

## The Heavenly Priestly Activity of Christ

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It was in pursuance of his priestly office that Christ offered himself a sacrifice to God upon the cross. "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb. 5:1). And since every high priest is thus ordained "it was necessary that this one also have something which he might offer" (Heb. 8:3). The sacrifice he offered was none other than himself - "he offered himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14). That this priestly function is not continued in the heavens is the unambiguous witness of the New Testament and particularly of this same epistle. "Who needs not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the people's: for this he did once for all when he offered up himself" (Heb. 7:27). "Through his own blood he entered in once for all into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). "Nor that he should offer himself often, as the high priest enters into the holies every year with blood of others, for then must he often have suffered from the foundation of the world. But now once in the consummation of the ages hath he been made manifest for the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:25, 26).

But that he does not discontinue his priestly office and function is equally patent. That Jesus is a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek is the refrain of this epistle. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 7:21). "But this one because he continueth ever has the priesthood unchangeable" (inviolable) (Heb. 7:24). There must therefore be a high priestly activity perpetually carried on by Jesus in the heavenlies, in what this writer calls "the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavenlies" (Heb. 8:1). And so the question arises: what is this high priestly activity in the heavenlies? It is usually spoken of as intercession. That it includes intercession is beyond question. Paul, delineating for us the pivotal events of Jesus' accomplishment, is careful to remind us that co-ordinate with the death, resurrection, and session of Christ at the right hand of God is the fact that "he also makes intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34). And in the epistle to the Hebrews we read:

"Wherefore he is able to save also to the uttermost those who come to God through him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). It is a mistake, however, to conceive of Christ's heavenly priestly activity as consisting merely in intercession.

In the epistle to the Hebrews we also read that Christ is entered into heaven itself" now to be made manifest in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24). Our attention is here drawn to a representative mediatory office, exercised in the presence of God at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, which embraces much more than the making of intercession. Again, the confidence enjoined upon us by which we may draw near in full assurance of faith is not only inspired by the faith that a new and living way has been consecrated by the blood of Christ but also by the assurance of Christ's continued priestly rule over the house of God. "Having, therefore, brethren boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus... and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:19-22). Furthermore, we note in this same epistle the extent to which the sympathy of the exalted Christ is related to his priestly activity or springs from his priestly role. "Wherefore it behooved him to be made like to his brethren in all things, in order that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to the end that he might make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:17, 18). "Seeing then that we have a great high priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not an high priest who cannot sympathize with our infirmities, but was tempted in all things by way of likeness without sin" (Heb. 4:14, 15).

There is not only this multiformity of aspect derived from the epistle to the Hebrews but there is confirmation and addition supplied by other New Testament data. In Johannine usage the term that closely corresponds to the terms used in the epistle to the Hebrews is that of paraclete - "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). The paraclete is the person who is called to help, to plead, to comfort, to support. So Jesus in heaven is the pleader, the helper, the comforter of those who come to God through him. That this must be referred to the priestly activity of the Saviour is surely borne out by the analogy of the teaching in the epistle to the Hebrews, particularly that Jesus appears in the presence of God for us and dispenses succour in his capacity as the high priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities. It is also borne out by the fact that the heavenly advocacy is in 1 John 2, as in Hebrews 2:17, 18, directly related to the propitiation which Jesus Christ the righteous one has performed and which he ever continues to be. So the activity as paraclete should most suitably be viewed as pre-eminently priestly activity based upon his finished priestly action in making propitiation.

These considerations provide the basis for a broader concept of Christ's high priestly activity in heaven than that involved in intercession. But there are considerations which open up a still wider perspective. In the epistle to the Hebrews Christ is represented as high priest over the house of God, and it is put beyond question that it is as the apostle and high priest of our confession, faithful to him who appointed him as Moses was faithful in all his house, that Christ as Son exercises the rule over his own house. There is an administration exercised over the house of God, and the writer forthwith proceeds to identify this house as the people of God who hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope stedfast unto the end (Heb. 3:1-6). When we correlate this with the teaching of Peter to the effect that believers are built up a spiritual house for a holy

priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), we can scarcely doubt that the church of God on earth is viewed as the house over which Christ exercises the rule and administration as the high priest of our confession. The church on earth as the body of Christ is the sphere of his activity in his capacity as high priest at the right hand of God. To use the symbolism of the book of Revelation it is as the high priest that he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks and in that capacity he addresses the seven churches in Asia. The epistles to the seven churches are, therefore, examples of the way in which, as a Son over his own house and as our apostle and high priest, he administers this heavenly office. Truly Christ executes his kingly office as head over all things to his body the church. But Christ is a priest upon his throne, and we must not allow the consideration of his kingly office to eclipse that aspect of Christ's heavenly activity with which we are now concerned. There is here an inter-permeation of the various offices. What we are concerned with now is to recognize that his specifically high priestly ministrations are more operative and pervasive in the church upon earth than we are frequently disposed to appreciate. And when his specifically priestly function is duly appreciated, new perspectives are opened up in the interpretation of the activity of our exalted Lord. The definition of the office of high priest that he is "ordained for men in things pertaining to God" (Heb. 5:1) is brought to bear upon the continued high priestly activity of the Redeemer. His continued activity has a Godward reference as truly as did his finished priestly offering. This adds new richness to our conception of the relation he sustains to his people and enhances our understanding of the significance for us, as individual believers and as members of the body which is the church, of the activity which Christ in heaven continues to exercise in reference to God on behalf of those whom he has purchased with his blood.

There is another consideration, derived also from the epistle to the Hebrews, that gives the broadest possible scope to Jesus' high priestly activity. It is the fact that Jesus as high priest is the surety and mediator of the new and better covenant. The new covenant is contrasted with the Mosaic. Just as the high priest of our profession is counted worthy of more glory than Moses because he is the Son over his own house, so his pre-eminence over Moses consists also in the fact that he is the surety of a new and better covenant. "And inasmuch as not without an oath... by so much the more did Jesus become the surety of a better covenant" (Heb. 7:20, 22). And the oath was, "Thou art a priest for ever" (vs. 21; cf. 9:15). The new covenant brings to its consummation the communion which is at the heart of all covenant disclosure from Abraham onwards, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people". Redemptive grace reaches its zenith in the full and final realization of this promise. And if Christ as priest after the order of Melchizedek is the mediator and surety of the new covenant as the everlasting covenant, this means that his priestly function is operative in the consummating action which will bring to final and perfect fruition the redemptive counsel of God. The ever-active priestly activity of Christ is thus brought into relation with the consummation of redemption, just as it is his priestly function of making propitiation which insured by its once-for-all transcendent efficacy and perfection that redemption would be consummated. In other words, the priestly activity of the Redeemer is central in the whole redemptive process. It is because he is a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek that redemption in its Old Testament adumbration had saving

effectiveness, that redemption in its objective accomplishment has meaning, and that redemption in its consummation will be achieved.

The heavenly high priesthood of Christ means, therefore, that Christ appears in the presence of God at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens to present himself as the perfected high priest to plead on the basis of what he has accomplished the fulfilment of all the promises, the bestowment of all the benefits, and endowment with all the graces secured and ratified by his own high priestly offering. This is a ministry directed to the Father. This it is pre-eminently.

The Godward reference is primary here as it is also in the once-for-all priestly offering. But it is also a ministry on behalf of men. As directed to the Father it has no relevance except as he is appointed for men in things pertaining to God (cf. Heb. 5:1). But since it is a ministry on behalf of men it is also a ministry which reaches to men in that it involves the administration of the house of God upon earth and the ministrations of succour to the people of God in all their temptations and tribulations.

There are two aspects of this high priestly activity on which we may reflect as they bear directly upon the succour and comfort afforded to the people of God on earth.

