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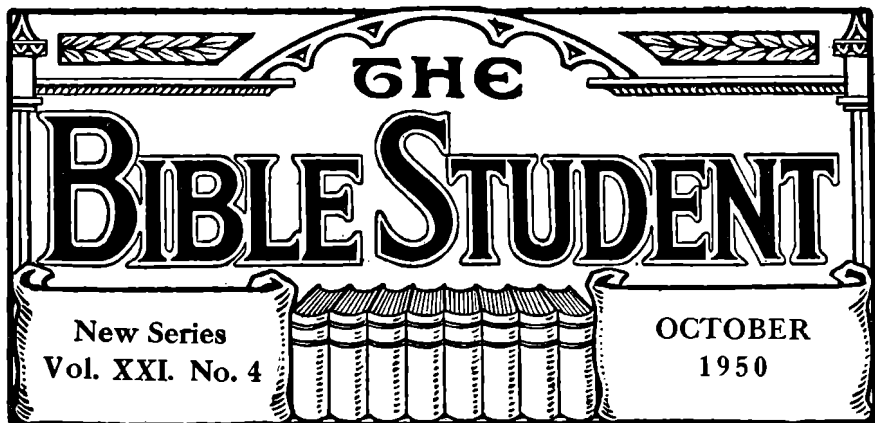
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*“ The Entrance of **THY WORDS** Giveth Light ”*

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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

looked upon as an end in itself. It ever looks on to the accomplishment of some design, the achievement of an end. Here it looks on to the attainment of the risen state in which that service will be glorified.

Prayer, Love, Service without fervour are lifeless, but when fervent in the spirit with which they are engaged in will be to the praise of the glory of His grace both now and in the eternal age.

NOTES ON HEBREWS

BY W. E. VINE, M.A. (Lond.)

Analysis of Chap. 7: 11-28

The Superiority of His Priesthood to that of Aaron

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Introduction

In this section the superiority of Christ's priesthood is set forth in three respects, (1) in its perfection (vv. 11-14); (2) in its eternity (vv. 15-19); (3) in its sacredness (vv. 20-24). The

writer now introduces the subject of the Law. There was a passing reference to it at the beginning of the second chapter. Here it shows the temporary character of all associated with the Levitical priesthood.

Verse 11

*Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron?—*The "Now" introduces a new branch of the subject. *Teleiōsis*, "perfection", signifies the accomplishment of an end as the effect of a process. See its use in Luke 1:45. Cp. *teleiōtēs* in 6:1, a word which stresses the accomplishment itself on the end in view. For the corresponding verb see 9:9; 10:1, 14, etc.

The parenthetic part shows that the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic Law are inseparably linked together. It is about to be shown therefore that any change of the one must involve a change in the other. Now the question arises that if the Levitical priesthood and the law connected with it accomplished purification from sin and the bestowment of quiet to the conscience, why should the Psalmist (see verse 17) speak of the arising of a priest of a different order from that of Aaron?

Verse 12

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.—Levitical priests were constituted as such under the jurisdiction of the Law, but Christ though He was born under the Law, was not made a priest under it. As for His Priesthood, see verse 16. If then the Law made men priests whose order would have to be changed because Christ's Priesthood was of a higher order, there must be a change of the law that made them (see verses 18, 19).

Verse 13

For He of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no men hath given attendance at the altar.—The priesthood is changed, because Christ sprang from Judah; therefore the law that made men priests is set aside in that particular. *Prosechō*, to give attendance, usually signifies to give heed, and therefore suggests devotion of thought and effort to a thing, Cp. "give heed" in Acts 16:14 and 1 Tim. 4:13.

Verse 14

For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests.—The word *prodēlos*, lit., “evident beforehand,” means “clearly evident.” Moses, under God, gave the priest’s office to the sons of Levi (Numb. 18:6), not to the tribe of Judah. What is to be understood in the argument, then, is that since Christ is a High Priest, there must be a change in the priesthood.

The verb *anatellō* means to arise; it is used metaphorically, e.g., of light, in Matt. 4:16; of the day-star, in 2 Pet. 1:19. Here it is used of the Incarnation of Christ, lit., “Our Lord hath arisen out of Judah,” as of the rising of the light of the sun. The perfect tense “hath sprung,” is significant. Not the historical fact is mentioned, but the abiding character of the fact. The priesthood of the tribe of Levi could not be transformed into the royal priesthood of the Melchizedek order.

Verse 15

And what we say is yet more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest,—*Katadēlos*, is a strengthened form of *dēlos*, evident. The phrase “after the likeness,” indicating a resemblance to Melchizedek, serves to show that Melchizedek was not himself Christ. That which is “yet more abundantly evident” is that the priesthood must be changed.

The word “ariseth” translates the verb *anistēmi* which here simply means the rising up in the midst of the nation.

Verse 16

Who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life:—Two very similar words, and yet important to be distinguished, are rendered “carnal”. The one, which is not used, according to the most authentic texts, is *sarkikos*, which signifies having the nature of flesh, sensual, governed by human nature, pertaining to the flesh, or, sometimes, “human” with the added idea of weakness. The other, which is used here, is *sarkinos*, fleshy, here used in its meaning “pertaining to the natural,” transient life of the body, i.e., temporary in nature. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish, but, where they both signify what is evil, *sarkinos* has a meaning far less grave than *sarkikos*. The commandment in the law concerning the appointment of priests was thus temporary.

