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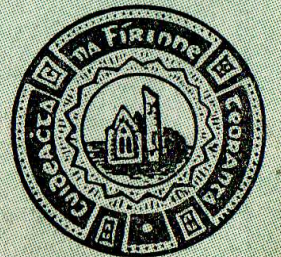
The SACRIFICE of REDEMPTION and the MASS

by
Very Rev.

WILLIAM MORAN

D.D.

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Maynooth



No. DD. 935.

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

By

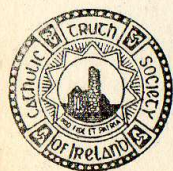
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THE SACRIFICE OF REDEMPTION AND THE MASS

BEING THE SIXTH BOOKLET IN THE SERIES :
"WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?"

By VERY REV. WILLIAM MORAN, D.D.,
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RELIGION is mainly a matter of the will or heart. Yet, because man is not merely a rational being, but also an animal, his interior religious life soon dries up, if it does not find outward expression in his bodily acts. External acts of worship are useful from several points of view. They help to sustain the spirit of worship in the will; they assist the mind to realise better its relation and duties towards God; and they serve to acknowledge God as the lord of the body as well as of the soul.

In the course of ages, various acts of external worship have been used by men, to show their respect for the god or gods, in whom they believe. Some of these acts were not used exclusively for divine worship, but were also employed to honour important men, such as kings and national heroes. There was one act, however, which appears to have been reserved by all peoples for the worship of their gods; and that act was sacrifice. I do not propose to discuss the ideas that lay behind the offering of sacrifice among the Gentile nations of antiquity. When the *Epistle to the Hebrews* tells us that the death of Christ was a sacrifice, it is the Jewish, not the Gentile, notion of sacrifice, that the author has in mind. Consequently, to understand what he means, we have to take our concept of sacrifice from the Old Testament. Moreover, we have to fix our attention particularly on one special class of Old Testament sacrifices, namely, blood sacrifices; for it is these that will best illustrate the sacrifice of Calvary.

In human society we acknowledge great excellence or great authority in our fellow-men by certain signs, such as doffing our hats when we meet them. Sacrifice belongs to that same language of signs. Among the Jews it was a sign or token, by which the worshippers acknowledged God's lordship over them, and their own dependence on God. This sign took the form of a gift presented to God—a special gift, presented in a special way, for the special purpose just mentioned.

For the pious Israelite, God was the first beginning and cause of all things. He was, therefore, the lord or owner of all, and was entitled to the service of those who were the work of His hands. He was the Lord and Master of Israel in a special manner, by reason of the privileges and protection, which He had extended to the nation, and the messianic promises He had made for the future. The primary purpose of sacrifice was to acknowledge this lordship of God, and the divine excellence, which it implied. It was no mere formal acknowledgement that was contemplated—a kind of polite curtsy made to God on account of His dignity. It was much more: it was a practical acknowledgment, by which the worshipper admitted his obligations, and consequently dedicated himself here and now to the service of God. The acceptance of this relation—a relation of supreme lordship on one side, and of complete dependence on the other—logically implied in the worshipper sentiments of adoration, thanksgiving for gifts received, supplication for the continuance of divine favours in the future, and repentance for sin, if sin had been committed. Every sacrifice expressed more or less clearly all these aspects of the Israelite's acknowledgment of God's dominion over him; but according as one or other aspect was emphasised, the sacrifice might be classified as one of adoration, thanksgiving, impetration or propitiation. Sacrifices of propitiation—i.e., sacrifices offered principally for the purpose of atoning for sin—have a special interest for us, as types of the sacrifice of Redemption offered by Christ.

