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# THE MASS

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## THE MASS<sup>1</sup>

BY B. F. C. COSTELLOE, M.A.

THE man who proposes to discuss "The Mass" with an agnostic audience may fairly be charged with temerity, for there is not one of the institutions of the world which has been so great a stumbling-block to the majority of modern Englishmen as the great historic and spiritual fact which is the subject of this address.

I have chosen it for two converse reasons. To all Catholics it is, and has been since Christianity began, the very heart and centre of the spiritual life. To the average Englishman it must long have seemed to be a relic of barbarism and a psychological enigma. The very name of the "Mass" has been for centuries a byword in this land, connoting to the unheeding generations only an exploded superstition and an aimless mummery.

In our own time, since Protestantism of the original type has begun to give way before the advance of a more consistent unbelief, the great names and uses of the Church have not been visited with so much obloquy—perhaps, with some, because they have been relegated to a deeper contempt. Yet I dare to hold and say that what lack there is about us of sympathy, of respect, nay of belief, is in the main the outcome, not of an evil will, but of a lack of opportunity; and for that reason I make bold to

<sup>1</sup> An address delivered at South Place Institute, March, 1889, before a non-Catholic audience.

try if at least some poor beginning may be made, by setting forth the Catholic beliefs in language less strange to your own habits of thought than is the common language of our books of doctrine or devotion.

That the task is beyond me, I know only too well. I have neither the knowledge nor the spiritual insight, neither the preparatory training nor the official authority, which that man must have who would state the truths of God to this hurrying generation. Yet there lies on all of us a duty, when occasion comes, to do our little spell of work in building up the roads of truth. In the day of beginnings we may be able to do little; but if we do our little work, in God's own time "that prophet" shall arise. London is not more proud of the swift advance of culture than was Florence in its new birth of knowledge and triumphant art; yet Savonarola led Florence captive, in the power of God. London is not half so hopeless of Christianity, not half so sunk in the mad endeavour to fill up the void of the spirit with the sweet things of the flesh, as was the Paris of fifty years ago; and yet all Paris was swept into reverent attention by the voice of Lacordaire. Pray with me, my friends, if you still pray, that God may send His prophet unto us also—if it be but as one crying in the wilderness—that after all the long confusion the way of the Lord may be made straight again.

I have said that to the majority of the English people the Mass is a byword; and yet there is a large and important section of them who have been drifting steadily towards all forms of Catholic usage and belief. You who are not of them may mix but little among them; but if any man would reckon with the currents of the time, he cannot overlook the startling growth of a pro-Catholic party in England. I do not mean the mere trifles in ecclesiastical fancy-work! I mean those capable and earnest men who speak of sacramental, of Eucharistic doctrine, in terms an outsider could not easily

distinguish from our own. The fact has its significance, even for the world of unbelief. If you count those who, since Newman, have joined the Church outright, with those who have come so close to it that for this purpose they are our allies, you will find that there is a Catholic school of thought among you which may well claim a respectful hearing. Men who are eminent in politics ought to be no bad judges of a thing so human as religious tendencies ; and it is a curious fact that the actual chiefs of both the political parties are earnest and avowed believers in almost all that I shall have to state to you to-day as the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharistic office.

Such things do not begin to prove that our belief is true ; but they do prove that it is not incredible.

How shall a man begin to speak of it ? To us of the family of the faith it is a fact so familiar, so closely woven in with all we know of God and of the spiritual experience, that we hardly put it into words. You may haunt our ceremonies and know our printed prayers by heart, yet if you do not bring to them some kind of Catholic sense, you may find but the tinkling cymbal and the sounding brass. In the first ages it was pre-eminently " the secret "—that fact of the new life so holy, so beloved, that no profane eye should see it, and that none but they who were prepared to love it should even know the mystery. We have fallen far, in these easy times, below the fervour of their devotion ; yet in one sense the same is true of us. To-day, as then—in this city, as in the catacombs—it is the secret of holy souls, the guarded heart of fire in many a commonplace, unnoticed life. Outwardly it may often seem a trivial thing, with tinkling bells and inartistic ornament ; but equally in the silence and the song, in the poverty and in the pride, it is the tense communion of our myriads of souls, each for itself and in its own way, with the hidden presence of the Lord.

The Mass is the one essential act of public worship of the Church. Combining the new idea of a sacra-

ment with the old tradition of a sacrifice, it is in truth a hundred things in one—as complete in its real adaptation to every private need as it is rigid in its ritual adherence to the historic liturgy. But above and before all else, it is the commemoration of the death of Christ, and of that Last Supper when He left this ordinance to His disciples, as a momentous legacy and a last command.

