for January, 1889, p. 32, says that the Hebrew Christians "did not connect the idea of priesthood with Christ, though they knew Him as their Prophet and their King." Professor Davidson, on the other hand, says, "The fact that the Son is a High Priest is a commonplace to his readers" (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 106). I have expressed my own view, to the same effect as Mr. Rendall, in the introductory paper in *THE EXPOSITOR* for March, 1888.

for men in things pertaining to God, the implied thought being that he cannot acquit himself satisfactorily in that capacity unless he sympathise with those whom he represents before God. Lastly, it is declared to be his special duty to offer sacrifices of various sorts *for sin*, the latent idea being that it is impossible for any one to perform that duty with any earnestness or efficiency, who has not genuine compassion for the sinful.

What is implied in ver. 1 is plainly stated in ver. 2, though in participial form, in accordance with the subordinate position assigned to the requirement of sympathy in relation to the Divine call. "Being able to have compassion on the ignorant and erring."

Very remarkable is the word employed to describe priestly compassion, *μετριοπαθεῖν*. It does not, like *συμπαθεῖν* in iv. 15, signify to feel with another, but rather to abstain from feeling *against* him; to be able to restrain antipathy. It was used by Philo to describe Abraham's sober grief on the loss of Sarah and Jacob's patience under affliction. Here it seems to be employed to denote a state of feeling towards the ignorant and erring balanced between severity and undue leniency. It is carefully selected to represent the spirit which becomes a high priest as a mean between two extremes. On the one hand, he should be able to control the passions provoked by error and ignorance, anger, impatience, disgust, contempt. On the other hand, he must not be so amiable as not even to be tempted to give way to these passions. Ignorance and misconduct he must not regard with unruffled equanimity. It is plainly implied that it is possible to be too sympathetic, and so to become the slave or tool of men's ignorance or prejudices, and even partaker of their sins; a possibility illustrated by the histories of Aaron and of Eli, two high priests of Israel. The model high priest is not like either. He hates ignorance and sin, but he pities the ignorant and sinful. He is

free alike from the inhuman severity of the pharisee, who thinks he has done his duty towards all misconduct when he has expressed himself in terms of unmeasured condemnation regarding it, and from the selfish apathy of the world, which simply does not trouble itself about the failings of the weak. He feels resentment, but it is in moderation; disgust, but it is under control; impatience, but not such as finds vent in ebullitions of temper, but such rather as takes the form of determined effort to remove evils with which it cannot live on friendly terms. All this of course implies a loving, kind heart. The negative virtue of patience implies the positive virtue of sympathy. The model high priest is one in whose heart the law of charity reigns, and who regards the people for whom he acts in holy things as his children. The ignorant for him are persons to be taught, the erring sheep to be brought back to the fold. He remembers that sin is not only an evil thing in God's sight, but also a bitter thing for the offender; realizes the misery of an accusing conscience, the shame and fear which are the ghostly shadows of guilt. All this is hinted at in the word *μετριοπαθεῖν*, whereby at a single stroke the writer *photographs* the character of the model high priest.

The character thus drawn is obviously congenial to the priestly office. The priest's duty is to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin. The performance of this duty habituates the priestly mind to a certain way of viewing sin: as an offence deserving punishment, yet pardonable on the presentation of the appropriate offering. The priest's relation to the offender is also such as demands a sympathetic spirit. He is not a legislator, enacting laws with rigid penalties attached. Neither is he a judge, but rather an advocate pleading for his client at the bar. Neither is he a prophet, giving utterances in vehement language to the Divine displeasure against transgression, but rather an intercessor imploring mercy, appeasing anger, striving to awaken Divine pity.

But the special source to which sacerdotal sympathy is traced is the consciousness of personal infirmity. "For that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." The explanation seems to labour under the defect of too great generality. A high priest is no more human in his nature and experience than other men, why then should he be exceptionally humane? Two reasons suggest themselves.