That the acknowledgment of God's lordship should find expression in the presentation of a gift is not surprising. From time immemorial men have presented gifts to their

fellow-men, to gain their goodwill, and to placate them for offences committed against them. Moreover, among many ancient peoples, especially in the East, the presentation of gifts was also widely recognised as a token of submission and allegiance in the political order. What then could be more natural than that men should endeavour to express their allegiance to God, as they expressed it to their earthly superiors, by means of gifts? This age-old procedure was sanctioned and regulated by divine authority in the Mosaic Law; not because God had any need or use for the things offered to Him, but because He wished to approve of the goodwill which found expression in these gifts. Not every gift, however, was a sacrifice. That the presentation of a gift to God might be a sacrifice, certain conditions had to be verified. From the complex regulations laid down by the Mosaic Law, we can select a few headings, under which it will be possible to elucidate sufficiently these conditions, in so far as the ritual of blood sacrifices is concerned. There must be a gift (victim) to be offered; a priest to offer it; and a sacrificial manner of offering. In regard to all these items, precise regulations were laid down by the Mosaic Law.

In regard to the victim, only the domestic animals, used as food by the people, might be offered in sacrifice. The Law, furthermore, forbade the sacrifice of an animal suffering from disease or serious mutilation. These restrictions were intended presumably to uphold the dignity of the sacrificial ritual, by excluding the offering of mean and unseemly gifts. They also helped the Israelite people to a better realisation of the meaning and purpose of sacrifice. To many modern minds, perhaps the most surprising fact about the Mosaic Law governing sacrificial gifts is that it sanctioned blood sacrifices at all. These sacrifices seem to offend the modern aesthetic sense: the slaughter of an animal in God's honour appears to have been an unnecessarily cruel form of worship, when the sacrifice of wine, bread or other foodstuffs would have served the purpose equally well. In the discussion of this difficulty, several points might be mentioned. In the first place, the difficulty is due to some extent to a shallow and illogical sen-

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timentality, that allows a man to order a leg of mutton from his butcher, but forbids him to think of the slaughter that has to be effected by the butcher, before he can carry out the order. Another point worthy of consideration is that, prior to the spread of Christianity, blood sacrifices were offered by practically all peoples; and that even those whose aesthetic sense was as highly developed as our own (e.g., the ancient Greeks), saw nothing objectionable in a blood ritual. Apart from these considerations, it is not true to say that the purpose of sacrifice among the Jews could have been served equally well by bloody or unbloody sacrifices. Some of the purposes of sacrifice could have been served quite well by unbloody gifts; and consequently we find such sacrifices prescribed by the Mosaic Law. But the Israelite's consciousness of sin required something more. Realising how he had rebelled against God, the repentant Jew felt the need of an appropriate rite, to express his sense of guilt, his repentance, his desire to placate God and obtain pardon and reconciliation. The blood ritual was the most appropriate for his purpose. He had learned that death is the penalty of sin, and he had earned the punishment of death by his own sins. Blood sacrifice symbolised his admission of his guilt, and his worthiness of death. He shed the blood of an animal victim, that his own blood might be spared. These sacrifices, offered principally for the purpose of placating God and securing for the sinner pardon and reconciliation with Him, are called propitiatory sacrifices.

Among the Jews sacrifice was an act of public worship, and consequently had to be offered by a duly appointed representative of the people. Before the Mosaic Law was promulgated, the patriarch or head of the tribal family filled the office of priest; but under the Law the offering of sacrifice was reserved to the descendants of Aaron, who thus became the sole priests of Israel. Even when the private devotion of a particular Israelite prompted him to offer a sacrifice for his own spiritual good, his offering had to be made by the official priest. The sacrifice was in a special way the sacrifice of the man who provided the victim; nevertheless, because of his solidarity with his Israelite brethren, his sacrifice was in some sense a public

act, and as such had to be offered by a priest, authorised to speak for the people at God's altar.