## **I. The Sympathy of Christ**

This is reflected on expressly in the two texts already referred to (Hebrews 2:17, 18; 4:14, 15). These texts make it clear that this sympathy is derived from the experience of suffering, trial, and temptation which he endured during his humiliation. This exemplifies what appears all along the line of his high priestly functions; the heavenly exercise of this office is based upon the accomplishments of his earthly ministry in the days of his flesh. In this instance the particular aspect of the earthly ministry upon which the heavenly is based is that of the sufferings and temptations to which he was subjected while on earth. This requires us to take a much more expansive view of the earthly accomplishment which provides the basis for his heavenly priestly activity. The work once for all accomplished upon earth reached its climax and finds its focal point in the death upon the cross. The whole course of obedience moved to its climactic demand and fulfilment in the yielding up of his life in death. I say climactic fulfilment though not terminal fulfilment. For his resurrection from the dead, insofar as Jesus was active in the resurrection, was an integral element of his messianic commission and obedience. The death on the cross it was, however, that placed the resources of obedience under the most exacting demand. Likewise his sufferings reached their most demanding expression in those of Gethsemane and Calvary. Yet his obedience, sufferings, and temptations covered the whole course of his humiliation. And it is the experience derived from these sufferings and temptations that equips him with fellow-feeling or sympathy so that he is able to support and succour his own people in their sufferings and temptations. His earthly undertaking, therefore, was not only that he should offer himself once for all as a sacrifice, not only that he should have learned obedience through sufferings so as to be able in obedience to fulfil the climactic demand of his

commission, but also that he might be fully equipped with the fellow-feeling requisite to the discharge of his priestly ministry of succour. We need to appreciate the continuity and inter-dependence of our Lord's earthly and heavenly ministries. For we are too ready to construe the exaltation of Christ and the ministry which he performs in the state of his exalted glory in disjunction from the state of humiliation. Or, to look at this from another angle, we are prone to emphasize the once-for-allness of his earthly accomplishment to such an extent that we fail to take account of the unity and continuity of the earthly and heavenly aspects of his high priestly function. This is but another way of recognizing the reality of our Lord's human nature in heaven and that it is in human nature that the Son of God in heaven exercises his heavenly priesthood. Once we say human nature, we must remember that his human nature in heaven cannot be conceived of apart from the progressive developments which characterized that human nature on earth and which condition the state of consciousness, feeling, and will of that human nature in heaven.

To view the heavenly sympathy of our Lord from the aspect of our existential need, how indispensable to comfort and to perseverance in faith to know that in all the temptations of this life we have a sympathiser, and helper, and comforter in the person of him from whom we must conceal nothing, who feels with us in every weakness and temptation, and knows exactly what our situation physical, psychological, moral, and spiritual is. And this he knows because he himself was tempted, like as we are, without sin. That he who has this feeling with us in temptation appears in the presence of God for us and is our advocate with the Father invests his sympathy and help with an efficacy that is nothing less than omnipotent compassion.

We sometimes entertain difficulty with the fact of Jesus' sinlessness in this connection. How can he have sympathy with us when there is the total discrepancy between our situation and his, both in the state of humiliation and exaltation. But when we pursue the subject a little more carefully we find that it is the fact that he was tempted without sin, without sin as antecedent, concomitant, or consequent, that charges his fellow-feeling with unique virtue and consolation. In our relationship to our fellowmen do we receive much help or comfort from the person who as respects weakness and sin is in the same position as we are ourselves? Misery likes company and it may be that we receive some comfort from the fact that others are as weak and sinful and miserable as we are ourselves. But this is a sinister kind of comfort and it is not godly consolation. On the other hand, how great is the uplift we receive when one who is immeasurably above and beyond us in sanctification helps and succours us from the similarity of his own experience with the same temptation. How much more then when Jesus Christ the righteous, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, affords us sympathy derived from his own experience of suffering and temptation. The fact that he lends this succour from the presence of the Father enhances the marvel of its exercise. And the thought that we in the stresses and conflicts associated with the body of our humiliation are objects of the solicitude and compassion of him who sits at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens and who dispenses from the reservoir of his knowledge and experience consolation, fellow-feeling, and strength injects into our fainting hearts the confidence of his invincible grace. How devastating to the faith which is the anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, entering within the veil, and how

lacking in appreciation of the existential demands of the believer's situation is any conception of the Redeemer which does not take account of the reality of his human nature in heaven and of the reservoir of sympathy stored up in that human nature because the great high priest of our profession was tempted in all points like as we are and learned obedience from the things which he suffered. Any conception that robs our Lord of the reality and continuity of his human nature and experience is but a form of docetism which deprives the Saviour and our faith of what is indispensable to both.