There are two linked beliefs relating to that Last Supper, which must be borne in mind by every one who would approach in any honest way the consideration of the Mass. They are the belief that Christ then revealed a sacramental doctrine of the Eucharist, and the belief that He then founded by His recorded words and deeds an ordinance since followed in the liturgies of the Church. The vindication of these propositions involves, of course, all Catholicism ; the testimony and value of the New Testament, the question of the person and office of Christ, the reality of any religion, the personality of God. The Catholic view of the world hangs together ; you must take it or reject it as a whole. It is, as I have already sought to show you,<sup>1</sup> the only consistent Christianity—the only escape from the quicksands of private interpretation and the deep sea of sceptical suspense ; and the proof or disproof of this claim is the ultimate question. For the present, however, I take it that the chief desire of my audience is *to know what we mean* ; and therefore I say that, for the apprehension of our meaning, you must first realize that we do in truth believe in the reality and significance of the world-historic scene in that Upper Room, and that we find in it the key to and the warrant for the office of the Mass. I think that unbiassed readers will probably agree with us that, if the words recorded were said at all, their sense is not really doubtful. They certainly were not understood in any but the one way, either by the Apostles or their immediate pupils, or by

<sup>1</sup> See earlier lecture on *The Church Catholic* also issued by the Catholic Truth Society (2d.).

the ages of the Church, or even by the countless heresies, until Luther and his friends went a-hunting for new interpretations.

Recall for a moment the familiar story. The strange sending of Peter and John to claim the room "because the Master's time was near at hand"; the keeping of their last Passover, with all that it implied to them as the central office of the Jewish system, in which the lamb was slain in token of the saving of Israel out of the land of bondage in the early days; the memory in their minds of His repeated prophecies that He would leave them soon, and of that recent scene when the healer of Lazarus rode into Jerusalem, amid the hosannas of the people waving triumphal palms; the sudden shock when Jesus girt Himself with a towel and began to wash the feet of all the Twelve, that, as He said, they might be "wholly clean" for some great event to come; the high words of commission that followed, "I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me"; and then the culminating words of institution—concurrently recorded with due care in the three synoptic Gospels, too well known to be repeated in the fourth, but amply witnessed by the Apostolic writings and by the unbroken tradition of the Liturgies—when (having said, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer") "He took bread, and giving thanks He brake it (εὐχαριστήσας ἐκλάσσε), and gave unto them, saying, Take and eat; This is My Body which is given for you. This do in commemoration of Me" (St. Luke xxii. 19; St. Matt. xxvi. 26; 1 Cor. xi. 24).

You will know that for the "*Do this*" He uses a word appropriate to a sacrificial act: "Do this office, perform this rite, in memory of Me." You will notice also, that when He identifies the Eucharistic Bread with His Body, He is careful according to all the MSS. to use the present tense, "My Body

which is even now being broken," and "being given over to death," for you.

These were strange sayings, either senseless or supernatural. But the hearers understood. For they remembered that preliminary lesson which John has recorded in his sixth chapter, for the confirming of this very teaching in a later time, when much was in danger of being forgotten or misbelieved. They remembered—how could they forget it?—when to those cavillers who asked for such a sign as was the manna to their fathers, He replied, "*I am the Bread of Life,*" "*The bread I will give is My flesh.*" The hearers had cried out, "How can this man—this carpenter's son—give us His flesh to eat?" But His words beat down on them again—royal, imperative, unyielding. "I say to you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, ye have no life in you. . . . *He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him.*" And now not the Jews only, but almost all His followers, rebelled. "It is a hard saying—who can hear it?" "How can we eat His flesh?" Did He retract, or soften, or explain? Nay; but as He had begun by telling them the work of God was to *believe* Him whom He had sent, so now, in this crisis of their faith, He asked only for belief again. And many—all but the Twelve, it seems—went back and walked with Him no more. Did He say, "Ye have taken a parable too literally?" Did He offer a hidden meaning? He only turned sadly, half wearily, to His Twelve and said, "Will ye too go away?" And Peter answered—not, "It is easy"; not, "We understand"; but with a cry of faith, confident through all strange teaching, even as are we to-day, that His message was divine—"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

I have said that the writer of the fourth Gospel omits all the words of institution, these being in his day the common knowledge, probably even the settled liturgy, of the Church. But the vast importance which he attaches to the fact is made all the



more clear by the wonderful sermon, burning with the Divine Love, and instinct with the idea of the Divine Communion as the root of all the holiness of that new life, which, like the earlier lesson, he alone reports. He wrote somewhere about A.D. 100, long after the story of the Synoptics and the writings of St. Paul were current in the churches. And it is important to notice that the same connection between the idea of the Eucharist, with its sacramental communion, and the idea of the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, wherein Christ's life and love must needs be indwelling, had been also worked out in many significant forms by the Pauline Epistles.

