

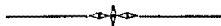
that in this department the laity can be used, I think we are slow to recognise the faculties of the laity in purely spiritual work, and being slow to recognise, the Church has failed to afford to the laity definite training in this particular direction. By spiritual work I do not in the least mean the preaching of sermons. A sermon is an excellent thing in its way, and I cannot for myself see why, if a man, with the necessary spiritual qualifications, has in the exercise of his profession acquired the art of lucid exposition, or is naturally endowed with that most dangerous gift of eloquence, he should not, under proper restrictions and in convenient places, be allowed to preach, by whatever name his service may be called.

But, after all, the best of sermons is but moderately efficient compared with half an hour's conversation man to man. I venture to say that any man who desires to do real work for the extension of the kingdom would rather have an opportunity of half an hour's uninterrupted conversation with any man whom he desires to win, than be afforded the opportunity of preaching him a sermon of the same length. Of course, I know you get more people within the sound of your voice on the occasion of sermons, but the power which is exercised over a large area is inevitably less effective than the same power concentrated on a single point.

I can only, in conclusion, summarize what I want to say by asking, with regard to the proposal of the lay-diaconate, three questions: (1) Whether it is in reality primitive? (2) whether it is in execution practicable? and (3) whether, having regard to things as they are, the call for it is, in fact, peremptory?

G. A. KING.

(London Diocesan Reader.)



ART. IV.—MESSAGES FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

IV.—*Hebrews vii.*

THERE is a symmetrical dignity all its own in the seventh chapter of the Hebrews. I recollect listening, now nearly fourteen years ago, to a characteristic exposition of it by Canon Hoare, in a well-known drawing-room at Cromer—a "Bible Reading" full alike of mental stimulus and spiritual force. He said, among other things, that the chapter might be described as a sermon, divided under three headings, on Ps. cx. 4. This division and its significance he proceeded to develop. The chapter opens with a preamble, a statement of the unique phenomena which surround the name and person

of Melchizedek in the narrative of Genesis. Then, from the point of view (to whose truth the Lord Himself is so abundantly a witness) that the Old Testament is alive everywhere with intimations of the Christ, and remembering that in the Psalm a mysterious import is explicitly assigned to Melchizedek, the writer proceeds to his discourse. Its theme is the primacy of the priesthood embodied in Melchizedek over that represented by Aaron, and the bearing of this on the glory of Him who is proclaimed a priest for ever after Melchizedek's order. This is presented under headings somewhat thus: *First* (verses 4-14), the one priesthood is greater than the other *in order*. Abraham, with the whole Aaronic hierarchy potentially in him, defers to Melchizedek as to his greater. Hence, among other inferences, the sacred Personage who is a priest for ever after Melchizedek's order, wholly independent of Levitical limits, must dominate and must supersede the order of the sons of Aaron, with their inferior status and with their transitory lives: *Secondly* (verses 15-19), the one priesthood is greater than the other in respect of *the finality*, the permanence, the everlastingness, of the greater Priest and of His office. He is what He is "for ever, on the scale of the power of an indissoluble life." As such, He is the Priest of not an introductory and transient "commandment," but of that "better hope" which (verse 19) has at last "made perfect" the purpose and the promise, fulfilled the intention of eternal mercy, and brought us, the people of this great covenant, absolutely nigh to God. *Thirdly* (verses 20, 21), this second aspect of the supremacy of the greater Priesthood is emphasized and solemnized by one further reference to Ps. cx. 4. There the Eternal, looking upon the mysterious Partner of His throne, is heard not to promise only but to *vow*, with an oath unalterable as Himself, that the Priesthood of "His Fellow" shall be everlasting. No such solemnity attended Aaron's investiture. There is something greater here, and more immediately divine. The "covenant" (verse 22) committed to the administration of One thus sealed with the oath of Heaven must indeed be "better," and must be final.

Then (verses 23-28) the discourse passes into what we may call its epilogue. The thought recurs to the sublime contrast between the pathetic numerousness of the successors of Aaron, "not suffered to continue by reason of death," and the singleness, the "unsuccessional" identity for ever, of the true Melchizedek, who abides eternally. And then it glows and brightens into an "application" to the human heart. We have in JESUS (the Name has now already been pronounced, verse 22) a Friend, an Intercessor, infinitely and for ever competent to save us, His Israel. We have in Him a High

Priest supreme in every attribute of holiness and power, and qualified for His work of intercession by that sacrifice of Himself which is at once solitary and all-sufficient. Behold, then, the contrast and the conclusion. To a great dispensation, the preparatory, succeeds a greater, the greatest, the other's end and goal. To the "weak" mortal priesthood of the law, never warranted by the vow of God to be always in possession, succeeds He who is Priest, and King, and SON, sealed for His office by the irrevocable vow, "consecrated for evermore."

Such on the whole, as I recall it, was the exposition of my venerable friend in 1887. Each new reading of the chapter seems to me to bear out the substantial accuracy of it; indeed, the symmetry and order of the chapter make it almost inevitable that some such line should be taken by the explanation. So then it lies before us. It is filled in all its parts with Jesus Christ, in His character of the true Melchizedek, our final, everlasting, perfect, supreme, divine High Priest.