The high priest was *officially* a very holy person, begirt on all sides with the emblems of holiness, copiously anointed with oil, whose exquisite aroma typified the odour of sanctity, arrayed in gorgeous robes, significant of the beauty of holiness, required to be so devoted to his sacred calling and so dead to the world that he might not mourn for the death of his nearest kin. How oppressive the burden of this official sanctity must have been to a thoughtful, humble man, conscious of personal infirmity, and knowing himself to be of like passions and sinful tendencies with his fellow worshippers! How the very sanctity of his office would force on the attention of one who was not a mere puppet priest the contrast between his official and his personal character, as a subject of solemn reflection. And what would the result of such reflection be but a deepened self-knowledge, a sense of unworthiness for his sacred vocation, which would seek relief in cherishing a meek and humble spirit, and in manifesting a gracious sympathy towards his brethren, considering himself as one also tempted; and would gladly hail the return of that solemn season—the great day of atonement—when the high priest of Israel offered a propitiatory sacrifice *first* for his own sins, and then for the people's.

Another source of priestly benignity was, I imagine, habitual converse in the discharge of duty with the erring and the ignorant. The high priest had officially much to do with men, and that not with picked samples, but with men in the mass; the greater number probably being

inferior specimens of humanity, and all presenting to his view their weak side. He learned in the discharge of his functions to take a kindly interest in all sorts of people, even the most erratic, and to bear with inconsistency even in the best. The poet or philosopher, conversant chiefly with ideal men, heroes invested with all imaginary excellences, is prone to feel disgust towards real common men, sadly unheroic and unromantic in character. The high priest had abundant opportunities for learning that the characters even of the good and devout are very defective, and he was thankful to find that their hearts were right with God, and that when they erred they were desirous to confess their error and make atonement. He looked not for sinless, perfect beings, but at most only for men broken-hearted for their sins, and bringing their trespass offering to the altar of the Lord.

The account given of priestly sympathy prepares us for appreciating the statement which follows concerning the need for a Divine call to the priestly office. "And no one taketh the honour to himself, but only when called by God, as indeed was Aaron" (ver. 4).

No one, duly impressed with his own infirmities, would ever think of taking unto himself so sacred an office. A need for a Divine call is felt by all devout men in connexion with all sacred offices involving a ministry on men's behalf in things pertaining to God. The tendency is to shrink from such offices, rather than to covet and ambitiously appropriate them. The sentiment, *nolo episcopari*, which has ever been common in the best days of the Church, is not an affectation of modesty, but the expression of a deep reluctance to undertake the onerous responsibilities of a representative man in religion by all who know themselves, and who realize the momentous nature of religious interests. The sentiment is deepened by the reflection that the office is honourable as well as sacred. For it is a

maxim which calls forth a response from every healthy conscience, that men should not seek honours, but be sought for them, it being but an application of the proverb, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth."

Having stated the general principle that a Divine call is necessary as an inducement to the assumption of the priestly office, the writer passes to the case of Jesus Christ, whom he emphatically declares to have been utterly free from the spirit of ambition, and to have been made a high priest, not by self-election, but by Divine appointment. Of the two texts quoted in proof of the assertion, the second, taken from Psalm cx., naturally appears the more important, as containing an express reference to Messiah's priesthood. This oracle, the key to the whole doctrine of the epistle on the subject in question, is introduced here for the first time, very quietly, as if by the way, and in subordination to the more familiar text already quoted from the second Psalm bearing on Messiah's sonship. Here once more we have occasion to admire the oratorical tact of the writer, who, having in mind to present to his readers a difficult thought, first puts it forth in a stealthy, tentative way, as if hoping that it may thus catch the attention better than if more obtrusively presented; just as one can see a star in the evening twilight more distinctly by looking a little to one side of it, than by gazing directly at it.

It is difficult to understand, at first, why the text from the second Psalm, "My Son art Thou," is introduced here at all, the thing to be proved being, not that Messiah was made by God a Son, but that He was made a Priest. But on reflection we perceive that it is a preliminary hint as to what sort of priesthood is signified by the order of Melchisedec, a first attempt to insinuate into the minds of readers the idea of a priesthood belonging to Christ altogether distinct in character from the Levitical, yet the highest possible, that of one at once a Divine Son and a Divine

King. On further consideration it dawns on us that a still deeper truth is meant to be taught; that Christ's priesthood is co-æval with His sonship and inherent in it. Only when we find this idea in it do we feel the relevancy of the first citation to be fully justified. So interpreted it contains a reference to an *eternal* Divine call to the priesthood, in consonance with the order of Melchisedec, which is described farther on as "having neither beginning of days nor end of life"—eternal *à parte ante*, as well as *à parte post*. Thus viewed, Christ's priestly vocation ceases to be a mere accident in His history, and becomes an essential characteristic of His position as Son: sonship, Christhood, priestliness, inseparably interwoven.