If sacrifice was to be an act of public worship, it was obviously necessary to have a sacrificial manner of offering that could be recognised by the people; otherwise they could not be expected to take an intelligent interest in what was being done. From the mass of details prescribed by the Law about the manner of offering, two acts stand out as of primary importance—the immolation and the oblation. The slaying of the animal was called immolation; and this part of the rite might be performed by a person who was not a priest. The oblation was the specifically priestly act, by which the victim was formally presented to God. It consisted in pouring the blood on, or at the foot of, the altar. The reason for this method of offering is interesting. It is referred to in the words of Leviticus XVII, "If any man of the house of Israel eat blood, I will set my face against his soul (life), and I will cut him off from among his people; for the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it (the blood) to you, that you may make atonement with it on the altar for your souls." To place the blood of the victim on the altar, therefore, was to place the life of the victim on it. The altar in turn was regarded as God's agent for the reception of the victim. The ceremony of pouring the blood on the altar, therefore, amounted to a transference of the victim to God. As soon as the blood was spilled on the altar, the victim was deemed to have passed into God's ownership. It was now "sacred" to God, and could only be disposed of according to the regulations He had laid down in the Law. The same idea is sometimes expressed by saying that the altar "sanctifies" the gift, i.e., makes it "sacred" to God.

One cause of heart-burning still remained. Unless God accepted the gift offered by the worshipper, the whole procedure was a failure. How was the worshipper to know that his gift was accepted? In the earlier history of Israel we read of sacrifices, in which God manifested His acceptance, by sending fire to consume the victim on the altar. Such a miraculous intervention could never become a normal feature of a sacrificial system, established and

regulated by law: and consequently the Israelites, who offered sacrifice in the Temple of Jerusalem, had to be satisfied with a purely figurative manifestation of God's acceptance of their victims. The altar, as already explained, was looked on as God's agent for the reception of the victim. The divine acceptance of the gift was further manifested, in an equally figurative way, by the altar fire, which consumed on God's behalf the parts of the victim placed upon it. That the reality did not always correspond with these figures is only too clear from the language of the Jewish prophets. These latter often had to denounce their people for their neglect of the interior worship, without which the external sacrifice is only a lying token. Speaking in the name of God, the prophet Amos tells them: "I will take no more delight in your assemblies. Yea, though you offer me your burnt offerings and your gifts, I will not accept them. Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts" (Amos V.). The outward sacrifice was intended to express the worshipper's inward sentiments of adoration, thanksgiving, repentance and so on. If these sentiments were absent, the outward sacrifice ceased to have any purpose or meaning in the eyes of God. The prophet Isaias, in a passage quoted by Our Lord, expresses the same idea, when he says: "This people honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matt, XV.)

To illustrate the various sacrificial factors already described I shall quote from the Old Testament an example of a sacrifice for sin, offered by an individual Israelite. "But if he offer from the flock a victim for his sins, to wit, an ewe without blemish, he shall put his hand on the head thereof, and shall immolate it in the place where the victims of holocausts are wont to be slain. And the priest shall take the blood thereof with his finger, and shall touch the horns of the altar of holocaust, and the rest he shall pour out at the foot thereof. All the fat also he shall take off . . . and shall burn it upon the altar . . . and he shall pray for him and for his sin, and it shall be forgiven him" (Leviticus IV.) The owner of the sheep slays it. The ceremony of placing his hand on the head of the sheep expresses his intention of devoting this animal

to be a victim of sacrifice on his behalf. The promise of forgiveness of sins would seem, at first sight, to indicate that the sacrifice has an atoning value, capable of satisfying for sin, and meriting the sinner's restoration to the friendship of God. The *Epistle to the Hebrews*, however, warns us against drawing such a conclusion: "For the (Mosaic) Law—having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things—by the self-same sacrifices, which they offer every year, can never make the comers thereto perfect . . . for it is impossible that by the blood of oxen and goats sins should be taken away" (Heb. X.) The blood sacrifices of the Old Law, therefore, had not in themselves the atoning value required to take away sin. If God actually accepted them, and in return granted pardon to the sinner, it was only because they were types and figures of a future sacrifice, that would be fully acceptable in itself. That future sacrifice was the sacrifice of Calvary—the only really redemptive sacrifice ever offered by man to God.

THE SACRIFICE OF REDEMPTION.