It is not possible to detail within any reasonable limits the great number of indications to be found in the New Testament as to the continuance by the earliest followers of Christ of a commemorative rite, in which this "giving of thanks" at the "breaking of the bread" was repeated in an evidently sacramental sense, and as an act of public worship. There is a hint of it even in the story of Emmaus.<sup>1</sup> But immediately after Pentecost we are told that the converts "continued steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and the prayers" —where no doubt this "breaking of bread" is a distinctive observance of the Christians and their *προσευχή* a known rite. A little later, their action is described by saying that they "continued daily with one accord in the Temple" (at their public resort in Solomon's Porch), and "breaking bread from house to house," as each provided that "upper room" in which they loved to commemorate the Supper of the Lord. In the later Acts there is a more explicit notice of this same observance, as of a public gathering for worship, in the account, plainly given by a fellow-traveller and eye-witness of St. Paul's

<sup>1</sup> The Church of the Catacombs used the last scene in St. John's Gospel (xxi. 13) as a Eucharistic symbol, as early as A.D. 200; whether the figurative reference (see St. Augustine *ad loc.*) was as old as the Gospel itself or no, we cannot now say.

visit to the important community at Troas. The writer gives us a graphic picture of the upper chamber, with its many lights. He says that on the first day of the week, when the disciples "came together for the breaking of bread" (apparently now a technical phrase), Paul preached to them, and, intending to depart on the morrow, he continued his discourse till midnight. Then, after describing the accident and the healing which was the occasion of the narrative, he goes straight on—"And having come up again, and having broken bread and eaten, and having conversed with them till the dawn, Paul departed." The impartial reader of this narrative who knows anything of the other evidences concerning the early Church, will see at once that this was a public Sunday service in commemoration of the Supper of the Lord; and that the "breaking of bread" was the characteristic central act, to which St. Paul's sermon was leading up, and which, after the startling interruption, he completed in due form.

It is not possible to escape from the clear meaning as a matter of history (setting aside the question of inspiration) of certain passages of the Epistles, such as chapters x. and xi. of the first letter to the Corinthians, admittedly one of the earliest documents of the Church. It is a sermon against certain laxities, first as to the temple meats, and then as to the misuse of the "Agape"—the Love-Feast which was combined, as is well known, with the special celebration of the Supper. The whole passage is charged with forms of expression and turns of thought which evidently refer to the sacramental conception of the Mass as we hold it now. After recalling those types of the sacraments of Christianity which he found in the history of his own people, Paul tells his followers, as the very reason why they may not be partakers of the table of the heathen gods, that they are already partakers of "that one Bread"—"The bread which we break," as he calls it—"which is the communion of the Body of Christ." That "Bread" is *their* sacred sacrifice,

and if they hold that communion so lightly as to join in feasts where the things sacrificed to Aphrodite and the rest are eaten, they insult the Lord. In the eleventh chapter he is still more explicit. His warrant for condemning such unseemly things as happened when they "came together for the eating of the Lord's supper," is no other, he tells them, than the *very words* of Christ's institution, which he repeats in full. "I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you, that the same night in which He was betrayed He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is My Body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me." He tells them in plain words that "as often as they eat this bread and drink this cup, they are showing forth the death of the Lord," and he warns them that if they take part therein "unworthily"—if each man does not first prove, examine, assay himself, to see that he is wholly clean from grave offence, and "so eat that bread"—then they shall be "guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord," and it shall bring the uttermost judgments upon them.

