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THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

XII. THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEC (CHAP. VII. 1-10).

HAVING unburdened his heart by these words of complaint and charitable hope, our author proceeds to determine the nature of the Melchisedec order of priesthood, and to demonstrate its superior and supreme value. Before considering his method of fixing the type, and showing its ideal worth, it may be helpful to offer here some introductory observations on the writer's aim in introducing into his treatise this remarkable speculation, if I may so designate it, or the function which the latter performs in his argument.

The section concerning the Melchisedec type of priesthood serves, I think, a double purpose. First, and in some respects foremost in importance, there is the apologetic purpose. The writer eagerly lays hold of the Melchisedec priesthood, as a means of showing that Christ might be a priest, though not possessing the legal qualifications for the Levitical priesthood. Here is a priesthood, represented in the oracle of Psalm cx. as of a different order, to which Jesus, as the Messiah, may lay claim. This new type of priesthood, other than Levitical, further serves well the apologetic aim by its priority in point of time. The new type is older than the Levitical, supposed alone to possess legitimacy; nay, is the oldest type known to history. In comparison with this ancient order, the Levitical priesthood is an upstart. But what if this order were only a rude, imperfect, irregular sort of priesthood, good enough for those old-world times, and graciously accepted by God in absence of a better, but destined to pass away when a regularly established priesthood came in, not worthy to continue side by side therewith, and not fit to be referred

to as establishing a new sort of priesthood, claiming to supersede the Levitical? In that case it would be a mere impertinence to refer to that rude, primitive priesthood to justify the antiquation of the divinely instituted, not merely graciously tolerated, priesthood of the sons of Levi. This would be a very natural view of the matter for Jewish minds to take; and the apologist of Christianity could not be sure that it would not suggest itself to the Hebrew Christians whom he sought to establish in the faith. The possibility was present to his mind, and he amply provides for it in his argument by unfolding the full significance of the oracle in Psalm cx., pointing out that the priesthood of Melchisedec is there referred to, not as a rude, irregular, inferior sort of priesthood, the continuance of which, in times of established order, were absurd or impious, but as the highest sort of priesthood, the very ideal of priesthood, a priesthood fit for kings, as opposed to sacerdotal drudges. "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." Here," says our apologist in effect, "here is Melchisedec's priesthood erected into the dignity of an eternal priesthood, a priesthood worthy to be established by an oath, a priesthood which would not dishonour a king, nay, a priesthood fit even for Messiah; for you, my readers, believe this to be a Messianic psalm. See how possible it is for Jesus to be not only a priest, but *the Priest par excellence*, though not of the house of Aaron."

The Melchisedec priesthood a distinct type, the most ancient, and, though ancient, yet not rude, but rather the better, and the best possible, such are the moments in the apologetic argument, which has for its aim to prove that the priesthood of Christ is at once real, and of ideal worth. One cannot help comparing this use of the Melchisedec priesthood in our epistle with that made by Paul of the *promise* in the Epistle to the Galatians.¹ The promise,

¹ For some interesting observations on this parallel between Paul and the

argued Paul, was *before* the law, and therefore above it: the law came in afterwards, not to supersede the promise, but to serve a purpose in subordination to it; and when that purpose is fulfilled, the law must pass away, that the promise may come into full effect, and the reign of grace begin.¹ Both lines of thought tend in the same general direction, that of establishing the independence and absolute worth of Christianity over against Judaism. Paul, by his line of thought concerning the promise, establishes the absolute worth of Christianity as against *legalism*; the author of our epistle, by his line of thought concerning the Melchisedec priesthood, establishes the same truth as against *Leviticalism*, thereby exhibiting himself as in full sympathy with the Pauline system, if not as a direct disciple of the great Gentile apostle.

