

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

The Epistle to the Hebrews deals mainly with the two great offices of Christ as Revealer and as Priest. It is clear that the author consciously coördinates the two. In the opening verses which serve as a prelude to the entire Epistle we have side by side: "God spake in a Son" and "Having made purification of sins He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high". But especially Chap. iii. 1, is interesting from this point of view. Here the Saviour is called "Apostle and Highpriest of our confession". The article, put only once, binds the two conceptions most closely together: He is Apostle and Highpriest in one, and His chief value for the believer consists in His being the two jointly; hence He forms as such the content of the confession and the readers are exhorted carefully "to consider" Him in this twofold capacity.

While the Epistle has in common with the other New Testament writings the representation of Christ as Revealer, it stands practically alone in explicitly naming Him a Priest. It were rash to infer from this that the conception was first created by our author. The sacrificial character of the death of Christ was a common article of faith long before. This was held in connection with Is. liii. Now it is precisely in Is. liii that the Servant of Jehova figures not merely as the passive lamb of sacrifice, but also as He who actively and freely pours out his soul unto death (verse 12) or even, according to the rendering, made his soul an offering for sin (verse 10). The CXth Psalm had been interpreted Messianically by Jesus Himself: His followers cannot have forgotten, that thereby He ascribed to His own Person the character of a Priest-King. Also the prophecy of Zach. vi. 12, 13, might easily have led to the same con-

ception, although there seems to be no positive evidence to this effect. According to Paul Christ is not merely the sacrifice, but also the one who brought the sacrifice, Eph. v. 2, and throughout the Apostle emphasizes the fact that He gave Himself up to death freely. How easily the idea of a mediatorial position between God and man closely approaching that of the priesthood might associate itself with this appears from 1 Tim. iii. 5: "For there is one God, one Mediator also between God and men, Himself man, who gives Himself a ransom for all." Closely related is the further thought that Christ makes intercession for believers in heaven, Rom. viii. 34. This again leads on to the conception of the *παράκλητος* in the Gospel and Epistles of John, especially in 1 John ii. 1. Further the Apocalypse represents believers as made by Christ "kings and priests to God", or "priests of God and of Christ", i. 6; v. 10; xx. 6; inasmuch as Christ's Kingship is prior to that of believers, indeed the source of the latter, it is likely that the writer on the same principle derives the priesthood of believers from a priesthood of Christ. A similar representation is found in 1 Pet. ii. 5: Christians are "a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ". It ought not to be overlooked, however, that these last analogies differ in one essential point from the teaching of Hebrews: they speak of believers being priests jointly with Christ, whereas according to our Epistle the Saviour's priesthood is something unique and incommunicable (cf., however, Chap. xiii. 15, "Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of lips which make confession to his name").

In Jewish literature analogies are not lacking. In places of the Talmud, where the heavenly sanctuary is spoken of, Michael or the Metatron appears as the officiating high priest.¹ The thought is likewise expressed that the Messiah

¹ The passages are given by Schöttgen, *Horae hebraicae et talmudicae in universum N. T.*, pp. 1212-1222, from Sohar, and by Röth, *Epistolam Vulgo*, etc., p. 17, and Tholuck in his comment on chap. viii. 1, from the tract Chagiga.

is dearer to God than the high priest Aaron.² In a Targum-passage, the Messiah is represented in connection with Is. liii. as making intercession for the sins of the people and bearing their sins.³ Philo speaks much of his Logos as high priest; he calls him μέγας, depicts him as sinless, emphasizes his mildness and benevolence, makes Melchizedek his type, ascribes to him the work of intercession. He even speaks of the Logos as having the twofold office of representing sinful man with God and of being God's messenger to man. But a great difference exists between Philo's conception and the doctrine of our Epistle. It concerns the total absence in Philo of the soteriological, expiatory element. Philo's main interest lies in cosmical speculation and spiritualizing, and this controls his treatment of the Old Testament institutions as well as of other things. The antitypical sanctuary is the kosmos or the soul. In these the Logos is high priest. He stands metaphysically between God and the world. He is pledge to God that the world will not sink back into chaos, pledge to man that God will always retain interest in his creation, and thus he is the herald of peace from God to man. He represents not humanity alone, but the physical world and its elements, for which he makes prayers and offers thanksgiving. It is true Philo speaks of the reconciling of man with God as a function of the Logos. But even for this no real expiation is required. In the ethical sphere his task is simply to separate the good from the evil, to stand between the people of God and their pursuers. From the ritual sacrifices Philo does not rise to a truly expiatory sacrifice of a higher order, but simply to the spiritual sacrifice of the heart.

In the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* occurs a remarkable passage (*Test. Levi*, 18), being a prediction about a priest-king, also compared to a prophet, who will perform various eschatological acts. There are several features in this passage which render it analogous to the

² *Aboth*, R. Nathan, chap. xxxiii.

³ Quoted by Schöttgen, *Horae hebraicae et talmudicae in theologiam Judaeorum*, p. 653.

representation in Hebrews. It is probably based on the CXth Psalm. The priest-king is brought into connection with Abraham. It is said that he will have no successor in eternity. At the time of his priesthood all sin disappears, the wicked cease doing evil, he opens the gates of paradise, removes the sword that threatened Adam, and gives the saints to eat of the tree of life. He binds Beliar and gives to his own children power to tread on the evil spirits. On the other hand, it should be observed that this Messianic priest is here derived from the tribe of Levi and no reference is made to any expiatory function.