From the pre-incarnate state, to which the quotations from the Psalter refer, the writer proceeds to speak of Christ's earthly history: "Who, in the days of His flesh." He here conceives, as in a later part of the epistle He expressly represents<sup>1</sup> the Christ as coming into the world under a Divine call to be a Priest, and conscious of His vocation. He represents Christ as under training for the priesthood, but training implies previous destination; as an obedient learner, but obedience implies consciousness of His calling. In the verses which follow (7, 8) his purpose is to exhibit the behaviour of Jesus during His life on earth in such a light that the idea of usurpation shall appear an absurdity. The general import is: "Jesus ever loyal, but never ambitious; so far from arrogating, rather shrinking from priestly office, at most simply submitting to God's will, and enabled to do that by special grace in answer to prayer." It is implied that this is a true account of Christ's whole behaviour on earth; but the special features of the picture are taken from the prelude to the passion, the agony in the garden, where the truth of the representation becomes startlingly conspicuous.

<sup>1</sup> Chapter x. 5.

In the description of the tragic experiences of that crisis, we note the pains taken to lay bare the *infirmity* of Jesus, the object being to show the extreme improbability of one who so behaved assuming the priestly office without a Divine call. The familiar fact that Jesus prayed that the cup might pass from Him is stated in the strongest terms: "When He had offered prayers and supplications with strong crying"; and a particular is mentioned not otherwise known, that the prayers were accompanied with "tears." Jesus is thus made to appear manifesting, confessing His weakness, frankly and unreservedly; even as the high priest of Israel confessed his weakness when he offered a sacrifice for himself before he presented an offering for the people. Whether the writer had in his view a parallel between Christ's agony in the garden and the high priest's offering for himself it is impossible to decide, although several things give plausibility to the suggestion, such as the use of the sacrificial term *προσενέγκας* in reference to Christ's prayer in the garden.<sup>1</sup> What is certain is that he is careful to point out that Christ was compassed with infirmity not less real, though sinless, than that which in the case of the Jewish high priest made it necessary that he should offer a sacrifice for himself before offering for the people; the moral being, how unlikely that one who so shrank from the cup of death should be the usurper of an office which involved the drinking of that cup!

The hearing of Christ's prayer referred to in the last clause of ver. 7 belongs to the description of His sinless infirmity. Whether we render, "And being heard for His piety," or "and being heard (and delivered) from the fear" (of death as distinct from death itself), is immaterial;<sup>2</sup> in

<sup>1</sup> Hoffmann, *Schriftbeweis*, ii. 399, earnestly contends that such a parallel is intended. Vide *The Humiliation of Christ*, p. 277, where I have stated and adopted his view. I still feel its attraction, but I am not so sure that the alleged parallel was present to the writer's mind.

<sup>2</sup> Opinion is very much divided as between these two renderings of the words

any case the answer consisted in deliverance from that fear, in courage given to face death. Some have supposed that the reference is to the resurrection and ascension. But it is not permissible to read into the passage a hidden allusion to events of such importance. Moreover the reference is excluded by the consideration that all that is spoken of in ver. 7 leads up to the main affirmation in ver. 8, and must be included under the category of learning obedience. The last clause of ver. 7 describes the attitude of one who shrank from death, and who was at length enabled to face death by special aid in answer to prayer delivering him from fear; that is to say, of one who in all that related to the passion was only learning obedience. The point to be emphasised is, not so much that the prayer of Jesus was heard, as that it needed to be heard; that He needed heavenly aid to drink the appointed cup.

