

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

VOL. XXXIII.—NO. 2.

APRIL, MDCCCLXXXII.

ARTICLE I.

HOME MISSIONS—HOW SHALL THEY BE CONDUCTED?

It is generally agreed among our Christian people that the work of Foreign Missions ought to be conducted under the direction and superintendence of the General Assembly. Presbyteries and Synods are fully competent to carry on the work, if they had the means and facilities, and could do it as effectually and economically in their separate character as in combination with other Presbyteries. But as Presbyteries, with few exceptions, perhaps, have not the means of themselves, and as separate action would involve a great increase of machinery as well as of expense, the work, by common consent, is committed to the General Assembly, the proper representative of the whole body. Presbyteries, in accordance with our Book of Order, in ordaining men to the work of foreign evangelisation, have agreed to transfer them to the control of the Assembly, so far as their general work is concerned, but without abdicating their right of control, so far as the moral and ministerial character of these brethren is concerned. In this view of the matter, our Church, so far as is known, is very nearly a unit.

In relation to the Home work, however, as also of Education, there is some diversity of views as to the mode in which it should be carried on. The great mass of our people hold that so far as

ARTICLE IX.

WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?

This is a question of much interest, and has been studied by the writer long and carefully. Modifying some former views, but reasserting others, he now proposes to demonstrate the truth by the teachings of God's word. As only four views are known, the discussion will be confined to these.

It is held that Jesus was baptized—

- I. As an example to us in the sacrament of baptism.
- II. As an act of obedience to the divine will instituting the sacrament.
- III. As a conformity to the law for redeeming the first-born Son in Israelitish families.
- IV. As preparatory to being anointed for the active duties of that Priesthood to which God had appointed him.

The latter is presented as a proposition here to be established. But the four views above mentioned will be examined in their order, as stated. Therefore we ask—

I. Was Jesus baptized as an example to us? Immersionists declare that he was, and that such is the teaching of God's word. But as there is no text of the Bible containing this teaching, it is reached by *inference*. The error is exposed by examining—

1. The *time* of the baptism of Jesus, as related to that of others baptized by John the Baptist.

Every reader of the Bible must admit that multitudes were baptized before Jesus came to John. Luke (iii. 21) places his baptism after, or "when all the people were baptized." Matthew (iii.) and Mark (i.) both record the baptism of "Jerusalem and all Judæa and all the region round about Jordan," before the coming of Jesus to his baptism. Can this be called *example*? He who sets an example is the first actor in the case. Then those for whom he sets an example follow it. But here, Jesus followed the people. So if there was an example at all, it was given by the people to Jesus. Thus the inference fails in the first point.

Note next—

2. The *circumstances* of his baptism. Jesus was not baptized

until he "began to be about thirty years of age." Luke iii. 23. Was this example? If so, his followers are to wait until that age also. But all admit that believers should not defer baptism until they are "thirty years of age." Yet if we are to follow the example of Jesus in baptism, we must conform in age, as in other points. Why not? The Scriptures are as clear on one point as the other in this special matter. Here we may note there is just as much authority for following the example of Jesus in being tempted forty days, in fasting forty days, in working miracles, in being crucified between two thieves, and in many other things in which no one thinks of following him. The Bible demands and warrants all this as much, and as clearly, as that we follow his example in baptism. But there is no demand nor warrant of such kind. And where is the right to select one act, and only a part of that, leaving other acts unfollowed when the Bible calls to one as much as to all—to all as much as to one? In vain do we search for hint or teaching that Christ's people are to follow his example in baptism. The *inference* is not from the Bible. If not scriptural: it is human; therefore not a law for faith and manners.