This short paper is not the place for critical discussions. I do not attempt the vindication of the mystical and Messianic reference of Ps. cx. All I can do, and perhaps all I should do here, is to affirm solemnly my belief in it, at the feet of Christ. I am perfectly aware that now, within the Church, and by men unquestionably devout in purpose, our Lord's own interpretation of that Psalm, involving as it does His assertion of its Davidic authorship, is treated as quite open to criticism. One critic, and a Christian one, does not hesitate to say that, if the majority of modern experts are right as to the non-Davidic authorship (and he seems to think that they are), "our Lord's argument breaks down." All I would remark upon such utterances, coming from men who all the while do (thank God) adore Christ as their Lord and God, is that they must surely open the way towards conceptions of His whole teaching which make for the ruin of faith. For the question is not at all whether our Redeemer consented to submit to limits in His conscious human knowledge; I for one hold that He assuredly did so. It is whether He consented to that sort of limitation which alone is the real peril of a teacher, and which is his fatal peril—the ignorance of his own ignorance, and the consequent claim to teach where he does not know. In human schools the betrayal of *that* sort of ignorance is a death-blow to confidence, not only in some special utterance, but in the teacher, for it strikes at his claim, not to knowledge so much as to wisdom. I venture to say that recent drifts of thought show how rapidly the conception of a fallible Christ develops towards that of a wholly imperfect and untrustworthy Christ. And, looking again at

the vast phenomenon of the portrait in the Gospels, I hold that the line of thought which offers by very far the least difficulty, not to faith only but to reason, is that which relies absolutely on His affirmations wherever He is pleased actually to affirm.

So thinking, I take His exposition of Ps. cx. as for me final. And that exposition guarantees at once a typical mystery latent in Gen. xiv., and the rightness of its development in Heb. vii.

But now, what "message" has our chapter for us in view of the needs of our own time?

First, as to its sacerdotal doctrine. It throws a broad illumination on the grand finality and uniqueness of the mediatorial priesthood of our Lord, the Son of God. It puts into the most visible possible contrast the age of "the law" and that of Christ as to the priestly conception and institution. Somehow, under the law, there was a need for priests who were "men, having infirmity." For certain grave purposes (not for all, even in that legal period) it was the will of God that they should stand between His Israel and Him. But the argument of the chapter, unless it elaborately veils its true self in clouds, goes directly to show that such mediatorial functions, in the age of Christ, are for ever withdrawn from "men, having infirmity." Where they stood of old, one after another, sacrificing, interceding, going in beyond the veil, permitted to draw nearer to God, in an official sanctity, than their brethren, there now stands Another, sublime, supreme, alone. He is man indeed, but He is not "man, having infirmity." He is higher than the heavens, while He is one with us. And now our one secret for complete approach to God is to come to God "through HIM." And this, unless the chapter is an elaborate semblance of what it is not, means nothing if it does not mean that between the Church, and between the soul, and Jesus Christ, there is to come *absolutely nothing mediatorial*. As little as the Jew, for ceremonial purposes, needed an intermediary in dealing with his mortal priest, so little do we, for the whole needs of our being, need an intermediary in dealing with our eternal Priest.

In the age of Christ no office can for one moment put a "man, having infirmity," nearer to God than another, if Heb. vii. means what it says. Mediatorial priesthood, a totally different thing from commissioned pastorate, has no place whatever in apostolic Christianity, except its sublime and solitary place in the person of our most blessed Lord.

Then, further, the chapter, far from giving us merely the cold gift (as it would be if it were all) of a negative certainty against unlawful human claims, gives us, as its true, its inmost

message, a glorious positive. It gives us the certainty that for every human heart that asks for God, this wonderful Christ, personal, eternal, human, divine, is quite immediately accessible. The hands of need and trust have but to be lifted, and they hold Him. And He is the SON. In Him we have the Father. We do indeed "*draw nigh* to God through Him."

Therefore we will do it. The thousand confusions of our time shall only make this divine simplicity the more precious to us. We will continually and quite directly take Jesus Christ for granted in all the fulness and splendour of His high-priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. It is for ever so; it is as new and young to-day in its virtue as if the oath had but to-day been spoken, and He had but to-day sat down at the right hand.

Happy we if we use Him thus. He blesses those who do so with blessings they cannot analyze, but which they know. Many years ago a Christian lady, daughter of a devoted Non-conformist pastor in the west of Dorset, told me how, in a now distant time, her father had striven to teach a sick man, a young gipsy in a wandering camp, to read, and to come to Christ. The camp moved after a while, and the young man, dying of consumption, took a Bible with him. Time rolled on, and one day a gray-haired gipsy came to the minister's door; it was the youth's father, with the news of his son's happy death, and with his Bible. "Sir, I cannot read a word; but *he* was always reading it, and he marked what he liked with a stick from the fire. And he said you would find one place marked with two lines; it was everything to my poor lad." The leaves were turned, and the stick was found to have scored twice at the side Heb. vii. 25: "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

H. C. G. MOULE.



ART. V.—THE PROTESTANT REVIVAL: WHAT HAS IT DONE?

ALL who have taken a part in, or have openly encouraged, opposition to the growth of extreme ritual within the English Church, know what it is to be told that they have erred. They have been accused of breaking the peace of their Church, as though until the year 1897 or 1898 all had gone smoothly within her. They have been charged with sowing discord between Bishops and clergy, between clergy