To perform, or even to attempt, such a task without a conscious Divine call was impossible. Even with a clear consciousness of such a call it was difficult. That is the truth stated in ver. 8, in these terms: "Though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience from the things which He suffered." Freely paraphrased these words mean: In His earthly experience Christ was so far from playing the part of one who was taking to Himself the honour of the priesthood, that He was simply throughout submitting to God's purpose to make Him a Priest; and the circumstances were such as made obedience to the Divine will anything but easy, rather a painful process of learning. Reference is made to Christ's sonship to enhance the impression of difficulty. Though He was a son full of love and devotion to His Father, intensely, enthusiastically loyal to the Divine

*εισακουσθεις ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας*, many weighty names being on either side. Bleek supports the first view, Bengel the second. On the whole, the weight of authority and of argument inclines to the rendering, "being heard for His piety, or His godly fear."

interest, ever accounting it His meat and drink to do His Father's will, yet even for Him so minded it was a matter of arduous learning to comply with the Father's will *in connexion with His priestly vocation*. For it must be understood that the obedience here spoken of has that specific reference. The aim is not to state didactically that in His earthly life Jesus was a learner in the virtue of obedience all round, but especially to predicate of Him learning obedience in connexion with His priestly calling—obedience to God's will that He should be a Priest.

But why should obedience be so difficult in this connexion? The full answer comes later on, but it is hinted at even here. It is because priesthood involves for the Priest death (ver. 7), mortal suffering (ver. 8); because the Priest is at the same time victim. And it is in the light of this fact that we clearly see how impossible it was that the spirit of ambition should come into play with reference to the priestly office in the case of Christ. Self-glorification was excluded by the nature of the service. One might be tempted to take unto himself the honour of the Aaronic priesthood, though even with reference to it one who fully realized its responsibilities would be disposed to exclaim, "Nolo pontifex fieri." A vain, thoughtless, or ambitious man might covet the office of Aaron, because of the honour and power which it conferred. In point of fact, there were many ambitious high priests in Israel's last, degenerate days, as there have been many ambitious ecclesiastics. But there was no risk of a self-seeker coveting the priestly office of Christ, because in that office the Priest had, not only to offer, but Himself to be the sacrifice. With reference to such a priesthood, a self-seeker would be sure to say, "I do not wish it; I have no taste for such an honour." Yea, even one who was no self-seeker might say, "If it be possible, let me escape the dread vocation"; and he would accept its responsibilities only after a sore struggle

with the reluctance of sentient nature, such as martyrs have experienced before appearing with serene countenance at the stake. The holy, sinless Jesus did indeed say "no" for a moment in reference to this unique sort of priesthood. His agony in Gethsemane, so touchingly alluded to in our epistle, was an emphatic "no," which proved that, far from proudly aspiring, He found it hard even to humbly submit to be made a priest.<sup>1</sup>

The verses which follow (9, 10) show the other side of the picture: how He who glorified not Himself to be made a priest was glorified by God; became a priest indeed, efficient in the highest degree, acknowledged as such by His Father, whose will He had loyally obeyed. "And being perfected became to all who obey Him author of eternal salvation, saluted by God 'High Priest after the order of Melchisedec.'" A weighty, pregnant sentence, setting forth the result of Christ's earthly experience in terms suitable to the initial stage of the discussion concerning His priestly office, implying much that is not expressly stated, and suggesting questions that are not answered, and therefore liable to diverse interpretation.

"Being perfected," how? In obedience, and by obedience even unto death, perfected for the office of priest, death being the final stage in His training, through which He became a *Pontifex consummatus*. Some think the reference is to the resurrection and ascension. So, *e.g.*, Pfeiderer, who thus argues: "*τελειωθείς* is not the moral perfecting in the learning of obedience through suffering, but a new moment, the last result of that learning, through which Christ was placed in a position to become the cause

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the agony in the garden, I have said in *The Humiliation of Christ*, "That agony was an awfully earnest, utterly sincere, while perfectly sinless, *nolo Pontifex fieri*, on the part of One who realized the tremendous responsibilities of the post to which He was summoned, and who was unable for the moment to find any comfort in the thought of its honours and prospective joys" (p. 276).

of blessedness. What that condition is we gather partly from the connexion, partly from ver. 7. There it is said that Christ prayed to His Father to save Him from death, and was heard for His piety. This piety is then described in ver. 8; whereupon ver. 9, with *τελειωθείς* takes up the *είσακουσθείς* of ver. 7, and so says that He was saved from death, which of course in this case is to be referred to the exaltation following on the resurrection."<sup>1</sup> It is a plausible and tempting line of thought, but I cannot help feeling that the writer of our epistle has studiously avoided such specific references, and expressed himself in general terms fitted to convey the moral truths involved independently of time and place. I therefore see no reason for assigning to *τελειωθείς* a different meaning from that which seemed to be the most appropriate in chapter ii. 10.