3. Consider the nature of John's baptism: it was but a formal, ceremonial rite. Here note—

a. When an adult is baptized, all agree that he is received into the membership of Christ's visible church upon profession of his faith in Christ. Then if John administered Christian baptism, the church should have been very large in his day; but it was very small. "Jerusalem and all Judæa, and the region round about Jordan," received John's baptism, but rejected Jesus Christ; he had but few believing followers.

b. All agree that Christian baptism is to be but once administered. Yet (Acts xix., 1-7) Paul re-baptized twelve men who had been baptized by John. Further—

c. Christian baptism is (by divine command) administered in the name of the three persons of the Godhead. But John did not baptize in the name of the Holy Ghost. These twelve converts of his had never heard of the Holy Ghost. Acts xix. 2. Evidently they had not received Christian baptism, though baptized by John.

d. A dispute about John's baptism was a dispute about purification rites. Jno. iii. 25. It was of the nature of the purifyings of the Old Testament in preparing the people for a special manifestation of God. So Moses "sanctified" the people for God's visit at Mt. Sinai.

e. There is no record of Christian baptism until after the resurrection of Jesus. Matt. xxviii. So then, as it was not instituted until that time, John could not administer and Jesus could not receive it. These and other kindred considerations refute the first theory. It is strange to the word of God; therefore an error.

We ask—

II. Was Jesus baptized as an act of obedience to the divine will, instituting the sacrament?

This theory is too indefinite to be discussed. It belongs to one or to all of the other three: What its advocates mean by it, we are unable to discover. It is treated either in what has been said, or in what follows. If it is intended to put Jesus on the same footing with others baptized by John, note:

1. John's baptism is invariably described as the "baptism of (or into) repentance." Could Jesus so receive it?

2. Those whom John baptized, "were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins." On receiving it, or as a duty accompanying its reception, they were commanded to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Could Jesus so receive it?

3. It was to "prepare the way of the Lord;" and the great demand was, "Repent ye." Could Christ so receive it? Would God command his *sinless one* to receive this baptism? Could Jesus repent? Could he "bring forth fruits meet for repentance?" Such questions cannot be tolerated for a moment! We may regard the baptism of Jesus as a part of his obedience, truly—but to what? That is the question. We deny that it was an obedience to the divine will instituting the sacrament, as is clearly seen from the foregoing remarks.

We now—

III. Take up the question: Was he baptized in conformity to the law for redeeming the first-born in Israel? This theory has

novelty, and some beauty to commend it. But the new and beautiful are not always the true.

This theory we reject on the following grounds:

The law for redeeming the first-born is found in Ex. xiii. 2, 11-13, which see. But in Numbers iii. 11-51 we find:

1. God afterwards took the Levites as substitutes for all the first-born. In numbering the people, the Levites had not been numbered. Therefore this could be done. See Numb. i. 47-50, ii. 33.

2. When the Levites were numbered by divine command, it was for the purpose of substituting them for the first-born.

3. From a month old and upwards there were twenty-two thousand Levites, but there were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three of the first-born. The cattle of the Levites were also taken instead of the cattle of the people generally. God said: "Take the Levites instead of the first-born of the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle, and the Levites shall be mine." Now here is express proof that the law of Ex. xiii. was changed. God no more required the first-born to be redeemed by that law. But there were *two hundred and seventy-three more of the first-born* than of Levites. Numbers iii. 46-51 tells what was to be done about this. They were redeemed at five shekels each. And God said to Moses: "Thou shalt give the money wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and his sons." Moses did so. Numbers iii. 51. Thus the twenty-two thousand Levites were taken in the stead of an equal number of the first-born. (So God provided a special class to serve in religious offices.) Then the twenty-two thousand first-born, so substituted by Levites, *were freed* from the law of Ex. xiii. Thus further, the excess (two hundred and seventy-three) of the first-born, being *actually redeemed* at five shekels each, *all the first-born of Israel were made free*. From this event, the new law (Numb. i. to iii.) went into full operation and force, all things being equalised. And now:

4. The Levites alone are to do service and fill offices in "the tabernacle of the congregation," in subjection to Aaron and his sons. Numb. iii. 9, 8-19. To each family special service was

allotted, and they acted in two classes. The higher duties of the priesthood were taken at about thirty years of age, and held until fifty years of age. The lower duties were assumed at twenty-five years of age, and held to fifty years of age. This is yet more plainly stated in Numb. viii. 5-26. No language could state anything more clearly.

