

ART. IV.—OUR LORD'S PRESENT MEDIATORIAL OFFICE.

THE present article does not pretend to be a full and complete study of the great theme that stands as its heading. To discuss fully and exhaustively this aspect of our Lord's Person and work would necessitate a review of the whole of the New Testament teaching upon the subject, and such a task is obviously beyond our present limits. An attempt, however, is here made to examine the matter in the light of a single book of the New Testament—the Epistle to the Hebrews—and although such an attempt cannot claim to be more than a part of a far larger discussion, yet all will admit that the teaching of the Epistle in question furnishes an important and indispensable contribution towards a right view of the subject as a whole. With the pages of this treatise, then, open before us, let us seek for an answer to such questions as these: What, according to the teaching here, is our Lord's present heavenly position? What relations are assumed to exist between our Lord and the members of His Church? What office is He now said to fulfil on their behalf?

Prominent above all else, because of its repetition, is the phrase which describes our Lord as a Divine King. "He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." We meet with it first in the opening verses of the Epistle, and the writer evidently employs it in order to impress upon his readers the fact of our Lord's present greatness and Divine authority. He begins by describing the person of the Son. He tells us of His pre-incarnate existence, "being the effulgence of His glory and the very image of His substance" (i. 3). He sums up the whole of the work accomplished during the incarnate life in the one brief clause, "when He had made purification of sins," and then at once carries us back again from earth to heaven to the special theme that he would have us contemplate—our Lord exalted to share the throne of the Divine Majesty.

The verses which follow expound the theme still further. This exaltation of the Son gives Him a position above the angels, and the writer does not scruple even to address to Him words that emphasize both His divinity and His kingship. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (i. 8), as he sees Him thus in thought "crowned with glory and honour" (ii. 9).

This phrase, which defines our Lord's position at the beginning, is repeated three times in the course of the Epistle. In chap. viii. 1, where the writer is summarizing the main points of his discourse, he speaks of "such a High Priest,

who sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens." Again, in chap. x. 12, where he is treating of the offering made by Christ, and again in chap. xii. 2, where he is bidding his readers run with patience the Christian race with eyes turned to their Lord, the writer depicts Him under that special phrase, "sat down on the right hand of God," which undoubtedly expresses the permanent present fact about Christ that he wished to convey to the minds of his readers. Now, there are one or two points of interest about this phrase which deserve a few brief remarks.

(a) In the first place, the words are quoted from Psalm cx.—an acknowledged Messianic Psalm—and also the Psalm in which the reference to the "priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec" occurs. And, further, the phrase "sat down on the right hand of God" forms an interesting link between the author of this Epistle and the other Apostolic writers. Indeed we may, I think, safely say that this phrase embodies the normal figure of speech in which the Christians of the first age were accustomed to express their belief in the ascended Lord. For we find that St. Mark in his Gospel (xvi. 19); St. Luke in the Acts, twice in reporting speeches of St. Peter (ii. 33, v. 21), twice in his account of St. Stephen's end (vii. 55, 56); St. Paul in his Epistles to the Romans (viii. 34), 1 Corinthians (xv. 25), Ephesians (i. 20), Colossians (iii. 1); St. Peter in his first Epistle (iii. 22), and St. John in the Apocalypse (iii. 21, xxi. 5), all reproduce the language of this verse in Psalm cx., either in direct quotation or in general allusion, in speaking about our Lord's state subsequent upon His ascension; and, moreover, it should be specially noticed, there are very few references to our Lord's ascended state in the New Testament other than those which find expression under these terms or this figure of Divine kingly rule.

(b) A second point that merits attention is, that we ought to recognise the language borrowed from the Psalm which speaks of God's throne, God's right hand, the act of sitting, etc., to be figurative, and must not be interpreted as though there existed any literal equivalent for these terms in the heavenly sphere. This caution is one that we do well to bear in mind, especially when we are studying a treatise like that of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where symbolism and analogy are so largely employed. We have continually to be on our guard against pressing these analogies too far or interpreting symbol and parable too exactly. We have to keep steadily before us the main principle, the spiritual idea and truth which the writer is striving to convey by the use of figurative language, and to remember that the figures drawn from human life are

often inadequate really to express the fulness and greatness of the spiritual thought. In the present instance we are to understand by the phrase "sat down at the right hand of God" that our Lord occupies not so much a position of power or honour viewed locally, but that in His person He is now invested with regal Divine authority, which our earthly emblems of kingship help us to some extent to grasp, and we are to think of Him as exercising that authority in closest union with God the Father, and in acknowledged Divine equality.