Besides the apologetic purpose of the Melchisedec section, we may distinguish a dogmatic one. In saying this, I do not mean that the writer himself makes any such formal distinction, or deals with the relative material successively from the apologetic and the dogmatic points of view; but merely that we may regard what he has written on the subject from the latter point of view as well as from the former. Dogmatically considered, the section exhibits the Melchisedec priesthood as a symbol of the eternal validity of Christ's priestly functions. In this connexion, the expression "for ever" in the oracle from the Psalter is the point emphasized. In his scheme of thought, our author employs the Aaronic type of priesthood to convey an idea

writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, *vide* Pfeiderer's *Paulinismus*, p. 365. The idea of Christ as a priest after the order of Melchisedec, he represents as strictly a pendant to the Pauline philosophy of religion. The apologetic value of the Melchisedec priesthood is not destroyed by the fact of his not belonging to the Jewish people. No Jew could say, "What is Melchisedec or his priesthood to us? He was a mere heathen." The priest of Salem was drawn into, and, as it were, naturalized in the history of Israel by Abraham receiving the benefit of his priestly benediction, and recognising him as the priest of the most high God.

¹ Gal. iii. 17.

of the nature of Christ's priestly functions, and the Melchisedec type to symbolize the everlasting duration of His priestly office. Hence, in determining the characteristics of the latter type, it is to the attribute of eternity that he gives prominence (ver. 3). But it would be a mistake to suppose that he attaches no importance to any other attribute, or means to suggest that none but the one emphasized enters into the idea of the type. The contrary is evident, from the way in which he deals with the history of Melchisedec, in order to determine the nature of his priesthood. It is further evident from the nature of the case. Eternity is the main fact, but the question inevitably arises, Why is the Melchisedec type of priesthood eternal? The answer must be, because it is perfect, because it possesses ideal value. Eternity and ethical worth go together. We see this, and that the writer saw it will forthwith appear. The "order of Melchisedec," as he conceived it, did not mean merely an eternal priesthood, but a priesthood of such a nature, that its eternity follows of course.

It is not surprising that the ancient priest of Salem took so strong a hold of an imaginative, philosophic mind like that of our author. Melchisedec is a striking figure in the early history of mankind. The reference to him in the Hebrew Psalter shows that from of old he had attracted the attention of men of prophetic gifts in Israel, and that in the few facts narrated concerning him such men had been able to discern an ideal significance. That Philo would have something to say about him might have been anticipated. But what he says is not important or stimulating. One searching the writings of the Alexandrian philosopher, in quest of thoughts concerning Melchisedec similar to those in our epistle, and fitted to support the hypothesis that the writer drew his inspiration from him, is doomed to disappointment. Philo does not quote or refer to the text in Psalm cx., and there is nothing in all

his writings to show that he followed the psalmist in ascribing to Melchisedec an ideal significance. What Bleek says is strictly true, that in Philo the significance of Melchisedec is always treated of in an incidental manner.¹ On the whole, he speaks of the priest of Salem with respect, though one phrase might almost suggest that he conceived of his priesthood as of the rude character above indicated. I refer to that passage in which he describes it as a "self-learned, self-taught priesthood."² There is certainly nothing in his writings to justify the representation that on the subject of Melchisedec the writer of our epistle borrowed from him. We can fairly claim for our author originality, so far, at least, as Philo is concerned. He got his inspiration, not from the Jewish philosopher, but from the Hebrew prophet who wrote Psalm cx. And what he got from the poet's brief pregnant word was but an impulse, a starting point, a slight hint, which only a mind of an equally high order could appreciate, and which for generations of Bible-readers had remained dead, unproductive, almost unobserved. All honour to the man, through whose philosophic genius, illuminated by the Spirit of Christ, the grain of precious wheat, after abiding alone for ages, at length attained to abundant fruitfulness, in the form of a theory concerning the Melchisedec priesthood of Jesus Christ, preserved for our instruction in the seventh chapter of this epistle, whose contents we now proceed to consider!³

¹ *Hebräerbrief*, ii., p. 323, note.

² ὁ τὴν αὐτομάθῃ καὶ αὐτοδιδασκτον λαχὼν ἱερωσύνην, in the tract *De Congr. Erud. Gr.*, cap. xviii. In another place Philo speaks of God having made Melchisedec a priest by an act of grace, without regard to any meritorious work of his: *ερέα ἐαυτοῦ πεποίηκεν ὁ Θεός, οὐδὲν ἔργον αὐτοῦ προδιατυπώσας* (*Leg. Allegor.*, iii. 25). In the same place Melchisedec is compared to reason, the point of the comparison being, that reason is able to discourse worthily of God, the highest of all themes, and Melchisedec was the priest of the most high God: *ἱερεὺς γὰρ ἐστὶ λόγος* (not ὁ λόγος), *κλῆρον ἔχων τὸν ὄντα, καὶ ὑψηλῶς περὶ αὐτοῦ λογιζόμενος*. "For Reason is a priest, having Him who is for his inheritance, and reasoning loftily concerning Him."