I can only indicate this Pauline argument, but every line and word of it strengthens the conclusion that he is referring to an Apostolic archetype of our office of the Mass, and to nothing else. Less distinctly, but with equal truth, the same thing may be said of the argument of the unique Epistle to the Hebrews, of which the keynote is the insistence on the "priesthood according to the order of Melchisedek," who offered the bread and wine.<sup>1</sup> I venture to affirm that if there were no other historic basis for the Mass than that which we find within the canon of the New Testament, it would be enough. We do not find any direct account of the liturgical form. The texts we have do not deal with such matters. Yet, even as to

<sup>1</sup> For the early acceptance of this as a sacramental analogy, see also Clement, *Strom.* iv. 25; and note the reference to the sacrifice of Melchisedek, Abraham, and Abel in the Canon of the Mass.

this, there is in the same passage of the Corinthians a significant phrase. The gravest abuses they will themselves, he is confident, put away ; " the rest," he adds, " I will myself *put in order* when I come." He will regulate, he means, the manner of their observance, that all things may be done, as Clement put it, " decently and in order." We cannot, in the face of the surrounding evidence, doubt that such a settled order did arise. There is thought to be further reference to it in the second chapter of the letters to Timothy (where the names of the different kinds of prayer and the whole context seem to demand such an explanation), and in parts of the Apocalypse.<sup>1</sup> It has even been plausibly maintained by one of the best English scholars that 1 Cor. ii. 9 is a quotation from the Apostolic Liturgy itself.

In my former address,<sup>2</sup> when I could not foresee that I should be asked to deliver a special lecture on " The Mass," I referred to some part of the further evidence for the Apostolic character of the institution as a whole, which is afforded by a comparison of the most ancient variants of the Liturgy among themselves, and by the concurrent testimony of the earliest writings, Christian or Pagan, which deal with the matter. Before I revert to that branch

<sup>1</sup> The framework of the splendid vision in chapters iv. and v. is evident to those who know the ritual of the days of the Catacombs. The Bishop sat on a " throne," a great chair in the centre facing the people, with the altar-table before him, whereon lay in the Mass " the Lamb that was slain." The attendant priests sat on either side—twelve, and twelve would be a natural arrangement. In the early part of the office they sang a Hymn of Praise, and brought the book of the Gospels with special solemnity to the Bishop. Later on (after the Preface) they sang a Triumphal Hymn—which may well have been in the very words of Apoc. v. 12-13. Afterwards, at the Elevation, they fell down and worshipped " the Lamb "; and at the Communion all the people said " Amen." Even the white cloaks (*ιματία*) of the twenty-four *πρεσβυτέροι* and the lighted lamps, and the " golden goblets full of incense," and the music are probably all derived from the contemporary ritual.

<sup>2</sup> *The Church Catholic.*

of the subject now, it will be well that I should try to state to you in a few words what the office of the Mass in fact contains.

The Liturgies, in spite of wide apparent variation, proceed upon a scheme which is common to them all; and in describing that, I shall be describing with sufficient accuracy the Mass which is celebrated in every Catholic church to-day. It consists, if we reduce the Liturgies to what I may call their simplest terms, of the actual Commemoration called the "Canon of the Mass," preceded by a double introduction, of which the first part is known as the "Mass of the Catechumens," as distinguished from the "Mass of the Faithful." The central and essential rite was called the Canon because of its close adherence to a "fixed rule." It is in its tenor, and even in much of its diction, alike in all the varying Liturgies. The other sections, being far less important, were to a much greater extent subject to the discretion of bishops, and have undergone local variation and substitution, though even in them we find a wonderful conformity.

The Office of the Catechumens (called "Missa" because it ended in their dismissal) was a public service, not especially eucharistic in its character, but founded for the most part upon the Sabbath service of the Synagogue. It begins now with the "Introit"—the Solemn Entrance of the officiating bishop or priest with his attendants, who chant an introductory psalm. Then come certain very ancient hymns. In the West, we have that triple cry for mercy called the "Kyrie Eleison," and the "Gloria," or Hymn of the Nativity, at first peculiar to Christmas Day (so used before A.D. 139, as it is said), and then extended to ordinary Sundays. In the East, you have the equally ancient "Trisagion." Next come the public prayers named "Collects" in the West and *συναπτη* in the East—the "gathered up" petitions of the Church. These are variable in every Western use, according to the day. Then are read portions of the Scripture—an Epistle or Lesson

symbolic of the Old Law, and the Gospel setting forth the New. Between these, as the procession carrying with joy the Sacred Book passes along the steps of the altar, a processional chant called a "Tract," "Sequence," or "Gradual" is sung; and this is the origin of many of those great Latin hymns that all churches borrow. After the Reading comes the Sermon,<sup>1</sup> upon the close of which the Catechumens were dismissed, and the "Mass of the Faithful" began. That was, of course, the "*mysterium*" which the Romans of the third century traduced and jested at—the rite at which the "initiated" only might be present.