The question why in the Epistle to the Hebrews, among all New Testament writings, the conception of Christ as Priest and Sacrifice, the whole expression of the gospel in terms of the ritual, plays such a prominent part still presses for an answer as much at the present day as ever before. It is true on the old view, which up to R \ddot{o} th (1836) held undisputed sway, and according to which the Epistle is addressed to Jewish-Christians living in Palestine and personally interested in the temple-service, the answer appeared obvious. But this view seems of late to have been losing ground, especially after the searching criticism to which it was subjected by von Soden in 1884. Even Zahn abandons it. The new view is not, however, necessarily distinguished from the old in that it affirms the Gentile-Christian character of the readers. It may do this, as is the case with von Soden, but it need not. Zahn, while absolutely detaching the Epistle from the local Jewish environment of Palestine and the temple-worship, yet advocates the Jewish nationality of the Christian readers, whom he seeks in Rome. Harnack is unjust in accusing Zahn of having only partially emancipated himself from the old tradition, simply because he continues to affirm that the readers were Christians from the Jews. This is unjust, we say, because the grounds on which Zahn affirms the latter are altogether independent of the old view, have in fact nothing whatever to do with the ritual content of the Epistle, and therefore, if sound, demand

recognition, wherever the readers may be located, and whatever interpretation may be placed upon the teaching of the Epistle. The specific difference of the new and spreading opinion is rather exclusively this, that it holds the ritual character of the content of the Epistle should not be explained from any direct personal concern of the readers with the Jewish ceremonial; and that it upholds this negative even where on other grounds the Jewish nationality of the readers is still maintained.⁴ No matter whether the readers were Christians from the Jews or the Gentiles, some other explanation is sought for the prominence of the ideas of priesthood and sacrifice. Now this modern view, it must be acknowledged, is able to present a respectable array of evidence in its favor. It is hard to acquit Bruce of rashness when he simply brushes it aside as "a brilliant paradox". But Bruce was quite right in his perception, that what was the strong point of the old view, constitutes the weak point of the new view, viz., its manner of dealing with the pronounced ritual character of the Epistle. The old view accounted for this with ease and naturalness; of the new theory the same can hardly be said. Of course, if the Epistle

⁴ The detachment of the Epistle from the circle of Jewish-Christians in Palestine does not necessarily involve that the readers could have no practical personal interest in the temple-worship. Not even the dating of the Epistle after 70 A. D. would necessarily involve this. Among the Jews of the dispersion a lively interest in the temple and its service was kept up. After the destruction of the city and temple, the religious interest of the diaspora still continued to a certain extent to revolve around them. The Jews could not know and did not believe that the destruction would be permanent. In the Epistle of Barnabas the Jews are accused of still placing their confidence in the temple. Holtzmann has shown that the present tenses used where the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the Old Testament ceremonial, occur also in Josephus, 1 Clement, Ep. ad Diognetum, all writings from after the year 70. (*Z. f. Wiss. Theol.*, 1867, pp. 9 seq. Cf. also Friedmann and Grätz in *Theol. Jahrb.* 1848, pp. 338 seq.) It might be argued that if such an attachment persisted among the diaspora-Jews, it might likewise have continued among the Jewish-Christians of the dispersion. Still how an attachment of this kind could, in the case of Christians, give rise to any serious religious danger, is hard to conceive, and, as a matter of fact, not much use has been made of the above possibility in more recent attempts to solve the riddle of Hebrews.

be not a true letter, but a theological homily, as among others Reuss, Deissmann, and quite recently the late Wrede,⁵ have asserted, there is no further explanation required for this peculiarity than the individual taste or preference of the author. We hardly believe, however, that this view, even after Wrede's skillful advocacy, will gain wide acceptance. The epistolary conclusion of the document is against it, and to declare this the product of an afterthought of the writer is a critical *tour de force*.

But, if we are dealing with a true letter, then the reason for the prominence and pervasiveness of the ritual element must be sought with the readers, not with the author in the first place. And here the new view has certainly made too light of the problem in hand. Von Soden held, and it has been extensively repeated after him, that the whole comparison between the two covenants and the two rituals serves no other than a mere theoretical purpose; it is simply the most convenient argument by means of which the writer seeks to convince the readers of the ideal character of Christianity as the perfect religion. The aim is nowhere to depreciate the old covenant, but exclusively to exalt the new. The Old Testament was the only Scripture to which the author could resort in theological argument, hence what more natural than that he should make extensive use of it? But is this really an adequate explanation? The problem is not why the writer operates so largely with the Old Testament, nor even why he so insistently places the new dispensation above the old, but, far more specifically, why he proceeds in both respects in such a peculiar way as to concentrate his argument almost exclusively upon the question of priesthood and sacrifice. By a mere dependence on the Old Testament this can scarcely be accounted for. There are after all many other important things in the Old Testament besides the ritual. We find it impossible to believe that the purport of the entire comparison is purely theoretical, that its concrete character does not stand in any connection whatever with

⁵ *Das literarische Rätsel des Hebräerbriefs*, 1906.