Our Lord was not only thoroughly conversant with the sacrificial system I have just described, but He was also conscious of His mission to fulfil in Himself the atonement, that was only pre-figured (symbolised) by the propitiatory sacrifices of the Old Law. In doing so He might be expected to keep in view the traditional notion of sacrifice, familiar to His Jewish disciples. On the other hand, the identity of priest and victim made it impossible for the sacrifice of Christ to conform in every respect to the rules of the Mosaic Law. If the immolation (slaying), for instance, preceded the oblation in Christ's sacrifice, as it usually did in the Jewish sacrifices, there could be no oblation at all; for the priest as well as the victim would be dead; and a dead priest cannot officiate. In regard to the immolation itself, the situation was unusual. In the Old Law, the immolation was not a specifically priestly act; it might be carried out by the owner of the victim, or by the servants attached to the Temple. But the slaying had to be done for the purpose of sacrificing the victim

to God; otherwise there was no sacrificial immolation, and the animal was not a victim for the purposes of oblation. Now, the slaying of Christ by crucifixion was carried out by His executioners, who certainly had no thoughts of sacrificial immolation; but merely intended to execute Him as a criminal. Nevertheless, in spite of the intention of His executioners, Christ's death was in fact an immolation. He had previously made it clear that He would lay down His life freely, and that nobody had power to take it against His will (John, X). He had also given proof of His power over His enemies immediately before His arrest in the garden of Gethsemani (John, XVIII). The real purpose of His death, therefore, was the purpose for which He Himself freely accepted it—not the purpose intended by His enemies, who could do Him no harm, except in so far as He permitted them. And what was this purpose intended by Christ? His own words at the Last Supper supply the answer: "This is My blood of the new covenant, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins."

We next come to the specifically priestly act of oblation (offering). And here again the sacrifice of Redemption differs from the sacrifices of the Old Law. The blood of the victim is shed; but there is no altar to receive it—no altar to "sanctify" the gift. In the Mosaic sacrifices the altar was the symbol of the Deity—a symbol rendered necessary by the desire of the worshippers to have some manifestation, even a purely symbolic manifestation, of the acceptance of their sacrifices by God. In the sacrifice of Christ, the symbol is absent, but the reality is present in its place. The gift is not "sanctified" by the figurative and fallible sanctification of an altar made by human hands, but by the divinity of the person, who is the priest-victim. The Fathers of the Church often speak of Christ's body as the altar on which He shed His blood. The image may be useful to assist the imagination; but the symbolism of an altar was really unnecessary in the case of Christ's sacrifice, because He Himself was a divine person. If we were to work out an explanation of Christ's sacrifice in terms of the sacrificial language of the Jews, we might put it this way:—The shedding of His blood, culminating in

death, considered as freely accepted and endured by Christ, constituted the sacrificial immolation. The same shedding of His blood unto death constituted the oblation, i.e., the priestly act of transmitting the victim to God. Christ made this act of oblation in His human nature: the divinity of His person assured its acceptance by God. This divine acceptance of Christ's sacrifice was soon to be manifested to the world by the miracles of the Resurrection and Ascension.*

The *Epistle to the Hebrews* leaves no manner of doubt about the perfection, completeness and finality of Christ's one sacrifice of Redemption. Having shown the superiority of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice over the priesthood and sacrifices of the Mosaic Law, from many different points of view, the author of *Hebrews* rings the changes on the one-ness, and at the same time the efficacy of Christ's unique sacrifice. "But Christ being come a high priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, neither by the blood of goats nor of oxen, but by His own blood, entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption." And again: "For Jesus has not entered into the Holies made by hand, but into heaven itself, that He may appear now in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entered into the Holies every year with the blood of other things: for then He ought to have suffered often from the beginning of the world: but now *once* at the end of ages, He hath appeared for the destruction of sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. IX).