Being made perfect in and through death, Jesus became *ipso facto* author of eternal salvation, the final experience of suffering, by which His training for the priestly office was completed, being at the same time His great priestly achievement. Such I take to be the writer's meaning. This interpretation implies that in his view the death of Christ was a priestly act, not merely a preparation for a priesthood to be exercised afterwards, in heaven. Nay, not merely a priestly act, but the great priestly act, the fact-basis of the whole doctrine of Christ's priesthood. I have no doubt that such is the case. It is noteworthy, in this connexion, that the first and the last times the writer refers to the subject of Christ's priestly work, chapter ii. 9 and chapter x. 10, it is to His death that he gives prominence: "that He should taste death for every man";

<sup>1</sup> *Paulinismus*, p. 344. Pfeiderer finds a reference to the heavenly state in all the texts which speak of the perfecting of Christ. He holds moreover that where the word is used in reference to men, it includes in its meaning the idea of glorification, combining the Pauline *δικαιοῦν* with the Pauline *δοξάζειν*; the combination illustrating the characteristic ambiguity of the epistle in regarding the Christian salvation as at once a present and a future good.

“ we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.” That Christ’s priestly ministry is placed in the heavenly sanctuary is not less certain, and the two views seem to be in flat contradiction to each other. Whether they can be reconciled and how are questions which may come up for discussion hereafter ; meantime let us be content to leave the two views side by side, an unresolved antinomy, not seeking escape from difficulty by denying either.

The statement that through death Jesus became *ipso facto* author of salvation is not falsified by the fact that the essential point in a sacrifice was its presentation before God in the sanctuary, which in the Levitical system took place subsequently to the slaughtering of the victim, when the priest took the blood within the tabernacle and sprinkled it on the altar of incense or on the mercy-seat. The death of our High Priest is to be conceived of as including all the steps of the sacrificial process within itself. Lapse of time or change of place is not necessary to the accomplishment of the work. The death of the victim, the presentation of the sacrificial blood—all was performed when Christ cried *Τετέλεσται*.<sup>1</sup>

It is not the writer’s object in this place to indicate the nature of “salvation,”—that is, the precise benefit procured for men by Christ as Priest,—but simply to indicate the fact that He attained to the high honour of being the source or author of salvation. Two facts however he notifies respecting the salvation of which Christ is the author : that it is *eternal*, and that it is available for those who *obey* Him. The epithet *αἰώνιος*, here used for the first time, frequently recurs in the sequel. It is one of the great, characteristic

<sup>1</sup> Some theologians, such as Professor Smeaton, contend for an entrance “within the veil” by Christ, with His blood, in His disembodied state, immediately after His death on the cross. The feeling which dictates this view is right, but the view itself takes too literally and prosaically the parallel between Christ and the Jewish high priest. For Professor Smeaton’s view vide *The Apostles’ Doctrine of the Atonement*, p. 48.

watchwords of the epistle, intended to proclaim the absolute final nature of Christianity, in contrast to the transient nature of the Levitical religion. Possibly it is meant here to suggest a contrast between the *eternal* salvation procured by Christ and the *annual* salvation effected by the ceremonial of the great day of atonement. More probably its introduction at this place is due to the desire to make the salvation correspond in character to the Melchisedec type of priesthood, whose leading feature is perpetuity: "Thou art a Priest for ever." To the same sense of congruity it is due that obedience to Christ is accentuated as the condition of salvation. Christ became a Saviour through obedience to the will of His Father, and it is meet that He in turn should be obeyed by those who are to receive the benefit of His arduous service. It is a thought kindred to that expressed by Christ Himself when He spake of the Son of man laying down His life for the many as the way He took to become the greatest, and to be ministered unto by willing subjects.