the practical difficulty of the readers. Let us grant that the modern view has succeeded in overthrowing the notion of a threatened relapse into Judaism and an argument aimed at preventing this is, after all, no more than a negative conclusion; as to the positive problem what the whole discussion of priesthood and ritual is for, we are left in the dark. So far as we know the only serious attempt to throw light upon this subject is that made by Kögel in his treatise, "*The Hidden Character of Jesus as the Messiah, the Problem of the Epistle to the Hebrews*", 1899,⁶ a treatise which in our opinion has not received the attention it deserves. Kögel's trend of thought is as follows. The author addresses himself to readers who were in a deplorable spiritual condition due to religious externalism. What he offers them is intended as an antidote against this fundamental defect. More particularly the externalism of the readers had assumed a Christological form, whence the writer immediately places the figure of the Son in the foreground. There was a lack of appreciation of the true spiritual value of Christ's Person and work. In the second chapter it appears to what cause this was specifically due. From the fifth verse onward the writer is occupied with demonstrating the reasonableness and necessity of the humiliation, the sufferings and death of Christ. The readers evidently had shrunk from the idea of the Saviour's humiliation, and they shrank from this because of the thought of extreme glory they associated with the conception of Messiahship. Already in the second chapter the subject of the priesthood of Christ is lightly touched upon (vss. 17, 18), and that for the purpose of convincing the readers of the necessity of Christ's earthly humiliation and weakness. This renders it probable that in the sequel also the elaborate presentation of the same theme will be in some way intended to meet the same difficulty. The first reference to a topic which lay uppermost in a writer's mind would almost inevitably reflect the point of

⁶ Cf. also, by the same author, *Der Sohn und die Söhne, eine exegetische Studie zu Hebräer*, ii. 5-18, 1904, reviewed in this REVIEW, July 1905.

view from which he had been mainly considering it. As a matter of fact, the author does handle the theme of the priesthood of Christ in the sequel so as to make it meet an objection arising from the externalistic prepossessions of the readers. As they took exception to the humiliation, so they took exception to the exaltation of the Saviour, not of course as such, but because it involved His absence, invisibleness, the unostentatious character of his ministry in a remote sphere. On earth the Messiah's glory was veiled by His lowliness, in heaven it is withdrawn from sight through His exaltation. But the disposition which finds fault with both is in each case in principle the same: it is the desire to see, to have near, to touch, in a word, religious externalism. Now in order to meet this, the writer follows the same method he had followed in the second chapter. He explains that the very point of objection constitutes the source of value and efficacy in the Saviour's career. The invisibleness, the remoteness of the present activity of Jesus, far from interfering with its efficacious character, is precisely the ground of the latter. And for the purpose of doing this no better plan could possibly have been pursued than to represent Christ's work under the aspect of a ministration in the heavenly sanctuary. The whole discussion of the priesthood serves primarily the end of justifying the necessity of Christ's heavenly state of existence and heavenly mode of ministry. It is intended to bring out the superiority of the spiritual, invisible, as over against the sensual, and visible. Because he desired to work out this contrast, and for no other reason, the author has drawn the elaborate comparison with the Old Testament ritual within the scope of his argument. The Old Covenant, through the very externality and visible-ness and earthliness and temporalness of its institutions, furnished an admirable foil to exhibit the glories of the spiritual, invisible, heavenly, eternal aspect of the work of Christ. It was a mistake to infer from the historical comparison which the Epistle draws that the difficulty of the readers lay likewise in the historical sphere. Closely looked

at the whole historical comparison appears to be subservient to the setting forth of the theological contrast between the sensual and the spiritual worlds, and it is in connection with this latter antithesis that we must look for the writer's diagnosis of the evil he seeks to correct. The readers were not at fault in showing any preference for the forms of the Old Testament cult in the concrete, theirs was a spirit of externalism, which virtually reproduced the Old Testament standpoint, even though it involved no craving for the ceremonies of the Old Covenant religion.

It is interesting to observe that this view of Kögel follows closely along the lines of the view of Riehm in his well-known work on the *Teaching of Hebrews*. Riehm already recognized the main fault in the readers to which the Epistle addresses itself as religious externalism. He likewise perceived that this fault did not concern exclusively the question of ceremonial, but bore also a Christological and eschatological aspect. But with Riehm all this was still coupled with the old opinion that the readers were Jewish-Christians of Palestine, and that their externalism assumed the specific form of reliance on the sacrificial cult, still in existence at the time of writing. Dr. Kögel entirely dispenses with this, and besides, both in the thoroughness and in the originality with which the principle is carried out, advances far beyond Riehm. The nationality of the readers becomes entirely immaterial on his view. While in point of fact, over against the modern proposal to make them Gentile Christians, Dr. Kögel adheres to the old theory that they were Christians from the Jews, this has nothing to do with his main argument. He does not base this conviction on the prominence which the ritual conceptions of priesthood and sacrifice obtain in the Epistle, but on other grounds. Acceptance of his view by no means carries with it assent to this specific opinion. Religious externalism, while a typical fault of Judaism, was certainly not a fault to which Gentile Christians were immune.