5. Aaron and his sons held the priesthood *proper*. Other Levites were assigned to serving work.

6. No Israelite who was not a Levite was to come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation upon pain of death. Numb. xviii. 22.

7. By the law, as first given (Ex. xiii.), the first-born of man and of beast were not required to be held for, nor redeemed from tabernacle service, as the advocates of this theory suppose; but were all to be *redeemed or killed*. The redeeming price (five shekels) afterwards required, when the Levites were substituted for the first-born, was not to save from *tabernacle service*, but from being *sacrificed—killed!* There is no evidence that, by law, the first-born were ever required for tabernacle service. They were claimed by God as a *memorial* that he slew the first-born of Egypt, when he saved Israel from bondage. Therefore the first-born of Israel were specially God's, and were to be redeemed to *save them from being sacrificed to God*. This precise instruction, the children of Israel were directed to give to their sons. Ex. xiii. 15: "When Pharaoh would hardly let us go * * the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man, and the first-born of beasts; therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the first-born of my children, I redeem." Thus the God who forbade murder, guarded against it by the law of redeeming. This redeeming was to be, at first, not with money, but with sacrifices. The first-born, as such, were never demanded for nor put to tabernacle service. But as the first-born of beasts were redeemed to save from death, so with the first-born of man. This is exactly according to the law as written in the word of God. Look and see!

Let it be remembered, that the law of sacrifice (Ex. xiii.) was changed so as to make the Levites (who had never been numbered with Israel, Numb. i. 47) the *redemption* of the first-born, instead

of *sacrificing* them. Numb. iii. 5-13. The first mention of *redeeming the first-born at five shekels*, is in Numb. iii. 46-47, when the excess (273) of first-born over Levites was to be equalised, so as to put the new law in force. The money (1365 shekels) Moses was to collect and give to Aaron. Thus the law of Ex. xiii. was modified forever.

8. Years after this, the people having journeyed away from Sinai towards Canaan, God arranged for the support of the Levites and his service generally. Numb. xviii. To Aaron and family, his sons and their families, and all Levites, he gave the first-fruits of everything, whether produce of land, men, or beasts. He now says, not, "they are mine," as formerly; but tells the priest, "they are thine." Here we find a new law for redeeming the first-born—a law *which applies to men and unclean beasts alike*. "Those that are to be redeemed, from a month old, shalt thou redeem" at five shekels per head. *The first-born of man and of unclean beasts were to be redeemed, and at the same price each*. Numb. xviii. 15-16. Now, a question:

Were these *unclean beasts* to enter upon the service of the tabernacle, at thirty years, or any other age, if not redeemed? Certainly not. Then this redeeming was not to save from such service, as the advocates of this theory contend it was. The same law, with the same reasons, applied to men as to these unclean beasts. Therefore this redeeming was *not to save the men* from tabernacle service either. It was all for the support of the Levites, who were not allowed to have any inheritance in the land. The redemption-money, with all the first-fruits, went for this. And to show that the position taken here as to the purpose of redeeming is correct, note:

9. That even if *a man were not redeemed, he could not come nigh the tabernacle, if not a Levite!* The law forbade him upon pain of death! And *this law* was not changed nor repealed for any Israelite, as a first-born.

Let us now see how all this applies to the idea that Jesus was baptized as an unredeemed first-born, and was thus dedicated to the tabernacle service; or baptized as one who must enter such service, because he was not redeemed. This is the idea of those who hold this third theory. Note:

a. The law for tabernacle service forbade Jesus to approach the tabernacle, upon the same grounds as in the case of others, viz. : *He was not a Levite*. Only a Levite could be consecrated. No first-born could be, if not a Levite. The law claimed the Levite only—not the first-born.

b. The Levites, not the first-born, were to have the “washing,” for consecration to the tabernacle service. There was no law for “washing” the first-born, at any age, for this service, whether redeemed or not. Numb. iii., viii. So as merely a “first-born,” Jesus was forbidden.

c. We find no scriptural warrant for the assertion of the “first-born theory” that the parents of Jesus were too poor to redeem him, and therefore he had to be “washed” as “devoted” to God.