The word *dunamis*, power, here conveys the idea of authority. *Akatalutos* denotes that which cannot be broken down or destroyed, unperishable, indissoluble. All speaks of the authority and perpetuity of Christ's Priesthood; it never changes, never ceases.

Verse 17

For it is witnessed of Him, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.—The most authentic texts have the passive voice of the verb *martureō*, as in the R.V., and the reference is to Ps. 110:4.

Verse 18

For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment, because of its weakness and unprofitableness.—The phrase "a foregoing commandment" refers to the law by which the priesthood was appointed. It was foregoing because it preceded the bringing in of a better hope. The word *athetēsis* denotes a setting aside, an abolition. In 6:26 it is used of the putting away of sin. The commandment was "weak" because it lacked power to accomplish an end in view; it was unprofitable, or rather, unserviceable, because it did not avail to effect the perfection intimated in verse 11, namely, the purification of the sinner and his peace of conscience.

Verse 19

(for the law made nothing perfect)—The neuter "nothing" refers especially to the fact that it did not purge the consciences of sinners; it was unable to convey either life or power (contrast 9:14). Not that there was anything inherently imperfect in the law itself; "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good" (Rom. 7:12).

and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope,—That is to say, this did accomplish what the law of the priesthood could not. The hope stands for the ground of the hope. All that was brought in through the gospel and its ministry concerning Christ provided a better ground of hope. The word *epeisagōgē*, translated "a bringing in thereupon", is used here of the introduction, not of something in addition, but of something in place of another, the "better hope" in place of the law.

through which we draw nigh unto God.—Under the law the people could not enter where the high priest entered once in the year; they could not draw near to God. To do so meant death. The "better hope" centres in Christ, in His capacity and ministry

as our great High Priest. That personal means of access is made good in Him. See 4:16.

Under the law the priesthood had to pass from one to another because the priests were hindered from continuing on account of death. But, since Christ "abideth for ever" (v. 24), His priesthood does not pass from him to another.

We have here a striking example of the great principle of the continuity of God's providence in His dealings with man. Any change in the course of His providence does not imply any imperfection in His former mode of procedure, nor does a change in His methods argue a change in His plans. A former method, perfect in itself, perfect, too, as to its immediate purpose, is replaced by another because the purpose of the former has been fulfilled. If something entirely different happens, it is nevertheless essential to the development of the Divine plan; though differing from what has preceded, it is not incongruous with it. Thus the Levitical priesthood was complete and perfect in itself, although perfection in worship was not obtainable through it; yet it was prefigurative of the priesthood of Christ, whereby perfection would be obtained. Being prefigurative it was bound to be temporary. This principle is illustrated further on in the Epistle in connection with the tabernacle and the sacrifices. Here it is exemplified both in the priesthood and in the Law.

Verse 20

And inasmuch as it is not without the taking of an oath—This mentions the third factor in the change in regard to the priesthood. Recapitulating,—firstly, there has been a change of the law, because the law of the constitution of the priesthood has changed. Christ is a High Priest, not because of what He legally or officially represents, but by virtue of what He essentially *is* in His combined Deity and humanity, the two facts set forth in chapters 1 and 2.

Secondly, the change in both law and priesthood is not merely that of constitution, it is that of *administration*. That is to say, it is a change not merely in character but in effect. For the function of the priesthood was the administration of the Law, by which men could never be brought nigh to God or find acceptance with Him. With the Priesthood of Christ God has brought in a better hope, "through which we draw nigh to Him."

Thirdly, there was a change in the mode of the constitution. This is set forth in verses 21 and 22.

Verse 21

(for they indeed have been made priests without an oath; but He with an oath by Him that saith of Him, *The Lord sware and will not repent Himself; Thou art a Priest for ever*);—There was no place for an oath in the appointment of the Aaronic priests. The transitory character of that priesthood made an accompanying oath unsuitable. God's oath ratifies the inviolable character of that to which the oath applies.

Verse 22

by so much also hath Jesus become the Surety of a better covenant,—The oath was not only a confirmation of the inviolability of His Priesthood, it was a guarantee of the Suretyship of Christ Himself for us, involving the fulfilment of the "better hope."

Verse 23

And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing:—Obviously the reference is not to the existence of many priests at the same time, but to the result of repeated succession consequent upon death.

Verse 24

but He—not "this Man," as in the A.V.; what is meant is "this Priest."

because He abideth for ever:—That is to say, 'abideth as a Priest;' the reference is not simply to the duration of life, but to the permanency of His Priesthood (see verses 3, 17 and 21).

hath His priesthood unchangeable:—There cannot be any succession in His case, as in that of the earthly priests. But the word *aparabatos* means more than that. The literal meaning given in the margins of the R.V. and A.V., "that does not pass to another" (or "from one to another"), is not to be preferred. That active voice sense is contrary to the usage of the word. In the time in which the New Testament was written, the word had acquired the meaning "inviolable" (as is the case with many words in the time of the *Koinē*, the common language in general usage). This passive sense of 'not to be violated' agrees with the whole scope of the subject as shown in the preceding and succeeding contexts. The earthly priesthood was not only successive, it was frequently and flagrantly violated.