The view just presented throws an interesting light on

the fact that the Epistle by preference calls Jesus high priest. It is true both priest and high priest are used. But the two are not used indiscriminately. Wherever priest is found there is a special reason for its appearance. High priest is the normal designation. In the quotations from the CXth Psalm it was necessary to use "priest" because the Messiah is there so designated in dependence on the title given to Melchizedek in Genesis. The only exception is Chap. v. 10, where the quotation, however, is somewhat free. Wherever the contrast is between the Melchizedek order and the Levitical order of priesthood, "priest" was, of course, specially in place (Cf. Chap. vii, up till verse 22, also viii. 4.) In Chap. x. 21 we would expect "high priest", but here probably the addition of the adjective *μέγας* made the prefix *ἀρχι* appear superfluous. But as a rule the author reveals a special interest in representing the Saviour as high priest, not merely as priest in general. The explanation for this will suggest itself on observing that the one transaction in the Old Testament ritual on which the Epistle dwells more than on any other feature and the act to which it makes the central act of Christ's priestly ministry correspond, is the entrance of the high priest into the holy of holies on the day of atonement. The Saviour is a high priest because in the discharge of his ministry He enters into heaven. This is of the very essence of his priestly work, whence also in Chap. vii. 26 the "made higher than the heavens" is placed, as one of the two great requisites, side by side with "separated from sinners", Cf. further iv. 14; vi. 20; viii. 1, 4; ix. 11; x. 25. But, if the subject of the priesthood is pointedly treated in such a way as to make it in its central aspect identical with entrance into heaven, then the inference lies near, that the whole discussion of this subject ultimately serves the purpose of showing the necessity of the exaltation, of the heavenly state of existence of the Saviour. There is reason, as has been shown, to believe that the readers took offense at this, because it clashed with their externalistic conception of Christ and his

work and with their practical desire for a visible, present Saviour: In answer to this the author emphasizes that the Saviour is a high priest and that as such the only place where He can properly dwell and effectually minister is the heavenly sanctuary.

The first and most general element entering into the author's conception of a priest is that of leadership based on identification with those who are led. A priest is one who stands at the head of others and thus mediates their approach unto God. Thus the movement of the priestly function is in a direction opposite to that of the prophetic function. The prophet officiates from God to man, represents God with man; the priest officiates from man to God, represents man with God. In the passage v. 1-10, which sets forth the qualifications of a high priest, this is expressed by the words: "Every high priest is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God" (*τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν*, cf. ii. 17). Priesthood, however, is not leadership in general; it is distinctly leadership based ὄν and involving identification of nature and experience. The rendering of the term *ἀρχηγός* in ii. 10 and xii. 2 by either "author" or "captain" is inadequate precisely for this reason, that it leaves the element of identification in experience unexpressed. While *ἀρχηγός* etymologically and according to usage may mean both "author" and "captain", the writer in the two passages cited attaches to it a more specific sense. The *ἀρχηγὸς τῆς σωτηρίας* is one who leads others unto salvation by himself treading the path of salvation before (cf. v. 7); the *ἀρχηγὸς τῆς πίστεως* is one who leads others to faith by himself exercising faith in an ideal manner. Similarly the *ἀρχηγὸς τῆς ζωῆς* in Peter's speech, Acts iii. 15, is not merely the Ruler of life, but the one who first entered into life for his own person and now dispenses life unto others. That the author of Hebrews uses the term with this specific connotation appears from the fact that elsewhere, where the content requires no reference to it, he contents himself with employing the quite general term

αἴτιος, v. 9, "author of salvation". The word *πρόδρομος* in vi. so shares with *ἀρχηγός* this reference to identification in experience, the "forerunner" being one who not merely leads and opens access, but also anticipates in himself the enjoyment of the access he mediates to others. Back, however, of the identification in experience lies the more fundamental identification of nature. The priestly leadership is such that it cannot be performed by one who stands outside of the circle in whose interests he serves. The author accordingly emphasizes in the definition of v. 1 *seqq.* that a high priest must be *λαμβάνόμενος ἐξ ἀνθρώπων* "taken from among men". The force of the participle present should be noticed: "one who is constantly, in each case, taken from among men", the permanent force of the requirement thus being brought out, as Westcott has strikingly observed. In this respect the priesthood differs from the prophetic and in general the revealing office. Angels can be and have been revealing agents. In connection with the revealing work of Christ the author nowhere reflects upon the fact, of which the modern Christian consciousness is so apt to make overmuch, viz., that in order to perform this work properly Christ needed to be man. On the contrary, here all the emphasis is thrown upon the thought that the Son's unique greatness, his difference from, his exaltation above man constitutes his chief qualification for the revealership. As a revealer He represents not man but God, therefore the nearer He stands to God the better He is qualified. As a priest, on the other hand, He represents man and his qualification is measured by his nearness to man. It is of importance to notice this point, because in Judaism a tendency prevailed to place intermediate angelic beings between God and man, because direct contact between God and the world had come to be regarded as derogatory to the divine majesty. This tendency showed its influence not merely with regard to the manward movement of revelation, but likewise with regard to the Godward movement of religious approach, as *e. g.*, when the archangel Michael

is represented as ministering at the altar in the heavenly sanctuary. Our author not merely makes the high priest a man, but insists upon it that the very nature of his office requires him to be a man.

Back of the identification of experience and the identification of nature lies a still deeper one, that of spiritual relation to God. This finds expression in Chap. ii. 11, "He that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are all of One". "To sanctify" is the specific work of a priest, so that we may substitute: "The priest and those whom he serves as priest are all of One." But the "oneness" here spoken of does not relate to physical oneness through descent, as if by the *εἶς* Adam or Abraham were designated. It is a spiritual bond of unity, the One of whom all are is God. They are all sons of God in the religious sense, as appears clearly from the following quotations, by which the author shows that Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren, speaks of them as His children, and trusts in God His Father, as they trust in Him. Only, because they are one in this deeper, spiritual sense, it becomes necessary that they shall be identified in the common possession of flesh and blood. The author therefore adds this by way of inference in the 14th verse: "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also in like manner partook of the same." And similarly on the participation in flesh and blood is built the further assimilation in all things, *i. e.*, in all experiences of human life according to verses 16, 17. In this passage, then, the three successive steps through which the priestly identification with the people passes are carefully marked.