Whether or not Mary paid the five shekels required by law, (Numb. xviii.,) we are not told in express words. She presented her first-born “to the Lord” (Luke ii. 22) as the law required. We conclude that the officiating priest *performed his duty*. He was positively commanded (Numb. xviii. 15) “the first-born of man thou shalt surely redeem.” No liberty was allowed him. “Thou shalt *surely* do it,” was his law of action. Now then who shall say that Jesus was not redeemed? There is every proof, except in *express words*, that he was. For note :

(1.) His parents had him *circumcised* at the proper time, according to law. Luke ii. 21.

(2.) They came, when the days of the mother’s purification were accomplished, according to the law of Moses, to Jerusalem to “present him to the Lord.” Luke iii. 22. And was not this in order that the priest might *redeem* him in obedience to the law? Numb. xviii. 15.

(3.) His parents offered sacrifices for the mother’s legal purification. Luke iii. 24.

(4.) Finally, Luke ii. 39, says that *they did perform* “*all things according to the law of the Lord;*” and then returned home. This is conclusive. If it is not satisfactory proof that, as a first-born, Jesus was redeemed, words can prove nothing. Now it follows, that, as he was not an unredeemed first-born, his baptism could have no significance in this direction, even had he not been excluded from tabernacle services by law.

d. But it is intimated that the law requiring a lamb for burnt-offering after the birth of a son, was connected with the law for redeeming the first-born, in this—that the bringing of two turtle doves, or two young pigeons (the legal substitute for a lamb in case of poverty) being a sign that Mary was too poor to bring a lamb, was also proof that she was too poor to redeem her son. The law is in Lev. xii. *It does not refer to a first-born;* but if a child was born—son or daughter—the lamb or its substitute was to be offered. If poverty forbade the lamb, then two turtle doves, or two young pigeons must be brought—one for a burnt-offering, the other for a sin-offering. But why? Not for the child, but *as an offering for the mother's purification!* This is, strictly, the law language. “And the priest shall make an atonement”—not for the child—but, “for her, and she shall be clean.” This then, was Mary's offering, and its purpose. It had no relation to redeeming the first-born. The redeeming under the new law was for the support of God's priesthood and service. Mary, as shown, had her son redeemed at the “five shekels,” and the priest applied this money as commanded. But no priest anywhere or at any time could touch Jesus as an unredeemed first-born, to consecrate him to anything. As a first-born in Israel, he, like others, had his substitute in the Levites. For the law arranging this as to the first-born, was never changed. For such reasons the theory that he was baptized as an unredeemed first-born, is rejected.

IV. We now turn to the proposition that Jesus was baptized as a preparation for being anointed to active duties of his priestly office. He certainly was never a disciple of John Baptist, as the first theory discussed would make him, in regarding him as baptized as others were who came to John. He was not baptized as a matter of expediency, for expediency is not obedience to law. But we note :

1. Jesus was obeying law in his baptism. John did not consider himself warranted nor worthy to baptize him with the same baptism administered to others. “John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee; and comest thou to me?” And not until the command, “Suffer it to be so now,” was given, with the reason,

“for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,” did John yield. Who were the “us” here? John and Jesus—none others. Now it is accepted by all, that this phrase, “thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,” means, *thus it is right and proper, or needful, to conform to what is required by law*. Jesus said, Matt. v. 17, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”