The secondary introduction has undergone more outward change than any other part of the service. So far as we have gone, there is a distinct parallelism between all the Liturgies of the East and West. Every Church had leave to add and modify to some extent, yet we can discern the clear outlines of an original common plan, the very simplicity of which argues for its antiquity. The Solemn Entrance, the Traditional Hymns, the Collective Prayers, the First Lesson, the Procession of the Book and the Reading of the Gospel, the Expository Sermon, and then the Dismissal of the Uninstructed—what could be a more natural rite?

In the following section there is still a correspondence, though the original scheme, developed apparently out of the ritual of the Passover, has become obscured by frequent transpositions. It probably began with the bringing in of the bread and wine,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So in the Synagogue there were two readings, from "the Law" and "the Prophets," and a sermon thereon (Acts xiii. 14, 15). The Pauline Epistles are written to be so read: see 1 Thess. v. 27; Col. iv. 16, etc. The form was no doubt continued because Christ used it to "preach the gospel" (St. Matt. iv. 23; St. Luke iv. 16-21; St. John vi. 45, 59, etc.). It is well established that in all early Liturgies there used to be an Old Testament Lesson or Lessons before the Epistle and Gospel.

<sup>2</sup> The coincidence with this act of an "ofertory" of charitable gifts by the faithful present is as old as the Roman persecution. This usage is probably the explanation of the suggestion in 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

which the people of the first age presented, in what we still call the "Offertory," at the altar. With this was combined, in later times, the chanting of the Creed. This, the public profession of faith by the baptized Christians, is a common use in all the Churches since the dogmatic struggles of the fourth century. The present form dates, as we all know, from A.D. 325, but it is understood that some simple *regula fidei* was an original part of the Mass, and that some Creed was always administered to the Catechumens when they were admitted to the Eucharist for the first time. After the Offertory—which is now only a short extract from the Psalms—follows the preparation by the priest of the vessels he is about to use in the Canon. This is closed by the public washing of his hands, at the psalm "Lavabo," in remembrance of Christ's action before the Supper. How old even the bare ceremonial is may be gathered from the fact that this very rite is accurately described in 347 by Cyril of Jerusalem, and is explained by him, as by us to-day, as a symbol of the purity requisite for the performance of the act that is to follow. Then after certain variable prayers similar to collects, which are said in a low voice and therefore called "Secreta," we reach that which has always been known as the "Preface" of the Commemoration itself. There is, however, another observance I should first mention, though it comes much later in the Roman ritual. That is the "Kiss of Peace," which was anciently exchanged by all the faithful in token of reconciliation, before they should "offer their gift at the altar," as Cyril says. In his use it followed the Lavabo—in others it followed or preceded the Offertory—in ours it is exchanged at the singing of the "Agnus Dei" between the attendants at the altar immediately before the Communion. In every variant its presence attests the constancy of the liturgical tradition and links us not only with Cyril in 347, but with Justin, who saw it long before 150, and no doubt (as Cyril himself believed) with the closing words of the

letters to the Thessalonians, Romans, and Corinthians, all written by A.D. 60.

Still more remarkable is the formula which comprises the so-called "Preface," the Responses which introduce it, and the "Triumphal Hymn" into which it breaks at the close. This singular and most striking group is to be found in *all* the liturgical families, and in all at the same point, as the introduction of the commemorative office technically known as the "Anaphora." Justin refers to it; Cyril describes it in minute and earnest detail, and preserves for us the startling fact that the very words of the Responses, which you may hear chanted in this connection at any Catholic Mass on any Sunday, were so chanted in Jerusalem between A.D. 300 and 350. *Sursum corda*: "Lift up your hearts; We have lifted them up to the Lord; Let us give thanks to the Lord our God; It is meet and right." So runs the ancient interchange, and the Priest, taking the word from the people's answer, goes on: "It is truly meet and just, right and available unto salvation that we should always give thanks to Thee." What follows—and here again the various Liturgies agree with one another and with Cyril—is a hymn of the glory and the providence of God, which ends by making mention of the Angels and Archangels, Cherubim and Seraphim, and of the heavenly song they sing, wherein we humbly join—"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God," and "Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord"—cometh, indeed, in that sacramental commemoration of His very sacrifice which is about to begin. There is a strong probability that the earliest forms of the Preface were founded on, and adapted by the Apostles from those very psalms of the Hallel which our Lord chanted with His disciples at the Supper. But the proof of the connection between the two would require a more detailed statement than could be given here.