To understand the reason for this identification we must first inquire into what the Epistle teaches concerning the connection between the covenant and the priesthood. Briefly this may be formulated to the effect that the priesthood is center and substance of the covenant, that in which the covenant actually subsists. The clearest expression this principle finds is in Chap. vii. 11-25, containing the com-

parison between the Levitical priesthood of the Old Covenant and the Melchizedek priesthood of the New Covenant. The two priesthoods are here compared from the point of view of their efficacy in giving "perfection", *τελείωσις*. The comparison of the priesthood passes over, however, almost imperceptibly, into a comparison of the two covenants, although the word *διαθήκη* is not used until verse 22. In the very first statement, verse 11, the centralization of the whole religious system in the priesthood finds striking expression, viz., through the parenthetic statement: "for the people under it hath received the law". This parenthesis serves to explain how a demand can be made of the priesthood that it shall lead to perfection. Perfection may be expected of every priesthood, because the whole religious system is centered in it; whatever is true of the system is true of the priesthood, and of course the system is a means to perfection. The priesthood was, as it were, the basis on which the entire structure of Old Testament religion had been reared *ἐπ' αὐτῆς ὁ λαὸς νενομοθέτηται*. The same thought finds formal expression in vs. 12, "Where there is a change of priesthood there is made of necessity a change also of law". The very fact that another priest, a priest of different lineage, arose, one not called after Aaron but after Melchizedek, this very fact proved that the organism of the covenant was being changed by God. The new priest was not simply an *ἄλλος* but a *ἕτερος*, something heterogeneous, we might say, to the law of the Old Covenant. The author proves this first in a rather external way, by the descent of Jesus, not from the priestly tribe of Levi, but from Judah. As soon as the priesthood is transferred from the priestly tribe to another tribe this betokens the breaking up of the old system. Then, however, he proceeds to show the same thing in a much broader and more fundamental way in verses 15-17.⁷ That the law changes with

⁷ The words *καὶ περισσότερον ἔτι καταδηλόν* at the beginning of verse 15 refer back to the proposition of verse 12, "where there is a change of priesthood there is made of necessity a change also of law" and *καταδηλόν* stands on a line with *προδηλόν* of vs. 14.

the priesthood is even more evident from the fact that the new priesthood introduced is of a totally different nature, such as the old law could never have produced. Here it is not merely the law of Levitical descent which is said to have been abrogated, but the law of fleshly descent in general, nay the legal character of the dispensation as a whole, because νόμος (notice the anarthrous κατὰ νόμον) is supplanted by δύναμις, verse 16. It is not a change of species within the genus, but a change of the genus itself. The new priest is ἱερεὺς ἕτερος not ἄλλος. With the appointment of Christ as priest after the order of Melchizedek there follows "the disannulling of a foregoing commandment" and this is equivalent to "the introduction of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God", *i. e.*, of a totally new religious position and outlook. All this already presupposes that the covenant and the priesthood hang inseparably together. Still it is worked out rather from the point of view that, under the Old Covenant, at least, the system, the law, the covenant created and determined the priesthood. In verse 20, however, the author proceeds beyond this point of view to a representation which makes the covenant depend on the priesthood, so far as the new covenant is concerned. The excellence of the new covenant is in proportion to the excellence of the priesthood as evidenced by the oath which God swore at its introduction.⁸ By so much as the oath lends weight to His priesthood, by so much also has Jesus become surety of a better covenant. It becomes very clear from this passage that in virtue of His priesthood Jesus is the ἔγγυος, "surety", of the new covenant. "Surety" means here the one who guarantees that the covenant shall accomplish what it is designed to accomplish. The idea stands in contrast to the inefficacy

⁸ The point of the reference to the oath-swearing is that the new priesthood must be of supreme dignity and power, since God does not swear except in relations of extraordinary importance. The beginning of the Levitical priests lay not in an oath but in a legal ordinance. In their case law determined priesthood, hence the sequence is: oath—priesthood—covenant.

of the Old Covenant, which possessed no such guarantor. What the writer means is that Jesus by His supernatural personality, by His whole character affords the assurance that the covenant administered by Him will be efficacious.⁹ The place taken here by ἔγγυος is taken in Chaps. viii. 6, ix. 15, xii. 24, by μεσίτης "mediator". The μεσίτης is one who stands between parties, especially parties in discord, to bring about a union. But sometimes the word has a more specific sense, in which it approaches ἔγγυος and signifies the one who obligates himself to render the mediation effective. The word μεσέγγυος, which is the classical term for the Hellenistic μεσίτης, expresses by its very form the combination of these two ideas in one. It is not possible to determine with absolute certainty whether our author uses the term in the general or the more specific sense. In the former case Christ's work as μεσίτης might have reference only to the initiating of the covenant at the beginning, being distinct from his work as priest under or in the covenant. In Chap. ix. 19 *seqq.* the mediatorship of Christ is contrasted with the mediatorship of Moses. Now the mediatorship of Moses was something that was confined to the initiation of the covenant and in no wise identified with the priestly λειτουργία under the covenant performed by the Aäronites. Probably, however, the author did not mean to draw a hard and fast distinction between the μεσιτεία and ἱερωσύνη of Christ, whatever might be the case with Moses. The emphasis in Chap. ix. naturally falls on the mediatorship as a work of inauguration, because the covenant is here represented as a testament set in operation by the death of Christ. In Chaps. viii. 6 and xii. 24 the mediatorship certainly includes the continuous priestly ministration. And if the author made the mediatorship coëx-