In being baptized he deemed it necessary to conform to some law touching this act; some law demanding his baptism. “It becometh us;” that is, “it is needful for us to do this.” It was no act of mere *decorum*, but something *necessary* under the circumstances—legally necessary. In Heb. vii. 26, the same word is used, “Such an High Priest became us.” The baptism was a legal necessity. Then what was the law making it so? Certain remarkable circumstances point to the law touching priestly consecration. We search in vain for any other, answering to the case. In order that this may be seen, note:

2. The law of that priesthood in which the types and symbols of the priesthood of Jesus were found. Then compare the circumstances found in the baptism of Jesus, and what preceded and followed.

a. In Ex. xxviii, Aaron and his sons of the tribe of Levi are chosen to be God’s priesthood; and the succession passes from father to son throughout their generations. See Ex. xxix., 1 Chron. vi. 48–49, etc.

b. The priest, entering upon his official duties, was consecrated with holy anointing oil. But *preparatory* to this anointing, he must be clothed in splendid garments, and “washed with water” at the door of the tabernacle in the presence of all the people. These latter ceremonies were not the consecration, but preparatory to it. The anointing, which was the consecration to office, followed. See Ex. xxix., xl., etc. Thus the priest was “hallowed” or “sanctified” to minister in his office.

c. The Levites entered and held office (as already shown) from twenty-five to fifty years of age. But the priesthood *proper* was held by Aaron and sons exclusively, from thirty to fifty years of age. Such was the Levitical law. Now note:

3. The points in which Jesus answers to this.

a. That he was a priest, need not be argued. The word of God leaves no room for doubt. As "the man Christ Jesus," he is our High Priest.

b. In this, human nature and at just the legal priestly age, he came to be baptized. Luke iii. There is significance in Luke's expression: "*Jesus himself*" (iii. 23). The priest was set apart to active duty at about thirty years of age. "And *Jesus himself* began to be about thirty years of age," when he came to John for baptism.

c. Immediately after the baptism,* he was *anointed*. The Scriptures declare that, as soon as he was baptized, the Holy Ghost descended upon him, and God accepted him. He was "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power." Acts iv. 27, x. 38. The anointing oil of the Old Testament was the "shadow;" here was the "substance." And it is evident that until this occurrence Jesus performed no priestly work. We have no hint of his before acting in official character at all, anywhere.

d. He was appropriately *clothed*, also. Isa. xlix. 10, "For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath adorned me with the robes of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels."

It is noteworthy that this chapter begins with the words: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me," etc."

It was *prophetic* of Matt. iii. 15, which records the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus after his baptism. We know also that Jesus applied Isaiah's prophecy to his work on earth, and declared it therein fulfilled. See Luke iv.

So this same prophet, afterwards looking upon Jesus coming to his work, exclaimed: "Who is this that is glorious in his apparel!" Thus the splendid furnishing of Aaron was but symbolical of the better furnishing of the better Priest. Thus in every point Jesus answered to his types.

e. The *appointment* of Jesus to the priesthood, was as definite as was Aaron's, and as truly in subjection to the divine will. In Heb. v. 4-5, we read: "No man taketh this honor unto himself,

but he (taketh it) that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a High Priest; but he (that is, God, thus glorified him) that said unto him: Thou art my son; to-day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place: Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec." Now here we see the inspired teaching that Jesus did not assume the priesthood of his own motion; that he did not glorify himself, but that God glorified him by appointing him; and, finally, that God chose this divine Priest from *another order* of priesthood. Again we read, Heb. iii. 2: "Who was faithful to him that appointed him (to the priesthood), as Moses also was faithful in all his house;" in the duties to which he (Moses) was appointed. With such teachings as these, the appointment is undeniable. Ps. cx., Heb. vii. 16, 17, 21, 28. Jesus was as really appointed of God, as were Moses and Aaron.

f. The *time* of this appointment is also positively fixed by the word of God. In Heb. vii. 28, we read: "The law maketh men (referring to the Levites) priests, which have infirmity, but the word of the oath which was since the law maketh the son (a priest) who is consecrated forevermore." Here we are told that "the word of the oath" which made Jesus a priest, was "*since the law*" which made the Levites priests; and that this new Priest is never to be succeeded by others, being "consecrated forevermore."