³ I am surprised to find Dr. Edwards treating the passage relating to Mel-

The first part of the chapter (vers. 1-10) has for its object to determine the type, or to fix the meaning of the expression, "after the order of Melchisedec." In the opening paragraph, the writer condenses into one closely packed sentence every particular of typical significance in reference to the mysterious personage whose priesthood is represented in Psalm cx. as the model of Messiah's. Of the things here said, some are plain enough, being simply a repetition of the historical facts as stated in the book of Genesis; others are indeed hard to be understood, and have given rise to great variety of interpretation. Yet it is possible to exaggerate the difficulty of these enigmatical statements, and so to make the whole discourse about Melchisedec a cloud of mist, obscuring the great truth of Christ's priestly office, rather than a light shining in a dark place, through which a subject ill understood becomes clearer to the mental eye. The meaning of this remarkable passage can be ascertained, in proof whereof it is enough to adduce the fact, that the leading expositors of ancient and modern times are in the main agreed as to the sense.

Let us note first the structure of this long sentence. The main proposition, stripped of all adjuncts (and these are so numerous that the fact might escape notice), is, "For this Melchisedec abideth a priest for ever, or continually." Hence the word *γάρ* (for), with which the chapter begins. At the close of chapter vi. it is said of Jesus, that He entered heaven, to be there a High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec; the idea implied being, that eternal endurance is an essential characteristic of the Melchisedec priesthood. Here this thought is justified by the

chisedec as a mere allegory borrowed from Philo, which "cannot be intended by the apostle to have direct inferential force." If Christ's priesthood is not proved at this point in the epistle, it is not proved at all. The writer certainly thinks he is proving it. The whole stress of his argument lies on the apologetic value of the Melchisedec priesthood.

assertion that the typical Melchisedec had a priesthood, whose nature it is to abide for ever.

Of the participial or relative clauses lying between the beginning and the end of the sentence, the first five, down to the words ἐμέρισεν Ἀβραάμ (ver. 2, clause 1), recapitulate the historical facts concerning Melchisedec; the remaining eight are a comment on the history, intended mainly to justify the statement that Melchisedec abideth a priest continually, and incidentally to suggest other characteristics of the priesthood that abideth. This analysis yields three categories under which the contents may be ranged: first, the *facts*; second, the *commentary*; third, the main proposition or *doctrine*.

1. The facts are simple and need little explanatory comment. Melchisedec is called "king of *Salem*," which most commentators regard as the name of a *place* to be identified with Jerusalem. He is next called "priest of the most high God," the title being exactly reproduced from the Septuagint. The third fact referred to is the meeting between Melchisedec and Abraham, on the return of the latter from his victorious battle with the kings. That the writer has his eye on the page of the Septuagint appears from the use of the Hellenistic word κοπή, employed by the Seventy to express the idea of defeat or slaughter.¹ The fourth fact mentioned is that Melchisedec blessed Abraham. The words of blessing are not quoted, the aim being simply to emphasize the fact that Abraham was blessed by Melchisedec. Last in the list of facts comes the gift of a tenth of the spoil to Melchisedec by Abraham, an act of worship on the patriarch's part, whereby he recognised God as the universal proprietor and Melchisedec as His priestly vice-regent.

2. For the better understanding of the writer's *commentary* on these facts, we must recall to mind the practical

¹ Gen. xiv. 17.