(c) Further, let it be noticed that our Lord's session at God's right hand is associated by the writer directly with the completion of His redemptive work and as a result of it. The making of purification of sins (i. 3) is regarded as the necessary step to the exaltation and session; it is regarded as a finished act (*καθαρισμὸν ποιησάμενος*) which is then followed by another—the assumption of kingly state. So also in chap. x. 12. One sacrifice for sins for ever had been offered (*προσενέγκας θυσίαν*). That act being completed, another follows as its outcome, "He sat down," etc. The same order of thought will be found to characterize the reference in chap. xii. 2. Further comment upon this feature need not now be added; but the fact deserves attention as pointing to what we may call the habitual view which the writer holds about our Lord's person and work. His kingly glory is connected with His sufferings, not loosely or casually, as simply two isolated Divine acts or states, but the two are bound together almost like cause and effect, so that the one—the exaltation—succeeds the other—the work of redemption—when completed, and is only possible upon its completion. So in another place he writes, "We behold Him—even Jesus—because of the sufferings of death crowned with glory and honour" (ii. 9).

(d) The next point about this phrase is one that leads us directly into the heart of our subject. The writer definitely associates the exaltation of our Lord to the right hand of God with His special High Priestly office. "We have," he writes in chap. viii. 1, "such a High Priest, who sat on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." It should also be noticed that almost all the other allusions in this Epistle to our Lord's present position and office occur in connection with the writer's exposition of His High Priesthood. For example: It is said of our Lord that "He is able to succour them that are tempted" (ii. 18); that "He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near to God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (vii. 25); again, that Christ entered into heaven, "now to

appear before the face of God for us" (ix. 24); again, that He entered "within the veil as a forerunner" (vi. 20); and that "through Him" we may "offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually" (xiii. 15). Now, all these passages throw light upon our Lord's present mediatorial office; each contributes some fresh feature to help us to understand what our Lord now is and what He is doing for us; and, at the same time, it will be found that they all, without exception, occur in the course of the writer's detailed exposition of the High Priestly office. It will be best, therefore, to turn now to that special theme, and to consider, so far as it is necessary, the above references in connection with it.

The author of this Epistle is, as is well known, practically the only New Testament writer who employs the institution of the Priesthood to illustrate the work and Person of our Lord. And he does this, we may remind ourselves, because he was addressing a body of Hebrew Christians to whom the ceremonial of the Temple worship was especially sacred and precious, who were evidently familiar with all its details, and who were also in grave danger of forgetting its preparatory and transitional character. The writer's aim is, broadly, to show that the Christian economy provides not only all that the older system could furnish, but all, and far more than all, that system could give for man's spiritual life. His general method is, we may say, to institute a comparison, which, indeed, often extends into a contrast, between the Person and work of the Aaronic high priest and the Person and work of our Lord—each regarded as the centre and representative of their respective systems.

Now, the general idea which underlies the institution of priesthood is to provide access to God. The priest, as such, mediates between man and God. He represents in certain matters the people to God, and in others he represents God to the people. The writer of the Epistle expresses this idea when he speaks in more than one place of the high priest being appointed for men in things pertaining to God (*cf.* ii. 17; v. 1; viii. 3).

What, then, we ask, is the office which our Lord as Priest fulfils? It is a fair summary of the general teaching of this Epistle to say that, in the first place, it speaks again and again of the offering of Himself—the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, made upon the cross, as being the sacrifice for sins which our Lord, as High Priest, made on behalf of His people. And, in the second place, it speaks of our Lord, after having fulfilled that offering, entering into the very presence of God as man's Representative, and there, by assuming His place of Kingly dignity at the Father's right hand, He

realizes in its fulness the thought of access and fellowship with the Divine which is especially characteristic of the priesthood; and, moreover, He realizes it, not only, so to speak, as though it were a personal honour for Himself, but as Representative still of the humanity He has assumed; and He thus attains, according to the writer, to the highest possible form of Priesthood "after the order of Melchizedec," which is at once Royal, Divine and Eternal.