Now what are the facts of history? The Levitical law was given at Mt. Sinai nearly 1500 years before Jesus came in the flesh. The "word of the oath" is declared by the Psalmist (Ps. ii. and cx.) B. C. 1030 or 1015. Let us say 1030 years before Christ was born. It is thus seen that his *formal appointment* to the priestly office occurred (humanly speaking) about 470 years *after the law appointment* for the Levitical order—the difference between 1500 and 1030 being 470. It was God's act done after the giving of the law. So the Scriptures show. Therefore it is proven. But by this, we do not understand that God had any new thought or plan. What he does is always of his eternal counsels. But *until he makes the revelation*, we can say and know nothing; we cannot run ahead of his revelation, nor go back of it. Therefore we cannot go beyond his declaration to find the appoint-

ment of Jesus to the priesthood. In God's eternal counsels, he was *to be* Priest. But for us, he *is* Priest only after God's formal revelation of the appointment. Ps. ii. and cx.

Therefore it is right to say, God appointed Him to be Priest; and here the *date* is fixed. The expression is scriptural and prophetic. Thus, about 500 years before Christ, Zechariah (vi. 13) made prophecy: "*He shall be Priest upon his throne.*"

g. So too the anointing of Jesus is a matter of prophecy and revelation.

Among the things to be done on earth after the lapse of a certain time was this—"to anoint the most holy." Dan. ix. 24-26. The atoning death of Jesus is also declared in this connection. Now the facts of history correspond to this. For in "the fulness of time" Jesus was anointed, and afterwards put to death. He was both priest and sacrifice, which no other priest could be. Thus, as Aaron (the type of Christ) was appointed before he was anointed, and anointed before he ministered in his priestly office, so was it with our great High Priest, Jesus Christ. Note:

He did no active priestly work until his incarnation; nor then, until he attained to priestly age; nor then, until he was baptized; nor then, until after God had anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power! In all these things he responded fully to the demands of law upon priests, and, as it "became him," fulfilled all righteousness! Not one point of importance is missing. We notice further, that God's declaration, quoted in Heb. v. 5-6, "Thou art my son, to-day have I begotten thee," stands in immediate relation to the words, "Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec." The two sayings belong one to another.

Again, God's declaration (Matt. iii. 17): "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased," stands in immediate relation to God's act of anointing Jesus after his baptism. The first of these sayings is God's *recognition of his chosen Priest*. The second is God's *recognition of his anointed Priest*. He first appointed him; then accepted him; then covenanted to abide by all that his Priest would do in the work to which he had just anointed him.

Thus we see that the practical working of Christ's appointment

did not begin until after he had taken his position on earth as a man of priestly age. What he did during the preceding part of this earthly life, we do not entirely know. Mark vi. 3. But until the priestly age of thirty years, he evidently did no priestly work. And in all this is great significance. It is also remarkable that Matthew is the only writer who was particular to record the words, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He wrote for the Jews specially, (though himself a native Galilean,) and seems to have been conscious that these Jews would be quick to take exception to any neglected law-points. Therefore, guided by the Holy Spirit, he was careful to show that this in-coming priest acted in strict conformity to law. The significance of this record, therefore, is, that Jesus was lawfully inducted into office. The advocates of the theory of "baptism as an unredeemed first-born," say, "Jesus Christ was really and truly man, as well as really and truly God. As man, he was a Jew, 'made of a woman, made under the law,' and was therefore bound, and as much subject to law as any other man under law. He was bound to do and perform whatever the law required of him, just as any other man similarly situated. * * * * Then as his baptism was to fulfil all righteousness, or in other words to comply with the law which required it, the question to be settled is, what law required it, and was fulfilled by his baptism?" We think this question fully answered in this article. In our search we are able to find conformity to only one law requiring the application of water to Jesus; viz., *the law for priestly consecration*. And we have seen that the anointing of Jesus which followed the use of water, was not only prophesied to occur on earth, but that it did so occur at the priestly age at Jordan after his baptism. His whole conduct up to the age of thirty years, was certainly that of a priest awaiting this legal age, at which time he could receive his consecration to active duty in conformity to law.