## **II. The Intercession of Christ**

Whether the idea denoted by the term translated as "intercession" is more inclusive than that of intercession, nevertheless it must include intercession. This is apparent from Romans 8:26, 27. For there the term refers undoubtedly to the intercession of the Holy Spirit. And it would be necessary to include that same notion in Romans 8:34. In Acts 25:24 a closely related idea is present. No more appropriate import could belong to the term in Hebrews 7:25. Hence we shall have to reckon with a heavenly intercession of Christ on the basis of Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25 and possibly Isaiah 53:12.

We could readily encounter difficulty in entertaining the doctrine of a heavenly intercession on the part of the exalted Lord. There is some plausibility to the argument that petition, though appropriate while Jesus was upon earth as a necessity of his humiliation and of his being made in all things like unto his brethren, would be neither necessary nor fitting in his exalted state. There are various angles from which the apparent incongruity could be viewed. Is not Jesus given all authority in heaven and in earth as head over all things to his body the church and therefore in possession of all the resources for the perfecting of the church and of all the grace to be bestowed upon its members? Is he not the Lord of the Spirit and does he not himself send forth the Holy Spirit as the advocate and comforter of the people of God upon earth? Would it not be inconsistent with his own sovereignty to exercise a function which implies dependence and subordination? And does it not detract from the high exaltation bestowed upon him to suppose that he must resort to the Father in the capacity of mediator and intercessor?

Or to view the question from another angle, is it not a reflection upon the knowledge, love, and beneficence of the Father to suppose that solicitation on the part of Christ is necessary to the bestowments of grace of which the Father is the agent? Did not Jesus say while on earth, "In that day ye shall ask in my name, and I do not say that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you" (John 16:26)? So the notion of heavenly intercession could be placed in a light that would seem dishonouring to both the Father and the Son.

These objections point up the necessity of avoiding assumptions and conceptions that are divorced from the data of revelation or at least the necessity of taking all the data of revelation into account when we think of Jesus' heavenly ministry. If we are disposed to think along the lines of these objections it is because we are ready to indulge in abstract

thinking and we betray a pattern of thought that is alien to the concreteness and diversity of the biblical witness. The biblical witness is to the effect that there is an economy of redemption and we must not discount the relations which the persons of the Godhead sustain to one another in terms of that economy. The process of redemption is not yet consummated, and, because so, the arrangements of that economy are still in operation. It is in terms of the fulfilment on the part of the three persons of the Godhead of their respective and distinguishing functions that the process of redemption progresses to its consummation. If we do not make allowance for, indeed thankfully entertain, the specific and distinguishing operations of the persons of the Godhead in the progressive realization of the counsel of salvation, then we are doing something dangerously akin to the demythologizing which relegates to the realm of myth the integral elements of our holy faith. It is not difficult to discover in the frame of mind which is inhospitable to the idea of the intercession of Christ the same tendency which eliminates the concreteness and factuality of the past historical in the once-for-all accomplishments of redemption. There is an indestructible relationship between the economical arrangement whereby Jesus intercedes with the Father in heaven and the concrete facts of Jesus, humiliation as the servant of the Father. If it was not dishonouring to the Father to send his own Son into this world, it is not dishonouring for the Father to act now in the progressive realization of his saving counsel through a mediation which the Son exercises through the mode of intercession. Divine exigencies required that redemption should have been wrought through mediation of the Son, and it only enhances our view of the knowledge, love, and beneficence of the Father to discover the economy in terms of which he brought to fruition the designs of his love. And, as far as the exaltation of Christ is concerned and the sovereignty he exercises by reason of that exaltation, we must not forget that it is an economical exaltation. It is one awarded to him because he took the form of a servant and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And if it is an economical exaltation, it is an exaltation that does not suspend economical arrangements. There is a continuity between that phase of the process of redemption which is complete and the phase that is still unfolding itself. It is a patent fact written in the boldest fashion on the New Testament witness that the mediation of Christ is not suspended and the intercession is but one concrete aspect of that mediation.