The Divine acknowledgment of Christ's priestly dignity, referred to in ver. 10, is not to be prosaically interpreted as a formal appointment; whether a first appointment, as some think, to an official position now commencing in the state of exaltation, or a second confirming a first made long before, alluded to in the Messianic oracle quoted in ver. 6 from Psalm cx.<sup>1</sup> It is rather the animated recognition of an already existing fact. Christ, called from of

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Rendall takes this view. He says: "The language of this verse and the context alike point to a new appointment quite distinct from that recorded in the Psalms, though both refer to the same Melchisedec priesthood. Psalm cx. has been cited as evidence of the earlier appointment of God's Anointed by prophetic anticipation to a priesthood. This verse declares the formal recognition of His *high* priesthood by a Divine salutation addressed personally to Jesus" (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 45). I agree with him so far as to recognise the distinction between the two appointments, only I cannot regard the expression "*formal* recognition" as true to the spirit of the passage commented on.

old to be a priest in virtue of His sonship, and made a priest indeed by His arduous training on earth, is cordially owned to be a priest when the death which completed His training, and constituted Him a priest, had been endured—whether immediately after the passion or after the ascension must be left undetermined. The style is dramatic, and the language emotional. God is moved by the spectacle of His Son's self-sacrifice, as of old He had been moved by the readiness of Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, and exclaims, "Thou art a Priest indeed!" That the writer is not thinking of a formal appointment, which creates a position previously non-existent, appears from the liberties he takes with the words of the oracle which contains the evidence that Christ was a God-called Priest: "high priest" substituted for "priest," and "for ever" omitted. The former of these changes is specially noteworthy. It is not accidental and trivial, but intended and significant. The alteration is made to suit the situation: Christ, already a High Priest in virtue of functions analogous to those of Aaron, and now and henceforth a priest after the order of Melchisedec. The oracle, as adjusted, combines the past with the future, the earthly with the heavenly, the temporal with the eternal.

Translated into abstract language, ver. 10 supplies the *rationale* of the fact stated in verse 9. Its effect is to tell us that Christ became author of eternal salvation because He was a true High Priest after the order of Melchisedec: author of *salvation* in virtue of His being a priest, author of *eternal* salvation, because His priesthood was of the Melchisedec type—never ending.

The words put into the mouth of God serve yet another purpose: to indicate the lines along which the writer intends to develop the subject of Christ's priesthood. His plan is to employ two types of priesthood to exhibit the nature of the perfect priesthood of the absolute final religion—the order of Aaron, and the order of Melchisedec.

I say not that he means to teach that Christ occupied successively two priestly offices, one like that of Aaron, the other like that of Melchisedec, the former on earth, the latter in heaven. That is too crude a view of the matter. His plan rather is to utilize the Aaronic priesthood to set forth the nature of Christ's priestly functions, and the Melchisedec priesthood to set forth their ideal worth and eternal validity; and he here as it were lets us into the secret. The plan in both its parts is based on Scripture warrant, to be produced at the proper place. This view of the writer's method is not to be summarily set aside by the assertions that priest and high priest are synonymous terms, and that the functions of all orders of priesthood are the same. As to the one point, it is enough to say that the writer uses the two words with discrimination: "priest" when likening Christ to Melchisedec, "high priest" when comparing Him with Aaron. As to the other, it is to be remarked that no mention is made of sacrificial functions in connexion with Melchisedec's history as given in Genesis, and that the writer evidently does not choose to ascribe to him functions not spoken of in the record. Arguing from his way of drawing inferences from the silences of history, one might rather conclude that because he found no sacrificial functions mentioned in the story, he therefore assumed that such duties as were performed by Aaron about the tabernacle did not enter into the idea of the Melchisedec priesthood.

The words, "high priest after the order of Melchisedec," containing the programme of the discussion about to be entered on, we expect to find the two topics suggested taken up in this order: first, Christ as High Priest; next, Christ as Priest after the order of Melchisedec. In point of fact, they are taken up in the inverse order. Why, we may be able to discover in a future paper.

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