Let us now look upon this Priest:

1. He was really and truly *man*. 1 Tim. ii. 52: "The man, Christ Jesus." Heb. viii. 3: "It is of necessity that this man have somewhat to offer." This human nature was necessary to the work, for without it Jesus could not execute the duties of his

office; could not offer the required sacrifice—*himself!* Therefore the nature of this Priest is carefully set forth in the Scriptures. The divine nature gave merit to all that the human nature did. The work of the God-man was perfect.

There was also *purpose* in his becoming man. “Wherefore in all things it became him to be made like unto his brethren” (the seed of Abraham) “that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” Heb. ii. 16, 17. This teaches that, as God only, he could not execute the functions of his priestly office. If not also *man*, he could not be such a High Priest as was needful. “Since the law” he was appointed, the Scriptures say. His work, then, belonged to time and earth, in making the “reconciliation for the sins of the people.” During time and upon earth, “being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” Heb. v. 9. Next—

2. Notice the *order* of his priesthood. (a) It was not Levitical, but, “Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec.” Heb. v. 6. Melchisedec was both priest and king. Heb. vii. 1, 2. The Levitical law forbade this. 2 Chron. xxvi. shows that Uzziah, a king, was punished for intruding upon priestly duties. But God appointed the Prophet-King, Christ Jesus, a Priest-King also. The control of the law was in the hands of God, to make, to change, or to repeal it. In the case of Melchisedec and of Jesus, the immediate choosing and constituting of the priests was of God. Heb. vii. 3. The likeness was, (1) neither had predecessors nor successors in office; (2) nor is the termination of their priesthood recorded; and (3) both were priests by extraordinary appointment. So far as history speaks, Melchisedec “abideth a priest continually,” “having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God.” And the Priest, Jesus, “because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.” Heb. vii. explains this fully. Also, (b) this Priest, Jesus, was superior to every other. The Epistle to the Hebrews is full of this doctrine. His consecration and work, his person and anointing, were all infinitely superior, as was also his tenure of office. Forever, he is the perfection of all that was foreshadowed

in the types and symbols before his incarnation ; as much greater than all preceding him as the Holy Spirit (with which he was anointed, and in the power of which he did all his works) was greater than the anointing oil used upon Aaron and his successors. The "first tabernacle," before which Aaron stood to be anointed with that oil, was but "a figure for the time then present" of the "greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands," before which Jesus stood to be anointed with the Holy Spirit. There God accepted and anointed his chosen Priest. See Heb. ix. for full explanations. Finally—

3. We note difficulties in this theory. *a.* The law forbade any but a Levite to be a priest; therefore forbade Jesus, who "sprang out of Judah." But Heb. vii. shows that when God changed the order of the priesthood, he also changed this law. See verse 12. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change of the law also." This seventh chapter of Hebrews is a complete answer to this objection. It is an *inspired commentary* upon Christ's appointment to the priesthood. Ps. ii. and cx. In verse 15 the apostle teaches that "it is yet far more evident" that the law confining the priesthood to Levi was changed, because another priest after the similitude of Melchisedec ariseth, "who is made (priest) not after the law of a carnal commandment, (as the Levites were,) but after the power of an endless life." And (verse 18) to provide for this, "there is verily a disannulling of the commandment (or law) going before," etc.¹

b. It is objected that the idea of an earthly consecration lowers Jesus to the level of human priests. But this objection smites at God! He made Jesus of a woman; made him under the law; guided him from Bethlehem to Jordan, and there consecrated him by anointing him with the Holy Spirit. God did it all, and Jesus agreed to it.