⁹ The representation is a metaphorical one and should not be pressed so as to make it correspond in concrete detail with the forensic or commercial conception of the modus of the atonement. The old controversy as to whether Jesus became ἔγγυος with God for man, or with man for God, or in both capacities, lies outside of the scope of the passage.

tensive with the priesthood, it becomes probable that he ascribed to it the same assured, infallible character which the priesthood possesses, in other words that he conceived of the *μεσίτης* as a *μεσέγγυος*, as not merely endeavoring to unite but as guaranteeing and effecting the union between God and the people. Even the death of Christ, which set the testament in operation, made it operate with absolute certainty. Both terms, therefore, *μεσίτης* as well as *έγγυος*, are expressive of the principle that the priesthood is the heart and center of the covenant.

From what has been said it follows that the purpose of the priesthood can be accurately determined only in the light of the purpose of the covenant. Now the covenant is conceived of in the Epistle in a twofold way. On the one hand it is an instrumental institution, a means to an ulterior end, which end is variously described as salvation, rest, inheritance, arrival in the heavenly country or the city with the foundations, receiving of the unshakable kingdom. On the other hand it also appears as constituting in itself the ideal of religion realized, the perfect covenant being the consummate approach and nearness to God. As such it is the highest category of religion itself. On the whole, the Epistle follows the former representation. Back of the covenant lie the promises of God, and it is for the fulfilment of these promises that the covenant serves. Hence it is said that the covenant "is enacted upon better promises", viii. 6. This instrumental character of the covenant further appears from its relation to the idea of *τελείωσις* "perfection". The covenant and the priesthood are for the "perfecting" of men, *cpr.* vii. 19, ix. 9, x. 1. From this point of view they have merely to do with the removal of obstacles that keep man separated from God, and after these obstacles have ceased to exist might be conceived of as passing away, having become unnecessary. But, although this side stands in the foreground, the other side is by no means overlooked by the writer. In the passage he quotes from Jeremiah the reality of the covenant is placed in this, that Jehovah is a

God to Israel and Israel is to Jehovah a people, viii. 8-12. Believers are in virtue of the covenant "a household of God", iii. 6. Their life is essentially a *λατρεία*, a religious service, and this *λατρεία* is nothing else but the outward manifestation of the covenant, ix. 14. The covenant is also designated an "eternal covenant", xiii. 20, which implies that it embodies the religious ideal, since as a mere means to an end it could not be eternal. And what is true of the covenant is true of the priesthood. The priesthood also is viewed as embodying in itself the result of all instrumental processes, the attainment of the goal of all religion. Through the priest the people enter representatively into the sanctuary of perfect communion with God. Thus the priest not merely works in their interest, but also receives and enjoys in their behalf the fruit of his own labors. He dwells with God as the first heir of the blessedness to which his ministry has opened the way. And even after they themselves have attained to the position of the same religious privileges he may still be conceived as retaining the old preëminence and as continuing in this function, because in Him the actual approach to God is concentrated in a single point and made externally visible. Thus, according to Chap. xii. 24, the priesthood has its place among the eternal realities of the heavenly world, it forms part of the abiding things believers have "come unto". And the Saviour is called "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" because to his ministration there is no end.

Now, insofar as the priesthood is viewed alongside of the covenant as eternalized, it in a certain sense extends beyond and appears detachable from redemption. Christ will remain a priest even after redemption shall have fully run its course. To this idea, which undoubtedly has a solid basis in the Epistle, an interesting speculation has attached itself, for which the authority of the Epistle can hardly be claimed. If the priesthood extends beyond the redemptive stage, why, it is asked, should it not in the author's conception have preceded, both logically and chronologically, the redemptive

stage? Why not conceive of a head, an *ἀρχηγός*, a priest of unfallen humanity, furnishing the point of contact between men and God, gathering up in Himself the united concerns of men with God, voicing their religious approach to God in its various forms of expression? May not the author have followed Philo, who in some such general sense invests his Logos with priestly character, although here the redemptive phase is entirely lacking? From more than one side it has been affirmed that the Epistle's teaching on the priesthood actually has this wider background of a representative relation apart from sin. It is especially Westcott who by his advocacy of it has given a certain vogue to this view. According to him in the general scheme of Christ's relation to the world, the atonement is a mere incident, a modification made necessary through the entrance of sin. If sin had not entered, the Son would none the less have become the religious head and leader of the human race, and would just as much have become incarnate to discharge this function as He is now under the redemptive economy. Westcott bases this favorite idea of his on two or three passages and does not allow sufficient weight to the fact that it is rather discountenanced than favored by the general trend of the Epistle's teaching on the priesthood of Christ. From the everlasting and intrinsic significance of the priesthood of Christ we may perhaps infer, that in a world without sin there would be a priest to lead and represent humanity in its approach to God, but that in such a case this priest would be the incarnate Son the Epistle gives us no reason to suppose. So far as the priesthood of Christ is concerned, the author everywhere speaks in soteriological terms. In the definition of Chap. v. 1 it is expressly stated that the high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. If the correct reading here be *δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίας ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν*, the "for sins" belongs only to *θυσίας* and the *δῶρα* will appear as not directly connected with sins. The unusual sequence, "gifts and sacrifices", instead of "sacrifices and gifts", might seem