From these and similar passages it is clear that, in the New Law, there is no room for any propitiatory sacrifice except that of Christ. Nothing remains to be added; the work of propitiation is complete; for "this man, offering one sacrifice for sins, for ever sits at the right hand of God . . . for by one oblation He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. X). And yet Christ's priesthood was not finished with that one sacrifice, though it

* The expression "on the altar of the Cross," which you sometimes hear in sermons and prayers, is only a metaphor.

cost Him His life. The priesthood of the Mosaic priests was extinguished by their death; that of Christ is everlasting. Having referred to Our Lord the Old Testament text, "Thou art a priest *for ever* according to the order of Melchisedech," the author of *Hebrews* continues, "By so much is Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And the others indeed were made many priests, because by reason of death they were not suffered to continue; but this (priest), for that he continueth for ever, hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby He is able also to save for ever those that come to God by Him; always living to make intercession for us." (Heb. VII).

Here we have two statements, which at first sight appear to conflict with each other. On the one hand, we are told that by one sacrifice, once offered, Christ has obtained eternal redemption for us, destroyed sin, and perfected for ever those that are sanctified. On the other hand, we are told that Christ is "a priest *for ever* according to the order of Melchisedech"; and that "He hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby He is able to save for ever those that come to God by Him; always living to make intercession for us." With these texts from *Hebrews*, it will be convenient to consider two other texts. The first is a Messianic text from the Old Testament: "For, from the rising of the sun to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation; for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachy I). According to this prophecy, God's name is not only to be great among the nations; it is to be honoured by continuous sacrifice. The second text is from *I Cor. X*: "The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? For we being many are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread. Behold Israel, according to the flesh. Are not they, that eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar? What then? Do I say that what is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? Or that the idol is anything? But the things that the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God. And I would not that you be made

partakers with devils. You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils. You cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils." The Apostle is warning his readers against taking part in pagan sacrificial banquets. He admits that an idol is nothing but a piece of stone; and that the meat of the victim sacrificed to it is nothing but ordinary meat. Nevertheless, Christians should have nothing to do with these meats; because to eat off the altar would amount to a participation in the sacrifice. Christians have their own sacrificial banquet, just as the unconverted Jews have theirs, and the pagans have theirs. The Christians in their banquet partake of the body and blood of Christ. It would be obviously incongruous for them to partake of the sacrifice offered to his enemy, the devil. The implication of the Apostle's argument is clear: the Eucharistic banquet is a sacrificial banquet; and the victim offered, and subsequently eaten, is Jesus Christ.

We are now in a position to draw all the threads together, from *Hebrews*, *Malachy* and *Corinthians*. From the all-sufficiency of the sacrifice of the Cross it follows that there is no room for any further sacrifice of propitiation for sin. No new sacrifice, having its own independent atoning value, and standing side by side as a co-ordinate sacrifice with that of Christ, can be expected or admitted in the New Law. Yet there is to be a sacrifice of some kind in the New Law; and it is to be offered from the rising to the setting of the sun. This sacrifice is associated in some way with the everlasting priesthood of Christ; yet it involves no new personal act of offering on His part. Moreover, the victim offered in this sacrifice is the same victim that He offered on the Cross. The problem, then, is to fit these various data together. The solution, of course, is the sacrifice of the Mass. To understand this sacrifice, we must again retrace our steps a little.

When a sacrifice was offered under the Mosaic Law, the victim became "sacred" to God as soon as its blood was placed on the altar. From that moment it was deemed to be God's property, to be disposed of according to His Will.

The Law laid down what *was* His Will in various sets of circumstances. In some cases the whole carcase had to be

burned on the altar. In other cases certain parts of the victim were burned; and the rest was eaten, in a sacrificial banquet, by the people most closely associated with the sacrifice. In this latter case, God, as a sign of the friendship bespoken by the sacrifice, entertained the worshippers at His own table, out of the gift they had presented to Him. In both cases the victim was completely consumed, and passed wholly out of existence.