design of this whole excursus concerning Melchisedec. It is to determine the notes of the ideal perfect priesthood of the Christ, as typified by the priest of Salem. For this purpose he finds it necessary to attach importance, not merely to what is said of Melchisedec in the history, but to what is *not* said. He gets at the ideal by laying stress on the *silences* as well as on the *utterances* of the narrative in Genesis. Whatever we may think of his method of reasoning, there can be no doubt of the fact that he does so reason, and the fact must be frankly recognised, if we are to get at his real thought. He finds, *e.g.*, that no mention is made of the parentage or genealogy of Melchisedec, and he regards that as significant. And on reflection one sees that he has some reason for doing so, and that his method of fixing the notes of the Melchisedec order is not so arbitrary or fanciful as at the first blush we are apt to imagine. This inspired commentator is by no means a blind disciple of the rabbis in his method of exegesis. The lack of a genealogy in the case of Melchisedec is undoubtedly a significant circumstance, at once suggesting the thought that here we have a priesthood of a different sort from that of the tribe of Levi. For in connexion with the Levitical priesthood parentage, genealogy, was of fundamental importance. To be a priest in Israel it was necessary to belong to the tribe of Levi, and no man might exercise sacerdotal functions who could not trace his lineage to the house of Aaron. If therefore, so far as the history is concerned, Melchisedec was fatherless, motherless, without genealogy, it must signify, for the typical interpretation, that his was a sort of priesthood that had no connexion with parentage or descent, depending on personal not on technical external qualifications.¹

¹ In Philo, Sarah is called ἀμήτωρ because the name of her mother is not mentioned. But, as Bleek has pointed out, by the epithet Philo does not mean merely that Sarah was motherless so far as the record is concerned, but that she had no mother.

That this is the true explanation of those mysterious epithets ἀπάτωρ, ἀμήτωρ, ἀγενεαλόγητος there is no room for doubt. Equally certain is it that the two following phrases, "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life," are to be explained on a similar principle. Here also significance is attached to the silences of history. The narrative in Genesis makes no allusion to the birth or the death of Melchisedec; so far as the record is concerned, he is without beginning of days and end of life. He makes a mysterious, momentary appearance out of eternity on the stage of time, then disappears for ever from view, to be mentioned only once again in Old Testament Scripture in a psalm which represents his priesthood as the ideal priesthood, and, on the principle that whatever is ideal is Messianic, as the type of Messiah's priesthood. Our author assumes that in fixing on the Melchisedec priesthood as the ideal, the psalmist laid stress on the absence of all reference to birth or death in the historical account, and so obtained eternal duration as one of the marks, as the outstanding mark, of the kind or order. He for his own part sees no other way whereby the attribute of eternity can be shown to be a mark of the Melchisedec order; and that it is a mark is a point settled for him by the fact that it is so represented in the prophetic oracle.

The last clause in the commentary need not now cause us much trouble. "Made like unto the Son of God." The words simply put in different form the thought contained in the previous clause. The intention is to suggest a parallel between Melchisedec and the Son of God in their respective relations to time. The Son of God as Son of man, like Melchisedec, had both a birth and a death; yet as Son of God He had neither beginning of days nor end of life. And Melchisedec is likened unto Him in this, that his life, so far as the record is concerned, is "shrouded in the mystery of eternity."

Having thus explained the more difficult part of the commentary, let me revert now to the easier portion, hitherto overlooked. "Being first by interpretation (of the name Melchisedec) king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace." A mystic significance is assigned to the priest's name, and to the name of the city over which he ruled. It is assumed that these names, mystically interpreted, are to be taken into account in determining the marks of the "order of Melchisedec." No other reason can be given why the writer thinks it necessary to explain their meaning. He did not need to tell his Hebrew readers the literal meaning of the words *Melchi*, *Zedec*, *Salem*. He interprets them because he wishes to suggest ideas entering into the "order" of which these words are the symbols, the ideas of *royalty*, *righteousness*, and a royal priesthood resulting in *peace*, or exercised in a region of peace remote from the passion, temptation, and strife of this world. And this is just what was to be expected. For it is not enough to know that the new (yet most ancient) order of priesthood is eternal. We want, further, to know the intrinsic nature of a priesthood to which it belongs to be eternal. That the new order is eternal is a fact, if you please it is the main fact; but the fact has its *rationale*, and our demand is to know the *rationale*. Our author recognises the demand as reasonable, and does his utmost to meet it; and we accept these interpretations of names as a welcome contribution to the solution of the problem. The above-mentioned attributes, royalty, righteousness, etc., are therefore by no means to be regarded as "only accessories," which "might conceivably be absent without derogating from His Melchisedec priesthood." They are no more accessory than is perfection accessory to the Christian religion, which throughout the epistle is declared to be eternal. Christianity is the final, perennial religion, because it is the perfect religion, the

religion which for the first time established a real, unrestricted fellowship between man and God. In like manner the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec is eternal, because in it for the first time the ideal of priesthood is realized, and all the conditions of an absolutely efficient exercise of priestly functions are fully satisfied.