That Jesus directed petition to the Father while he was on earth is apparent. To Peter he said, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32). "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The fullest recorded example is the high priestly prayer of John 17. John 17 is not exclusively intercession, that is to say, petition on behalf of others. For Jesus there prays on his own behalf as well - "glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (vs. 5; cf. vs. 1). But it is to a large extent intercession. The intercession exemplified in John 17 was an essential part of his messianic undertaking and the appropriate expression of his concern for the fulfilment of his Father's will respecting his own. These recorded intercessions of our Lord in the days of his flesh provide us with some index to the content of his intercession at the right hand of God. It is unreasonable to suppose that such petitions as the following have ceased to have relevance. "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one" (vs. 15). "Father, that which thou hast given to me, I will that where I am they also

may be with me, in order that they may behold my glory which thou hast given to me" (vs. 24). Petitions more appropriate to the need of the people of God in the world could not be conceived of, and these surely indicate the lines along which the heavenly intercession proceeds. Another example is provided by John 14: 16. "And I will pray the Father, and he will give to you another comforter that he may be with you for ever." The giving of the Spirit refers specifically to Pentecost and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit with the people of God as a result of Pentecost. The prayer directed to the Father in reference to this event can scarcely be excluded from the heavenly intercession; it was subsequent to the ascension that the Holy Spirit was given. The most natural interpretation is that Jesus is referring to petition directed to the Father after his departure from this world. By good inference, therefore, from some of the recorded intercessions we may gather something of the direction which the heavenly intercession follows.

But in those contexts where the heavenly intercession is mentioned there is an indication of the type of intercession which Jesus offers. In Romans 8:34 the context is one in which the people of God are contemplated as being challenged by their adversaries. At least the apostle is adducing those considerations which provide the answer to any charge which may be laid against them. "Who shall lay a charge against the elect of God ? It is God that justifies: Who is he who condemns ? It is Christ Jesus who died, yea rather is risen, who is at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Rom. 8:33, 34). Whether the four data with reference to Christ - his death, resurrection, exalted state, and intercession - are the answer to the question, "who is he who condemns?", which precedes, or to the question "who shall separate us from the love of Christ?", which follows, it is obvious that the intercession of Christ is co-ordinated with the death, resurrection, and exalted glory as that which insures the vindication, on the one alternative, or the security, on the other alternative, of the people of God. And this means that the active and abiding intercession of Christ is engaged with the permanency of the bond that unites the people of God to Christ in the efficacy of his death, in the power of his resurrection, and in the security of his exalted glory. The intercession is appealed to here for the purpose of assuring believers that there is an abiding concern on the part of the exalted Lord with the conflicts and trials which beset the people of God and that this concern expresses itself in prayer on their behalf, that none of the assaults upon them will be successful in sundering the bond that unites them to him and that they will be more than conquerors in every engagement with their adversaries. In a word, it is intercession directed to every exigency of their warfare and therefore to the supply of grace for every need.

Likewise in Hebrews 7:24, 25, the thought is dearly to the effect that Christ is able to save to the uttermost because he has an unchangeable priesthood and ever lives to make intercession. "But because he abides for ever, he has the priesthood unchangeable: Wherefore he is able to save also to the uttermost them that draw nigh to God through him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them." The intercession is mentioned more specifically as that which insures salvation to the uttermost. The idea of saving to the uttermost is very inclusive and implies salvation to the full extent, salvation complete and perfect. The inference is inescapable that the intercession of Christ brings within its scope all that is necessary to salvation in the

fullest extent of its consummated perfection. This is to say that the intercession covers the whole range of what is requisite to and of what is realized in the eschatological salvation. The intercession of Christ is interposed to meet every need of the believer. No grace bestowed, no blessing enjoyed, no benefit received can be removed from the scope of the intercession, and the intercession is the guarantee that every exigency will be met by its efficacy. The security of salvation is bound up with his intercession and outside of his intercession we must say that there is no salvation.

When we are thinking of the saving grace which is embraced in the scope of Christ's heavenly intercession, the intercession of Christ must be severely restricted to those who are the heirs of salvation. Jesus' intercession is always availing. "I know that thou hearest me always" (John 11:42). It would wreck the meaning of intercession on Jesus' part to suppose that he was ever denied what was the subject of his petition to the Father. The efficacy of Jesus' intercession includes, of course, those who are still unbelievers but who are among the elect. This appears in his high priestly prayer of John 17. "Not for these only do I ask, but also for those who believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou, Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us, in order that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (vss. 20, 21). The intercession of which we have examples and which is referred to in Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25 is strictly within the realm of saving efficacy. The objects are the heirs of salvation.