But, Christ, the victim of the sacrifice of Redemption, did not pass out of existence in this way. He was neither consumed by fire, nor by sacrificial banquet. God raised Him up, and took Him to the divine throne in heaven, where He is now glorified as "the lamb that was slain" (Apoc. V). He is still "the lamb that was slain"; He is still the gift presented to God in sacrifice, accepted by God, and now placed by God "at His right hand" (Heb. X). It is not Christ's priesthood alone that is eternal, but also His victimhood. He is priest-victim before the throne of God. We have already noticed the words of *Hebrews*: "(Christ) has entered into heaven itself, that He may appear now in the presence of God for us." (Heb. IX). His mere presence before God—His presence as victim of the one great sacrifice of propitiation—gives everlasting efficacy to His one offering on the Cross, and renders a second offering unnecessary. It is the same idea that the author of *Hebrews* has in mind, when he speaks of Christ as "always living to make intercession for us." (Heb. VII). These words do not mean that Christ prays for us in heaven, as do the Saints. He does not intercede for us in that way: but His presence before God as "the lamb that was slain" is itself a practical, factual intercession, a continual reminder of Calvary.

The Mass is *our* offering of this same victim. It is not a new sacrifice, complete in its own right, with its own independent propitiatory value. It is the same sacrifice as the sacrifice of Calvary. The same victim is offered. The same immolation (slaying), that served for the sacrifice of Calvary, still serves for the Mass. By that immolation Christ became a victim of sacrifice once for all. We do not need to immolate (slay) Him again at Mass; He is already a victim, ready to our hands. All we need to do,

in our sacrifice of the Mass, is to offer Him to God. That act of offering is the only new thing in the sacrifice of the Mass. Everything else is borrowed from Calvary—the victim, the immolation, the propitiatory value.*

Perhaps you will ask: Is not the sacrifice of the Mass, as well as the sacrifice of the Cross, offered by Christ? Is He not the chief offerer? The answer will be "Yes" or "No," according to the way you understand the question. The same victim, once offered on the Cross, is now offered at Mass. Christ offered in person by His own immediate act on the Cross. He does not offer in that way at Mass. The immediate offerer in the Mass is the priest, the representative of the Church. As the priest, however, is incapable of offering, except in virtue of the priesthood of Christ delegated to him for the purpose, Christ can be said to offer the Mass through the ministry of His priests. It is only in this sense that Christ offers the sacrifice of the Mass. The whole situation might be summed up as follows. There is only one sacrifice in the New Law. That sacrifice was offered by Christ in person on the Cross. It is offered daily by the Church, through her official ministers. The priestly power, required to make this offering, was delegated to the Apostles at the Last Supper, when Christ said to them: "Do this in commemoration of Me." Our manner of offering is different from Christ's. He offered by the real shedding of His blood. We offer by the symbolical shedding of His blood. This symbolism is contained in the separate consecration of His body and blood. It is the manner of offering, which He Himself has appointed for us.

Some one may ask: If the Mass is only our offering of the same sacrifice already offered by Christ, what is the use of such a sacrifice at all? Has not Christ already offered Himself once for all? And has He not offered Himself more perfectly, more devoutly, than we can hope to offer Him? What useful purpose, then, can be served by our offering? In reply to this difficulty it may be stated at once that the Mass serves not one, but several most use-

* Hence, the Council of Trent says that the sacrifice of the Mass differs from that of the Cross **only** in the manner of offering. (Trent XXII. 2).