Not one merely, but five notes are specified as belonging to the Melchisedec type of priesthood. Taking them in the order in which they are referred to in the text, it is first, a *royal* priesthood (*king* of righteousness); second, a *righteous* priesthood (*king* of *righteousness*); third, a priesthood promotive of *peace*, or exercised in the country of peace (*king* of *peace*); fourth, it is a *personal*, not an inherited dignity (without father, without mother); fifth, it is an *eternal* priesthood (without beginning of days or end of life). The first four are related to the last as cause to effect. Because the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec possesses these characteristics, it is eternal.

3. A word now on the main affirmation, that Melchisedec "abideth a priest continually." The variation in expression (*εἰς τὸ διηνεκές* instead of *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*, vi. 20) is probably made out of regard to style, rather than to convey a different shade of meaning. The point to be noted is, that it is affirmed of the historical Melchisedec that he is a priest for ever. In what sense is this true? The statement is to be understood in the same way as all the others of similar startling character. Melchisedec had neither predecessor nor successor in office. We know of one priest of Salem, and but one. He lives in Scripture and in our imagination the priest of the city of peace. If he had had in the history, as doubtless he had in fact, a successor in office, we should have said of him that he *was* the priest of Salem in the days of Abraham. As the case stands, he *is* the priest of Salem. He is known and lives in sacred history by that name, and in that respect, as well

as in others, is an apt type of the one, true, eternal Priest of humanity. More than this may be said. Not only does Melchisedec abide in name the priest of Salem, but his priestly acts have an abiding value. His blessing on Abraham had a lasting effect. Levi was blessed (as well as tithed) in Abraham; all the generations of Israel got the benefit of that blessing. It is a great thing for a people to have a Melchisedec at the fountain-head of its history, a man fitted by genuine holiness and righteousness to transact on behalf of his fellow men with God. The prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and the life of a saintly man availeth much. Such prayers and such lives are the bread and wine of life to men, from generation to generation.

Such then is the "order of Melchisedec," and such are the notes of that august order. The question might now be raised, Does the order thus determined absolutely coincide with the ideal order? in other words, Is the order of Melchisedec, possessing the above-mentioned characteristics, the highest order of priesthood conceivable? It is a question in speculative or philosophical theology. To answer it, it would be necessary to form a conception of an ideally perfect priesthood, and then to ascertain how far the marks of the Melchisedec order covered the ground. Thus we might say: The ideal priest must be really, not merely ritually, holy; he must not be a mere sacerdotal drudge, offering daily *ex officio* the statutory tale of sacrifices, but one whose whole priestly ministry is a course of gracious condescension—a royal priest, whose sacrifice is the outcome and highest manifestation of free, sovereign love; he must be one who by his personal worth and official acts is able to establish a reign of righteousness, peace, and perfect fellowship between man and God; finally, he must be one who never dies, ever lives, hath a priesthood that does not pass from him to another, as a guarantee for the maintenance of peace and fellowship. If this be the ideal, then

the Melchisedec order comes indefinitely near to its realization; its notes all point that way, though they are so rapidly indicated, that their full import cannot be certainly determined, but can only be guessed at. The words *king*, *righteousness*, *peace* are very suggestive, but the writer has not attempted to appreciate their precise value in relation to the order, preferring to leave them vague, provocative of thought, rather than satisfying the intellectual craving for knowledge, as is the way of Scripture writers in general.¹

While not attempting the philosophical task of showing that the order of Melchisedec satisfied the requirements of the ideal, our author takes pains to show that that order is, at least, vastly superior to the order of Levi. This is the burden of what follows of chapter vii. (vers. 4-28). No less than five arguments are adduced in support of the thesis: one based on the personal dignity of Melchisedec, three on the oracle in Psalm cx., and the fifth based on the contrast between *many* and *one*: many priests under the order of Levi, one priest under the order of Melchisedec. The first, as a pendant to the statement concerning the nature of the order, may be considered here; the rest will form the subject of the next paper.