to favor this. If, on the other hand, the $\tau\acute{\epsilon}$ be stricken out, both gifts and sacrifices are affirmed to be "for sins".¹⁰ But even on the former view it does not immediately follow that, because the gifts are not gifts for sins, the need of a high priest for offering them, has nothing to do with the presence of sin. Non-atoning gifts require a priest, not, perhaps, because a priest is absolutely and under all circumstances necessary, in every human approach to God, but simply, it may be, because sinful man cannot directly bring any gift, not even a non-atoning offering, without a priestly mediator. Westcott's conclusion, therefore, as if the passage taught that "man needs an appointed mediator even to bring his gifts to God", is not warranted. Only when for "man" we substitute "sinful man" can we be certain that we do not go beyond the intent of the author. In Chap. ii. 17 "the things pertaining to God" are likewise more closely defined by the following clause: "to make propitiation for the sins of the people". In Chap. vii. 25 the effect of the unchangeable priesthood of Christ is placed in this, that He can save to the uttermost. The main act of Christ's high-priestly work was the entering in, once for all, into the heavenly holy place, and by this He obtained eternal redemption, ix. 12. The purpose of his priesthood is to cleanse the heavenly things by sacrifice, ix. 23. And all that is said in Chaps. ix. and x. about the sacrificial work of Christ presupposes that it has reference to sin.

Westcott appeals to Chap. i. 2, God made the Son "heir of all things". This heirship, he thinks, must be an heirship of the world as such and under all circumstances, not merely an heirship contingent on and determined by redemption, because it corresponds to the mediatorial activity of the Son in creation: "Whom He made heir of all things, through whom He also (*i. e.*, in correspondence with the part assigned to Him in the consummation of the world) made the worlds". As to this last point it might well be

¹⁰ In chap. viii. 3, where the same phrase occurs with the $\tau\acute{\epsilon}$, the reading does not vary.

urged that the correspondence expressed by the "also" is fully preserved when the inheritance of the world on the part of the Son is understood as a redemptive inheritance. As God made the Son the mediator of creation, so He made Him the heir of redemption. The parallelism does not require, that the world shall be inherited by Christ as a purely-created, *i. e.*, natural, world, as distinguished from redemption. But, altogether apart from this, we must make the two strictures that heirship is not equivalent to priesthood and that heirship, if kept separate from redemption, does not involve incarnation. The Son could become heir of the (sinless) world without becoming man; He could not be priest of even such a world without being man. The context does not speak of the Son as incarnate Son exclusively; some of the predicates given Him obviously go back to the state of preëxistence, so that, if the thought of hypothetical heirship of the world under all conditions be found here, there is no need to join with it the thought of incarnation under all circumstances. The passage, therefore, teaches nothing of a priesthood of the Son which He would have discharged in the flesh as the incarnate head of an unfallen race. Nor is such an idea found in another passage quoted by Westcott in support of his view, *viz.*, Chap. ii. 5-10. Here, we are told, the inheritance of the world to come which the exalted Christ receives appears as the realization of the destiny set before the human race at creation according to the words of the VIIIth Psalm. Therefore, the reasoning is, even before the fall in the creation-design of the world it was contemplated that the race should reach its destiny through the incarnation of the Son of God. On this we would comment as follows: If the words of the Psalm on "the Son of Man" were taken by the author of Hebrews as a direct reference to Christ the Messianic Son of Man, a view actually held by not a few commentators, then the passage would actually lend support to Westcott's contention. For in that case it would affirm, that in setting the destiny of the world at creation, God had assigned the

sovereignty over the world to his Son, and that as Son of Man, *i. e.*, as incarnate Son. In other words, provision would have been made from the outset for the incarnation. Even then, however, the question might be raised, whether we had anything more here than a sort of supralapsarian representation, in which creation appears as subordinated to redemption, and therefore subordinated to redemptive heirship, not to non-redemptive heirship. But, as a matter of fact, this personal Christological interpretation of the phrase "Son of Man" is almost certainly incorrect. Westcott himself does not follow it. He assumes, and in our opinion quite correctly, that the writer of Hebrews interprets the "Son of Man" of the Psalm as referring to humanity generically. What the writer therefore affirms on the basis of the Psalm is that at the creation sovereignty over the world was destined to the human race. Up to verse 9 the "Man" and "Son of Man" of which he speaks is not an individual, not Christ, but mankind. Then in the 9th verse he makes the affirmation, that the fulfilment of this promise given to mankind originally, can be in principle beheld in the exalted Christ. But this is entirely an *à-posteriori* statement. The author by no means affirms that, contingently speaking, if sin had not entered, the form of fulfilment of the promise given to the race, would have been the same as it is now. This was a purely speculative question, which he hardly put to himself. It is quite true, God must have known from the very first, when He instituted the order of creation with its implied promise to the race, what would be the concrete form it was to assume in its realization. But God also knew from the very first, that sin would come into the world. Beyond the common supralapsarian representation this does not carry us; it does not demonstrate, that there was a divine purpose or promise to make the Son the human heir of humanity's destiny apart from sin and redemption. And even, though all this were to be overlooked, it would still have to be remembered that not the priesthood of Christ, but rather his royal office, his lordship over the world to come, is here spoken of. Application of the principle ex-

pressed to the priesthood would have to rest on inference.