ful and important purposes. Let us first consider the question of propitiation. When Our Lord redeemed us by His death on the Cross, we were still strangers to Him. We had still to be linked up with Him by faith and baptism; we had still to be made members of His mystical body. We were not even sleeping partners in the transaction carried out on Calvary. Now that we have been received as members into the body, of which He is the head, He wants us to identify ourselves formally and publicly with the act, by which He redeemed us. He invites us to become *co-offerers with Himself* of the sacrifice of the Cross. He extends to us the honour and the privilege of taking an active part in the sacrifice of our own redemption, by offering to God out of our own hands the atoning victim, which He places at our disposal. Nor does the element of time—the fact that our offering comes so long after that of Christ—render our sacrifice a useless formality. When Christ offered the victim of Calvary to God on our behalf, He did so in our absence, and without any mandate from us. When we now offer that same victim, we not only proclaim our approval of what He did on our behalf; but we also add our own personal apology for our sins to the apology already made to God on our behalf by Christ. Although this personal act of ours does not improve on the already full and perfect propitiation for sin, established by Christ; yet, by bringing our wills into line with His sacrificial will on Calvary, it enables us to draw upon the propitiatory value established for us by Him. The Mass thus becomes for us a means of reaping the fruits of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice—it becomes a means of applying those fruits to our souls. To quote the words of the Council of Trent, the Mass "is a means, whereby the power of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is applied to the remission of our daily sins." (Sess. XXII. C. 1.)

Even if the Mass served no other purpose than that, which I have just described, it would still be a marvellous legacy left by Christ to His Church. But for us Christians the Mass serves all the purposes, for which the Israelites offered their various and diverse sacrifices under the Old Law. It is the outward expression of our inward attitude of will towards God—our will to recognise His

lordship over us, and to dedicate ourselves to His service; to thank Him for His gifts and graces; to beg of Him the continuance of His favours; to apologise for our offences against Him. Christ's sacrifice on Calvary was not merely a sacrifice of propitiation: it was equally perfect as a sacrifice of adoration, thanksgiving and impetration. Christ has now placed at our disposal the victim, by which He once expressed to God His own perfect sentiments in these respects. In the Mass that victim becomes *our* victim, *our* gift, to express *our* adoration, *our* thanksgiving, *our* desire for God's grace and mercy. Provided we try to align our wills with the will of Christ on Calvary, the Mass enables us to say to God: "We identify ourselves with the sacrificial intentions of our High Priest. Accept as coming from us, His members, the same adoration, the same thanksgiving, the same supplication, the same apology for sin, which were once so perfectly expressed by Christ, our head, upon the Cross." We can now understand how it comes that the Mass can be the means of applying to our souls the fruits of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. We are enabled to offer that sacrifice as our own.

I have just said "provided we try to align our wills with the will of Christ on Calvary." The Mass, like all other sacrifices, is the outward expression of an inward submission of the will of God. That inward submission is the individual Christian's contribution to a worthy offering of the sacrifice; and nobody else can supply it for him. If a person in his inmost heart refuses to serve God, even the Mass, in so far as it is *his* sacrifice, is only an empty token of a submission which in fact does not exist. He may still benefit by the Mass, in so far as it is the sacrifice of his fellow-worshippers, or of the Church at large; and in this way the Mass wins for many a sinner the grace of repentance. But as offered *by himself* it produces no fruits, because of his bad dispositions. He places an obstacle to its efficacy.

We now see how the apparently conflicting statements of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* all fit together. Christ made only one oblation (offering) of propitiation for sin—by His own personal act. Yet His priesthood is everlasting—

being exercised indirectly through the ministry of His priests to whom He has extended His priesthood by delegation. Again, "By one oblation He hath perfected for ever them that are justified": and yet, "He hath an everlasting priesthood, *whereby He is able to save for ever them that come to God by Him; always living to make intercession for us.*" (Heb. X 14; VII 25). By the one oblation, mentioned in the first text, He paid the price. By the subsequent exercise of His priesthood, through the ministry of His priests, the fruits thus paid for are actually brought home to individual souls. The Mass, of course, is only one of the means, placed at our disposal by Christ, for reaping the fruits of His one great sacrifice. The seven sacraments are the other great means He has given us for the same purpose.

The Mass is like the sacraments in another way, namely, in that the better the dispositions with which we offer it, the greater will be the fruits to be expected from it. Remember that you do not go to Mass merely to look on; you go to offer sacrifice to God. It is your sacrifice as well as the priest's; he is only the public representative, set apart to carry out the rite in the name of all. It will help you to assist at Mass well, if you remember that you are privileged to be a *co-offerer with Christ of the sacrifice of your own redemption.*

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