How great was this man, Melchisedec! He was greater even than Abraham, the great, august patriarch of our race; therefore greater than his descendants, including the tribe of Levi. Such is the drift of vers. 4-10.

Two facts are adduced as showing that Melchisedec was greater than Abraham. He received tithes from the patriarch, and he gave him his blessing. To bring out the significance of the former fact a comparison is made between the tithe-taking of Melchisedec and the similar

¹ Mr. Rendall suggests that the kingly aspect of Christ's Melchisedec priesthood, while evidently regarded by the writer as of essential importance, is not made prominent from prudential reasons. "The title in the mouth of Hebrews was readily susceptible of a treasonable construction at the time of the national Jewish rebellion."

privilege of the Levitical priesthood (vers. 5, 6). "It is true indeed that those of the sons of Levi who receive the office of the priesthood have a commandment, are entitled by statute, under the Mosaic law, to tithe the people, though they be their brethren descended from the same ancestor. But Melchisedec, who hath no part in their genealogy (and therefore no legal right), nevertheless tithed Abraham." Such is the drift of these verses, and the point specially emphasized is, that the right of the Levitical priest is only a legal right. He is not intrinsically superior to his fellow Israelites; they are all his brethren. Only a positive statute gives him the right of tithing his brethren as the means of his support, so that the fact of his receiving tithes is no evidence of personal superiority. But in Melchisedec's case it is different. He had no legal right. There was no law entitling him to receive or compelling Abraham to give tithes. The gift on the patriarch's part was entirely spontaneous. And just because it was so, it was, in the view of our author, unmistakable evidence of Melchisedec's personal greatness. He was so great a man in every sense, that the high-souled patriarch, who scorned to play the part of sycophant towards the king of Sodom, of his own motion, no law or custom compelling, out of pure reverence for worth, offered to the priest of Salem a tenth of the spoil taken in battle. Surely the priesthood of this man, who inspires reverence in the noblest, is of a very high order, superior to that based on a statute, a mere hereditary trade or profession.

In giving tithes to Melchisedec then, Abraham voluntarily acknowledged his superiority. And Melchisedec in turn accepted the position accorded to him by bestowing on the donor his blessing: "And blessed him who had the promises. And without all contradiction, the less is blessed by the better" (vers. 6, 7). The fact is held to be conclusive evidence as to the relative position of the

parties, in accordance with the axiom that it belongs to the superior person to bless. The axiom is certainly true, though it is subject to limitations, holding chiefly with reference to *solemn* benedictions, and with regard even to these only when the parties understand and accept their proper relative positions. The inferior in age, status, worth, influence may assume the position of blessing giver if he be conceited, forward, impudent. But in all cases it is true that it belongs to the better to bless the less. It is the place of the father to bless his son, of age to bless youth, as when Jacob blessed his son Joseph and his two grandsons, or Simeon blessed Mary the mother of Jesus. It is no exception to the rule that Jacob blesses Pharaoh ; for such is the dignity of age, that the humblest peasant whose head is hoary, and whose feet have walked through life in the paths of righteousness, may with perfect propriety give his blessing to a king.

To enhance the greatness of Melchisedec as the bestower of blessing, it is carefully noted that the receiver of blessing was he who had the promises. It was no small matter to bless the man who had the promises ! How great must he have been, who, without presumption, might give his blessing to the man whom the Maker of heaven and earth had called to be the father of a great nation, and to be a fountain of blessing for all the nations !

But it is Melchisedec's superiority over the Levitical priests that our author is really concerned to establish. For this purpose he states or suggests no less than four arguments. First, greater than the ancestor, therefore *à fortiori* greater than all or any of his descendants. This argument is suggested by the epithet "patriarch" (ὁ πατριάρχης) attached to the name of Abraham in ver. 4, and placed at the end of the sentence for emphasis. Second, greater than the sons of Levi, even in the respect in which they were superior to their brethren of the other

tribes; they receiving tithes in virtue of a legal right, he receiving tithes in virtue of a higher moral right freely and cordially acknowledged by the giver. Third, greater in this, that in receiving tithes from Abraham, he virtually received tithes from his descendants, including the tribe of Levi (vers. 9, 10). Fourth, he received tithes as one who continues to live, the Levitical priests receive tithes as men that die (ver. 8).