Leaving, then, this speculation to one side and keeping ourselves within the limits set by the explicit statements of the Epistle itself, we are now prepared to answer the question why the priest must be identified with the people in the manner indicated above. Both for the absolute and for the instrumental significance of his office this is necessary. If He is to express in His own Person the nearness of men to God, then He must obviously partake of human nature, since otherwise no direct contact between God and man could be established. A priest who was not man would make a separation between the two parties in the covenant, just as a revealer who was not "the Son" would fall short of bringing the ideal direct speech of God to mankind. Whatever such a priest might do for the covenant in other directions, he could not realize in himself the consummation of the covenant in which God and man directly meet without any intervening agent of a different nature. This is the meaning of Christ's being ἀρχηγός and πρόδρομος. As He fulfills the destiny of the race in His lordship over the world to come, so He fulfills its destiny in entering upon the closest contact with God. He is within the veil. If we draw nigh to God it is through the fresh and living way He Himself has dedicated. Hence also it is not human nature in the abstract that is demanded for Jesus, but human nature placed in that specific spiritual relation to God which is expressed by the ideas of Sonship and faith, as the quotations in Chap. ii. 11-13 prove.

Most of the statements of the Epistle, however, bring the necessity of the identification of Jesus with human nature and human experience into connection with the instrumental aspect of His priesthood. The possession of human nature was necessary for the great act of sacrifice which consisted in His death. In a subsequent article we intend to discuss the much-mooted question, whether the writer represents Jesus as acting with reference to his death in the capacity of a priest or rather makes the priesthood begin with the entrance into heaven, so that the death would be excluded

from it. It is not necessary to prejudge this question here, because, even in case the answer were given in favor of the latter opinion, still the death would remain the necessary basis of the subsequent priestly ministrations in heaven, and what is indispensable for the act of dying is indispensable for the priesthood resting thereon. In two passages at least Christ's partaking of human nature is treated from this point of view that it created the possibility for His death and through it the possibility for His subsequent priestly work. These passages are Chap. ii. 14 and Chap. x. 5-7. The former teaches that the Son became partaker of flesh and blood, that through death He might bring the devil to nought. The latter declares that a body was prepared for the Messiah in order that thus He might be enabled to execute the will of God concerning his sacrificial death. Still this by no means exhausts what the Epistle teaches under this head. For to the *προσφέρειν* "offering" belongs more than the self-surrender in death; its culminating part is the self-presentation in heaven. It is not merely necessary that a sacrifice be slain; it is equally necessary that the sacrifice be brought into the immediate presence of God as He dwells in the heavenly tabernacle. The sacrifice is not completed until this is done. This is not a result of the sacrifice; it is an integral part of the sacrificial transaction itself. And that this must be done by man, by a priest who is man, follows from the intimate connection between the two acts of self-surrender and self-presentation. Both together constitute one God-ward movement; what is necessary for the one is necessary for the other. If he who dies the sacrificial death must be a man, then he who presents the sacrifice in heaven must be a man, the latter being but the carrying out of the former. In connection with this aspect of the matter, it is true, the author does not dwell so much on the possession of human nature by Christ in the abstract, but rather on the possession by Him of human nature in a sinless state. But the one presupposes the other. The very point which the Epistle brings out is that no sinner, even if he had an adequate sacrifice of expiation,

could accomplish anything effectual by means of it, because, being a sinner, he would not be able to bring it near to God. The act of presentation being integral to the sacrifice, being required to complete it, could not be allowed to anticipate the effect of the completed sacrifice. And yet such would be the case, if a sinful man could come near to God to present his own expiatory offering. The privilege of drawing near would involve that the sacrifice had been accomplished, while as a matter of fact it was still incomplete. Consequently there must be a sinless one to appear before God in the place of man. While in Chap. iv. 25 the words "without sin" are not added for any specific reason, but simply to guard the perfection of the Person of Christ in general, as a saving clause to the preceding statement, that He was tempted in all things like unto us, in Chap. vii. 26 the Saviour's sinlessness is brought into direct connection with His priesthood and that from the point of view of His presence as a priest in heaven. The predicates here enumerated are not in the first place associated in the writer's mind with Jesus' earthly life under temptation; they rather describe what He is at present in His glorified state as the "become higher than the heavens" at the close indicates.¹¹

It was not, however, for the purpose of becoming capable of death alone that the Son had to assume human nature. There is a much wider range of human experience which constitutes an important preparation for the discharge of the instrumental aspect of His priesthood. This will be the first subject for consideration in a subsequent article.

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¹¹ It might be objected to the foregoing that in Chap. v. 2, 3 the qualification of the Old Testament high priest is in part sought precisely in this, that he is himself also compassed with infirmity and by reason thereof bound to offer for his sins. But the author is led to this statement only by his desire to emphasize the importance of sympathy. What was a relative qualification in the case of the typical priesthood of the Old Covenant becomes a disqualification for the ideal priesthood as realized in Christ. In point of fact, the main reason why the Old Testament priests were not ideal, truly effective priests lies in this, that they stood in need of offering for their own sins. They bore that in themselves which virtually annulled their priestly character, vii. 27, ix. 7.