If now, passing on from this more general account, we ask for a more detailed statement of the office which our Royal High Priest fulfils for His people in the heavenly sphere to which He has ascended, our Epistle returns us the following answer:

(a) It describes the present work of our Lord as that of continued intercession on behalf of His people: "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (vii. 25). It is difficult to express without possibility of misunderstanding this idea of Christ's intercession. We are in danger of transferring our merely human applications of the word to the Divine. Our ordinary idea of intercession is often that of pleading with and persuading an offended person to remit some penalty or change his attitude of displeasure for one of favour. But few students of the text of our Epistle would venture to read into the above words such a meaning as that. There is no thought here of Christ, our High Priest, dealing with an offended or angry God on our behalf. The idea of intercession is expressed in quite general terms. The purpose for which He intercedes is not stated. "To define it," says Dr. Davidson, "in itself may be impossible" ("Epistle to the Hebrews," Commentary, 142), and no better explanation, perhaps, can be attempted than that which Dr. Westcott gives in his comment on the words: "Whatever man may need, as man or as sinful man, in each circumstance of effort and conflict, his want finds interpretation (if we may so speak) by the Spirit and effective advocacy of Christ our (High) Priest. In the glorified humanity of the Son of Man every true human wish finds perfect and prevailing expression" ("Epistle to the Hebrews," Commentary, 192).

(b) The Epistle, in the second place, describes our Lord's present attitude in the phrase, "now to appear before the face of God for us" (ix. 24). The form in which the thought is expressed deserves notice (*νῦν ἐμφανισθῆναι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ*). It is not said that Christ entered heaven to look upon the face of God for us, but rather He entered to present Himself, or submit Himself, so to speak, to the gaze of God. He becomes, on our behalf, by His entry into the Presence, the object of God's sight, and in seeing Him, God sees us.

(c) The Epistle, further, speaks of our Ascended Lord as the channel through whom we can render to God a worthy service and worship. It is "through Him" that our Sacrifice of praise to God alone can be offered (xiii. 15).

(d) Lastly, the writer speaks of our Lord in His character of High Priest in the heavens as the pledge to us of our right to hold fellowship with Divine things. "Having then a great High Priest,—let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace" (iv. 14, 16). So again, "Having a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith" (x. 21, 22).

The above references contain, as the writer of this paper believes, all that this Epistle directly teaches of our Lord's present work as High Priest in Heaven. The terms employed throughout show us that the author has evidently before his mind as he pens his description the ritual acts of the Levitical High Priest on the Day of Atonement. After the sacrifices had been offered the priest entered with the blood into the holy of holies. He went as the representative of Israel into the place where the Divine Presence was regarded as especially revealed. There before God he stood, and for a brief period enjoyed the closest intercourse with the Divine that was possible for man under the older dispensation. There he realized the highest prerogative of his priesthood, viz., access on man's behalf to God. Christ, the writer would teach us, fulfils perfectly the spiritual idea that lies behind the human high priest's service. By His offering of Himself in death, He passes through the veil from earth into the actual presence of God, and becomes "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man" (viii. 2). There, like the High Priest, He appears before the face of God as man's Representative, and by His presence intercedes on behalf of man. Only, it should be noticed, while the analogy is traced between the earthly and the heavenly priest, the writer is careful to point out in the above references the perfect and ideal character of the heavenly priesthood in contrast to the imperfect and temporal fashion of the earthly type. The access and fellowship which Christ enjoys is unveiled and unbroken. No longer like the human representative does He stand only for a brief moment before God, but He is seated at His right hand for ever. Not now, therefore, as of old is man's approach to God enjoyed only at intervals, and in symbolic form, but in the person of their Representative, at once human and Divine, they may come at all times boldly to the throne of grace and offer continual homage.