The third argument is curious. The reasoning may appear to us more subtle and ingenious than convincing; and the writer himself seems to hint that it must be taken *cum grano* by introducing it with an apologetic phrase: "And so to say (καὶ ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν) through Abraham Levi also, the receiver of tithes, was tithed; for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him." Yet the statement will bear examination. It simply proclaims in a concrete form the principle that Abraham, in all the leading transactions of his life, was a representative man. To many this idea of solidarity appears a mere theological fiction. But it is not so, indeed: it is a great law whose operation is discernible in the whole course of human history. There are individuals in whose personal life the history of whole races is, as it were, summed up. Abraham was one of these. God's call to him was a call to Israel. God's blessing to him was a blessing to the human family. In like manner we may say that Melchisedec's blessing on Abraham was a blessing on all his descendants, and that Abraham's offering of tithes was an act of homage from the people of Israel to the priest of Salem. Therefore, in addressing Hebrews, who recognised the federal principle, and gloried in some of its applications, *e.g.* in being the people to whom belonged the covenants and the promises and the fathers, the writer of our epistle was justified in pressing this thought into the service of his argument, and so inviting his readers to open their minds to the truth

that, while within the race there were men bearing the title of priest, there was a higher priesthood, with reference to which these priests were simple laymen, paying tithes, doing homage thereto, receiving blessing therefrom, just like ordinary men.

The fourth argument seems the least cogent of all. Even the fact-basis of it may appear questionable. Melchisedec is described as a person testified to as living. Where is the testimony borne? Not in Psalm xc., for the statement there is made concerning Messiah, not concerning the historical Melchisedec. If it be supposed that the testimony is implicitly contained in the expression, the order of Melchisedec, that order having eternity for one of its attributes, we are still thrown back on the narrative in Genesis as the basis of that attribute, and therefore as the original source of the witness. But the witness of the history is not positive, but negative. The story does not say that Melchisedec continued to live; it simply omits to say that he died. We have here therefore another inference from the *silence* of Scripture. The meaning is, though the historical Melchisedec doubtless died, the Melchisedec of the sacred narrative does nothing but live. Stress is laid on the omission of all reference to the death of the priest of Salem to hint that the receiving of tithes from Abraham has significance for all time. The type is regarded as continuing to receive tithes from Abraham's descendants, because the antitype is entitled to receive tribute from all men of all generations. Under the Levitical system dying men received tithes, and when they died their claim died with them or was transmitted to their successors. The true Priest never dies, and therefore is ever able to save, and therefore ever also entitled to receive a Saviour's homage, the tithes of grateful love and faithful service.

I must not close this chapter without remarking on one feature in the "order of Melchisedec" which is conspicuous

by its absence, its universalism. Melchisedec, though priest of the most high God, did not belong to the Jewish race. The order of priesthood named after him ought therefore to exist, not for Jews only, but for humanity. The Priest after that order must be the great High Priest of mankind. The writer here, as throughout the epistle, is silent on this point, but doubtless he has it in his mind.

A. B. BRUCE.

ST. PAUL AND THE GALATIAN JUDAIZERS.

II.

II. 11-14. The open rebuke which St. Paul addressed to St. Peter at Antioch is the only existing trace of personal collision between the two Apostles. He had been hitherto, with the one exception of St. Paul, the most prominent champion of Gentile freedom from the law. On three successive occasions, first at Cæsarea, then at Jerusalem upon his return, and again at the apostolic council, he had stood forward to vindicate the rights of the uncircumcised. But at Antioch the question was revived in a more insidious form. The right of Gentile converts to Christian baptism was no longer directly disputed after the decision of the council. But a fresh appeal was made to Jewish scruples on the plea of reverence for the law of uncleanness; it was represented that, though Gentile Christians were themselves free, yet Jewish Christians were forbidden by the law to associate with uncircumcised brethren. This was not, it appears, St. Peter's own view; but he first, and Barnabas after his example, were tempted in moments of weakness to yield so far to the prejudices of Jewish brethren as to withdraw from the free and unrestricted intercourse