Further, if in his estate of humiliation it was not beneath him

¹ Here it is seen that though God did never change the law so as to demand or admit the "first-born," as such, to tabernacle service; yet he did change the law which forbade any but a Levite to be priest. The priestly prerogative is here declared to be taken from Levi, and given to Jesus Christ of the tribe of Judah forever. The change is not as to be first-born, but as to the *tribe of the priest*.

to be circumcised; to be presented for redeeming before the Lord, as other Israelites were; or to conform in all things to the law of the Lord, as other men did; neither was it beneath his dignity to be lawfully consecrated as priest on earth, where he was to begin his work. And whether it be more a lowering of Jesus to say that he was baptized as a preparation for God's anointing than to say that he was baptized as an unredeemed first-born, let the reader decide. If he took the *very nature* of priests, subject to law, why call it a low thought, that in this nature he conformed to the law under which he "was made"? The objectors themselves say: "As a man he was a Jew, made of a woman, made under the law, and was, therefore, as much subject to law as any other man made under law." This is true. But if it does not lower Jesus in the light of other theories, neither does it lower him in this. The objection is destroyed by its makers.

c. But Jesus is said to have been "*baptized*," while the law called for a "*washing*" of the priest. A distinction without a difference, this is. In Heb. ix. 10, the word "washings" is given (in the English) for the use of water under the old dispensation. But these "washings" were really "baptisms," for the Greek says "*baptismois*." Thus of the ceremonial rites in Mark vii. 4, where the English says "wash," but the Greek says "baptize;" so the law was honored, for the priest was "baptized," though "washed." It is objected—

d. That John had no right to consecrate Jesus. We do not say that John did so. He "prepared the way of the Lord." As a legal priest he administered the washing preparatory to God's anointing his priest; *this latter was the real consecration*. That John had the right to administer the washing, is clear. For—

1. He was a legal priest by regular descent. Luke i. 5-25, 57-66.

2. He did not act until Jesus, his Lord, commanded him to do so, and gave a reason for his command. Christ's "suffer it to be so now," settles all doubts.

3. If it was proper for a Levitical priest to minister in the ceremony of redeeming Jesus as a first-born, or in his circumcision, or in the "all things" in which the law for him was fulfilled, it was surely proper that this greatest of Levitical priests should of-

ficiate in what he was sent to do, viz., "to prepare the way of the Lord," especially when *commanded* to act by this Lord. It was the grandest act ever performed by a Levitical priest, performed by its greastest priest. When John went as far as he might in introducing to active duty that priest of the order which was to supplant his own forever, his recognition of this duty was, "he must increase, but I must decrease."

e. Only one more difficulty will be noticed, viz.: It is said, "if Jesus was not consecrated to active duty of office except on earth, and at Jordan, the Old Testament saints had no priest in him;"
But—

(1.) By faith looking forward, those saints partook of the benefits of Christ's priesthood as truly as the New Testament saints do, by faith looking back to him. See Acts xv. 18, and Heb. xi.

(2.) As Redeemer, purchasing the church of God with his own blood, Jesus did not offer his sacrifice until the close of the old dispensation. But who thinks of arguing that therefore the Old Testament saints had no Redeemer in Jesus? No more can it be argued that they had no Priest in him.

To conclude:

We can see our way to but one answer to our question, Why was Jesus baptized? It was the "washing" preparatory to his anointing, given him as required by the law for consecrating a priest to office. The many human, imperfect priests, preceding Jesus, were but types, symbols, shadows of the coming *perfection*, the better priest. They "were many priests because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." "Those priests were made without an oath;" God took no solemn oath for them. "But this (priest, Jesus, was made priest) with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." Heb. vii. 20-21. Therefore, his baptism no one else can ever receive. In it, no one can ever "follow his example." He has "fulfilled all righteousness," and none is left to be fulfilled by others. Here, as under that other law by which a sinner is condemned, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

HERBERT H. HAWES.