Thus far an attempt has been made to expound the view

which this Epistle sets before us of our Lord's present position and work. If we have read it aright, there is a clear distinction drawn between what our Lord now is and does in His heavenly state and what He accomplished at the end of His earthly life in His death upon the cross. By "clear distinction" we do not, of course, mean that there is any want of unity and connection between the past and present existence of our Lord—as if the Christ who lived on earth and suffered were changed or different from the Christ now in glory. His one unchanged Divine personality gives unity to His being, whether we regard it as pre-incarnate, incarnate, or glorified. He is "the same," as our author says, "yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever" (xiii. 8). But what is meant is that, viewing the life of our Lord as revealed to us in acts done in the order of time, and in the succession of history, the Epistle speaks of our Lord's offering of Himself, of His sacrifice, as a single event which happened at one definite point of time in the world's history, that it was an act complete and perfect in itself, and as such was and is incapable of repetition. It is regarded as a finished action, and in the order of revelation has been succeeded by another Divine act and state, which was only possible, speaking humanly, when the prior act had been concluded. In other words, we may say that this Epistle, when rightly interpreted, does not give any colour to the view that the victim state, or the offering act of Christ, if we may use such phrases, continues or is perpetuated as such in His glorified existence. Again let us guard against misconception. We are not now thinking of the continuance of the effects of our Lord's offering, of the lasting and eternal results that flow to us from the Divine Sacrifice. We are contemplating the offering of our Lord, in the strict sense in which alone the writer before us appears to use the word, viz., of the offering of Himself in death upon the cross, the offering which, because of the moral strain which death, associated as it was with the sin of man, involved for Christ the Sinless—proved His utter submission and consecration to the Father's will, and so, as this writer teaches, gained all its redemptive efficacy (*cf.* x. 9, 10). Whether this is or is not the meaning, and the only meaning which the words "offering" and "offered" bear in this connection, can alone be proved by a careful study of all the passages in which those terms are employed by the writer. Without venturing into details, a summary of the results that a fair examination of those passages yields may be expressed as follows:

(a) In the first place, the offering of Christ is spoken of as made in the past (*cf.* vii. 27; viii. 3; ix. 14; ix. 28; x. 12).

The verbs in each instance are in the aorist tense, expressive, as we know, of an act performed and definitely ended.

(b) Secondly, the offering is spoken of as one single act, not a succession of acts, and not a continuous action, but a completed single event. The offering is "once for all" (x. 10). It is "one offering" (x. 14). We are forbidden to think of it as an offering that can be repeated, "nor yet that He should offer Himself often" (ix. 25).

(c) Thirdly, the offering is identified with the sufferings and cross of Christ, so that it is not only a single act, and not only a past act, but the actual occasion in the past when it was made is also fixed. It is in close connection with such terms as "without blemish"—referring evidently to the sacrificial lamb—"blood," "body," "sufferings," that we read of Christ's offering, and this fact appears to fix beyond any possible dispute the actual point in the history of revelation when the writer of this Epistle regarded the offering as made (*cf.* ix. 14; x. 10; ix. 26-28).

Few, possibly, will question the truth of these conclusions in general. There are, however, many teachers of note who, without denying that the death of our Lord upon the cross was His one supreme offering, yet hold also that there is a sense in which we may speak of an offering still being made by our Lord in His glorified state in heaven; and, moreover, they appeal to the teaching of the Epistle before us in support of that view.

One text upon which this idea of a continuous offering by Christ in heaven is made to rest is chap. viii. 3: "For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is necessary that this High Priest also have somewhat to offer." The way in which this text is applied in support of the above view is well known. Christ, it is said, is a Priest for ever. Being a Priest, He must of necessity "do for ever a characteristically priestly act; and, consequently, according to the same Epistle, 'He must have now somewhat to offer'" ("The One Offering," Sadler, 53). It should be observed that, in order to be able to use this text the more easily in support of the view mentioned, it must be interpreted in the present. "Have somewhat to offer" must be rendered "have *now* somewhat to offer," and the writer just quoted does not scruple to make this addition to the text, although there is no verbal equivalent for the "now" either in the original Greek or in the Revised or Authorized translations. Is such an interpretation strictly correct? The Greek is *ὅθεν ἀναγκαῖον ἔχειν τι καὶ τοῦτον ὁ προσενέγκη*, literally, "Whence a necessity that this man also have somewhat to offer." How far is there any reference, we may ask,

to time, either present or past, in these words? *ὅθεν ἀναγκαῖον*. There is neither *ἔστιν* nor *ἦν* in the original. You may say, so far as the bare words go, either "Whence it *is* necessary" or "Whence it *was* necessary." *ὁ προσενέγκη*. Does this help us? The tense is the aorist. "Something that He should offer once for all" is the obvious sense. But we will allow that these words, considered simply as they stand in the text, are not sufficiently clear to decide the matter. There are, however, some further considerations that may help us to see clearly the writer's meaning. We may notice:

(a) That in every other case where the writer uses the word *προσφέρειν* or *ἀναφέρειν* in connection with our Lord's work he consistently employs the aorist tense, and, as we have already seen, the sense of the word in those instances points clearly to the one completed offering on the cross. Here also the aorist is used. Should we not naturally infer that this instance of the use of the word falls in line with the rest, and that the reference here, as there, is to the one offering? We may at least claim that this is highly probable, if not certain.

(b) And this probability is deepened when we bear in mind that the writer, had he really desired to speak of a continuous present offering of Christ, could have avoided all possible ambiguity by employing, as he does in another place, the present tense of the verb (*προσφέρειν*), instead of the aorist, which certainly favours the view of a past act. For he actually does employ this other form in chap. ix. 25. There, as will be seen, he is contemplating the idea of continuous offering, though only to negative the possibility of any repetition in the case of our Lord. The words are: "Nor yet that He should offer Himself often"—*οὐδ' ἵνα πολλάκις προσφέρῃ ἑαυτόν*. Here the writer wishes to express the thought of Christ repeatedly offering Himself, and he does so by using the present tense of the verb, which of course conveys that idea of unfinished continued action without any ambiguity. Is it not, at least, reasonable to suppose that had this same writer wished us to read the word "now" into his phrase, "this man also have somewhat to offer," he would have chosen the form of the verb which would have left no shadow of doubt as to what he intended to convey to the minds of his readers?

(c) But there is another, and, as some think, a more serious objection to this suggested interpretation of "to offer." It is one gathered from the general line of thought in this section of the Epistle. Let the Epistle be read carefully from the beginning, say, of chap. vii. on to the middle of chap. x.,

and let the progress of thought be clearly traced. It will be found that with chapter vii. the writer begins the real exposition of our Lord's Priesthood after the order of Melchizedec. He dwells upon various points, but it is not until verse 27 that he mentions the subject of Christ's offering. Then, after having reminded his readers in the opening verses of chap. viii. of the chief points about which he is speaking—viz., the High Priest in heaven, the sanctuary in which He ministers and His offering—he goes on in the remaining part of that chapter, in chap. ix. and in chap. x. to verse 18 to discuss these points in detail: The High Priest as the Representative Person in the New Covenant, the Old Sanctuary and the New, and especially the offering. The section which deals with this last subject—the offering of Christ—runs on from chap. ix. 11 to x. 18. Now here, unquestionably, the offering treated of is the Sacrifice of the cross. The terms introduced—"His own blood," "death," "suffered," "the sacrifice of Himself," "the Body of Jesus Christ"—all occur in connection with the thought of offering. The writer concludes his exposition by leading us back to the point from which he started—the High Priest upon His throne—in the words, "He, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet" (x. 12, 13). Now, the consideration that has certainly great weight is this: If the opening verses of chap. viii. are an introduction to the following section, and name the points about to be dealt with in that section, then, necessarily, the reference to our Lord's offering in those introductory verses must bear the same meaning as the references to His offering in the verses which follow. In the latter case there is no doubt that the completed offering is in the writer's mind, and it is difficult to see how we can resist the conclusion that the same sense—of an offering made once for all in the past, and not of one now continued—attaches to the word in the former reference as well. On the other hand, if the other view be adopted, does it not seem an extraordinary thing that the writer should make this one isolated mention of a present offering by our Lord in heaven, giving no sort of explanation of what that offering is, either there or elsewhere, and should then proceed in the subsequent section to speak always and consistently of the Lord's one offering as a thing completed and finished in past time?