This fact is correlative with another feature that bears closely upon the efficacy of our Lord's intercession. It is that of the unity and co-extensiveness of his high priestly accomplishments and activities. The intercessory aspect of the priestly function must never be divorced from the propitiatory. The intercession is based upon the atonement. In the two passages where intercession is expressly mentioned this correlation and dependence are clearly implied. "It is Christ that died... who also makes intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34). And the context of Hebrews 7:25, specifically verses 26, 27, indicates this relationship. It was such a priest who was needed, the writer proceeds to say, who could offer himself once for all as a sacrifice (vs. 27). And the close parallel thought in Hebrews 9:24, that he is made manifest in the presence of God for us, is related directly to the fact that he purified the holies with better sacrifices than those of the Levitical antitypes and that once in the consummation of the ages he was manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (vss. 23, 26). There are two inferences that are unavoidable.

1. It would violate the implications of the unity of his priestly functions to give to the propitiatory a more inclusive extent, as respects its redemptive efficacy, than is given to the intercession. The security which is, on all accounts, bound up with the intercession is a security which must likewise inhere in the propitiation. Otherwise the intercession would not extend as far as the high priestly offering provided for and there would be an area of accomplishment which the propitiation embraced that would not be covered by the intercession. I am well aware that questions arise at this point respecting the privileges and opportunities accruing from the death of Christ for those who are not themselves the heirs of salvation and therefore privileges and opportunities that are comprised in the design of the death of Christ. This is the question of the relation of the

death Of Christ to the gifts which fall into the category of what we call common grace. It is within the mediatorial dominion which Christ exercises as the reward of his once-for-all high priestly accomplishment that this common grace is dispensed, and the grace dispensed must sustain a relationship to his redemptive work. We must remember, however, that common grace by its very nature is non-saving grace and therefore does not fall within the sphere of that security of which we are now speaking nor is it to be defined in terms of that which propitiation, as propitiation, contemplates. And we do not have warrant from Scripture to include within what is called intercession on Christ's part that which falls within the non-saving grace which those who are not the heirs of salvation enjoy in this life. But, even if certain considerations arising from the universality of Christ's dominion and from the organic relations which the operations of non-saving grace sustain to the fulfilment of God's redemptive design, required us to bring the operations of common grace within the compass of Christ's intercession in some way or other, we must remember that such intercession cannot extend beyond the efficacy and effect of non-saving grace.

The intercession that is brought to our attention in these passages is intercession which cannot be reduced to lower terms than the efficacy of saving grace.

2. The heavenly intercession is a messianic function just as truly as was his propitiatory offering. It is therefore conducted in pursuance of the economy of salvation. It belongs to that arrangement designed by the love, grace, and wisdom of God. As in the propitiation itself, there is no place for the notion that the Father is won over to clemency and grace by inducements which the Son brings to bear upon him. Just as the propitiation is the provision of the Father's love, so must we say that the intercession is also. All messianic appointment and investiture has its origin, by way of eminence, in the Father's love. The intercession is simply one element or aspect of that provision which God in love and wisdom has made to bring to perfection his redemptive design. That mediation of this character should be continuously carried on in the holies of the heavenly sanctuary brings to our attention the condescensions of love and grace which the economy of salvation involves. It also advertises the divine exigencies which are met by that economy. And it is the fact that no humiliation for the Son of God attaches to the conduct of this phase of mediation that serves to exhibit the marvel of its grace. When Paul says of Christ that God "bath highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every name" or again that he "set him at his right hand in the heavenlies far above all principality and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come," he implies that no humiliation now adheres to the human nature in which our Lord is glorified. And no humiliation, therefore, can characterize his intercessory activity. But the fact that from the seat of exalted and undimmed glory and in the exercise of high priestly prerogative he interposes petition to the Father on behalf of every one of his own, to the end that they also may be glorified with him, should cause us to be filled with holy and adoring amazement at the condescensions of trinitarian love and grace. And the effect will then be that we shall be humbled to the point of being speechless, in a true sense exasperated, at the thought of the intercession which is interjected to save us from the doom which our continuing sinfulness and unfaithfulness deserve and saved to a glory which consists in glorification with Christ.

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