Further support for the idea of a present continued offering by Christ in heaven is sought for by the advocates of that view in chap. ix. 7, which runs thus: "But into the second (went) the high priest alone, once in the year, not without

blood, which he offereth for himself and for the errors of the people." Here, so it is argued, in the action of the Levitical high priest, is presented to us the earthly type which our Lord fulfilled. As the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, so our great High Priest has entered heaven. As the high priest offers the blood of the sacrifice, so the Lord makes His offering in the court of the heavenly sanctuary.

Our consideration of this argument must be a brief one. Let us notice :

(a) In the first place, exactly what this form of reasoning claims to establish. It is an inference drawn from certain actions of the earthly high priest. The analogy is presupposed to be complete between those actions and what our Lord has done or is doing. It is this presupposition that seems to us to be open to question. It is of course true that there are certain broad lines of analogy between the earthly and the heavenly priesthood ; but there are also, as any reader of this Epistle will remember, many points in which the comparison between the two results in contrast and difference rather than similarity. Our only safe guide, surely, is to confine ourselves when drawing such inferences in regard to the heavenly from the earthly type—especially when we are touching upon questions of doctrinal importance—carefully, and even rigidly, to those features which the sacred writer has himself suggested to be common to the two. For example : that the Holy of Holies is a picture of the heavenly Presence ; that the entrance of the high priest into the sanctuary is a type of our Lord's direct access to the Father by His ascension ; that the blood of the sacrifice was a symbol of His life surrendered to the Father in death—all these are undoubtedly valid and legitimate, because suggested and enforced by the author of this Epistle himself. But, on the other hand, we may fairly question whether it is an inference that is sufficiently justified by anything the writer has said to conclude that Christ continues to offer Himself, or, as some say, His blood, or, as others, His life to God in the heavenly sanctuary because the high priest is here said to offer the blood of the sacrifice for himself and for the errors of the people. Obviously there is one point in which the analogy will not hold, for Christ had no need to offer for Himself. And the writer, moreover, seems carefully to abstain from using any such language as this of our Lord's acts. He speaks, it is true, constantly in the Epistle about Christ's blood, as representing His life surrendered in death, and therefore a sanctifying power. He speaks of Christ entering heaven "through His own blood" (*διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος*, ix. 12)—*i.e.*, as the channel and means, so to speak, by which

His perfect access to the Father was realized—but in no single instance does he ever speak of the blood of Christ being offered. “The Epistle avoids,” says Dr. Davidson, “such language as that Christ carried in or offered His blood, for obvious reasons; such language could be used of the high priest’s act, but not of His” (“Commentary on Epistle to the Hebrews,” 153, note). “The modern conception,” says Dr. Westcott, “of Christ pleading in heaven His passion—‘offering His blood’—on behalf of men, has no foundation in the Epistle” (“Commentary on Epistle,” 230).

(b) But even if we allow, as perhaps we may if we speak in terms sufficiently guarded, that the sprinkling or offering of the blood on the mercy seat by the high priest has a spiritual parallel in the first entrance of our Lord into the heavenly sanctuary and the cleansing and purifying of all things there by His “better sacrifice,” yet consider this: That particular action of the Levitical high priest was performed upon his entrance. It was a preliminary, so to speak, to His standing before God’s presence. It was a condition to be fulfilled prior to the enjoyment of that high privilege for which he entered as Israel’s representative, viz., access to and fellowship with God. Now, if we are to follow out the analogy, we must be consistent. If our Lord, upon His entrance into heaven, made an offering which in any way corresponded to the sprinkling of blood by the high priest, then must it be regarded also as but the preliminary step to a higher state of fellowship with Divine realities which was to follow. Granted that there is an analogy, yet the analogy itself does not permit you to speak of a continuous offering. Rather, it leads you past the atoning act on to the state of fellowship with the Divine for your thought of what is to be continuous and permanent; it leads you on to the thought of access to God on man’s behalf in virtue of an atonement completed; and this settled eternal attitude of our Lord in the heavenly sphere is expressed by the writer in the constant phrase: “Sat down on the right hand of God.”

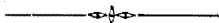
This view of a continuous offering in heaven is one that is held by men of widely differing views and ecclesiastical standing, and it is held by them in various forms. Some are extreme, and lead undoubtedly to results which imperil the truth of the perfect sacrifice for sins made upon the cross. Others are moderate and sober, and run no such risk. We may frankly admit in regard to the latter that were it not for the fact that there has been in the past such misuse of the terms employed, and such errors of doctrine connected therewith, no protest need be made against them. But the lessons

of history are not to be lightly ignored, and a doctrine that in the past has been found to be capable of grave error, even though now put forward in apparently harmless, and even attractive garb, if it be not strictly in harmony with revealed truth, may involve in the end some serious, though now, perhaps, unperceived risk to the religious life. To those who endeavour to study this and other similar problems primarily from the standpoint of the teaching of the New Testament, it is often apparent that many writers and teachers of to-day, who are justly held in high esteem for their wisdom and piety, yet do in dealing with this subject use terms to express their ideas that cannot strictly be said to be the exact language of the New Testament, or rather, we ought to say, the terms are words taken from the New Testament, only they are words that are there found, unless we are mistaken, associated with other ideas altogether. For example, when men use such phrases as "Christ is always offering His sacrifice," or "Christ is continuously presenting within the veil the sacrifice which He made on the Cross," do we not feel that there lurks in such phrases a wide possibility for misunderstanding? In many cases, it is true, when you get beneath the language used to the ideas in the writer's mind, you will possibly find yourself in perfect agreement with them. The writer just quoted really means, when he says "Christ is always offering His sacrifice," that our Lord is perpetually interceding for us, and possibly nothing more than that, but then the thought of regret constantly arises in the minds of those who desire, above all things, to be loyal to the Apostolic words, Why put it in that way? Why, if you mean as you do, the intercession of our Representative High Priest, Why put it in language which in Scripture is not usually, to say the least, associated with intercession, but, on the contrary, is connected frequently and almost invariably with the one special work of the Cross?

We are living in an age of our Church's life when there is a great and earnest desire for closer fellowship, and also a real approximation towards that fellowship among men whose opinions have been hitherto regarded as hopelessly at variance. We cannot be too thankful for this attempt after a better understanding of one another. And it seems to the present writer that Christian men of all shades of opinion can best foster that movement—which we cannot question to be of the Spirit of God—by bringing their own opinions and the opinions of others more habitually to the test of the exact thoughts of the New Testament, by striving to judge of them in the wide spirit of wisdom and love which characterizes the Apostolic writers, and by resolving that those thoughts, and not the shibboleths of party, however venerable or popular,

shall alone form the standard by which their views, and even the words in which they express them, shall be governed. Some of us are sufficiently sanguine to believe that for men who will accept such a discipline, and work from such a basis as this, the sense of agreement between them upon fundamentals, the sense of their real oneness in matters which reach deepest in conviction and life, will be so overwhelmingly strong that the surface differences will sink into the background, assuming their right place as differences that can not only be tolerated, but even welcomed as necessary in the providence of God for the complex completeness of the One Body.

J. A. HARRISS.



ART. V.—THE HAIDA LANGUAGE: A MISSIONARY STUDY.

THE linguistic difficulties in the path of a missionary are too rarely understood at home, nor are their services to the study of languages at all widely understood. The following notes respecting one of the North American Indian languages may, whilst illustrating the modes of thought and expression in use among a people very far removed, geographically and ethnologically, from ourselves, also help people to realize some of the linguistic difficulties besetting the missionary on his first arrival in a little known land.

The language here dealt with is Haida, spoken by a tribe of Indians of that name inhabiting the Queen Charlotte Islands, off the coast of British Columbia. Though never a large tribe, the Haidas were said in 1841 to number over 8,000. A careful estimate made in 1878 places them at 2,000. At the present time they fall short of 1,000. The shores of the Queen Charlotte Islands are strewn with the remains of their ancient villages, the sites of which are marked by still erect but fast crumbling totem poles. The few surviving Haidas have gathered at three centres, the principal centre being the village of Massett, which, since 1876, has been a station of the Church Missionary Society. The whole tribe has now been evangelized.

Haida is one of seven Indian languages met with in British Columbia. How so many tribes, speaking languages sufficiently diverse to be classified as distinct stocks or families, came to be crowded into so comparatively small a space is a question which thus far ethnologists have failed to answer. These tribes are essentially maritime in habits; they live within easy reach of each other; they possess a seaboard