The Canon itself, which, like the whole office, is now much shortened as compared with the first



centuries, may be divided into three parts—the Great Intercession for the Living and the Dead, the Eucharistic Commemoration itself, and the Communion. The wording of the important passages is preserved with astonishing fidelity here, although even here there is a curious difference in the way in which the intercessory formulæ are combined with the words of commemoration. This variance is, in fact, a distinguishing test by which the critical scholar can say to which of certain great families a particular local use belongs. In the Alexandrine the great prayer is before the consecration; in others after it; in our own, partly before and partly after.

Of the central Commemoration itself, the Sacramental words, and the Elevation, there is little that I need here say, except that in *every* rite they testify, beyond cavil, to the doctrine of the Real Presence. It is but a simple recital of the facts of the Supper at which the Mass was instituted, and of the command then given; and as the Church has always believed, the mystery of the Divine Presence comes to pass, and the miracle Christ wrought is wrought again, when the solemn words are uttered. Therefore we bow down, and adore.

It is this act of the Mass which the Church from the first century onward has styled the "Sacrifice"—the repetition, that is, by a providential ordinance of the great offering once made upon the Cross. Connected with it is the remarkable rite of the "fraction of the Host," to which every liturgy ever known gives prominence. But there remains the Sacrament; and when, after the "Agnus Dei," a bell rings again, the priest, having made his private preparation, receives that Holy Communion, and with him any or all the people, if they will. By this the office is completed, except for the prayers of thanksgiving, and the final blessing. In our usage, however, there is read the introduction of St. John's Gospel, as a final theme of meditation. Other prayers, English or Latin, may be added at the end, or at the beginning, or before the sermon; but with

these exceptions the stated course of the ritual is followed by the officiating priest, the people being free to use their own prayers, so long as they in spirit and intention "assist at" or follow the action.

In reverting, after this description, to the historical question, I need not refer further to the internal evidence afforded by the consensus of the early rites, except to remind you that the existence of several great types or families of liturgical uses in as many great and largely autonomous Churches, each type going back to at least the third or fourth century, and the fact that these while varying in order and detail yet point clearly to a common scheme, which is the essential Mass, constitutes to any fair historical critic one of the strongest possible proofs that that common scheme arose *before* the separation of these Churches, and was settled as of general and vital importance by some authority to which they all referred back; which is the same as to say that the Mass in its essentials is Apostolic. The force of that line of argument will already be apparent, and any candid critic can easily follow it out. As to the external evidence to be drawn from all the writers of the first four centuries (including Justin and Cyril), our proposition is that, differing as they do in race, character, and subject, no fair-minded reader can collate the numerous utterances which bear on the central office of the Christian Church as they knew it, without admitting that it was in its essentials such a service as the Mass I have described.

It would be impossible, within any practical limits, to marshal these testimonies. I cannot here do more than illustrate the argument by indicating one or two of the details—internal and external—which point very strongly to the Apostolic age.

It is said that the liturgical texts were not committed to writing till the fourth century. St. Basil (A.D. 375), when he wrote down his own, was struck (as he tells us in the *De Spiritu Sancto*, c. 27), by the singular fact that, at the most vital and well-guarded portion of the office, the words of institution, the

liturgical tradition did *not* follow the texts of the Gospels and Epistles which had for centuries been the common possession of the Church. He explains that in that matter the Church had not referred herself to the written words, because "there are many points most important for the mystery which we receive (from the Apostles) by unwritten tradition, in addition to those which the Gospels relate." It is very plain, on a mere comparison of texts, that in spite of their veneration for and dependence on the origin and character of the rite, no one of the ancient types *followed* the formula of any Gospel. Evidently they claimed for themselves a coequal authority, as regards the events of that momentous Supper.

It comes out in many ways. The biblical texts vary as to whether Christ spoke of "My Body which is broken," or "My Body which is given." The liturgy of St. James vouches that He said *both*. Almost all the rites are particular to say that when He invoked the Eucharistic blessing, Christ "raised His eyes to heaven"—which is not to be found in the Bible and is apparently therefore a traditional detail. It is a curious fact that practically all the rites concur in the ceremony of mixing water with the wine, of which there is no word in the Bible. Their tradition as to this detail of Christ's action was so strong that they regarded it as an essential part of the rubric of the Commemoration. And St. Cyprian (A.D. 245-258), discussing this very question of form, asserts that he upheld it because it was the tradition of the Apostles as to that act of Christ which they were commanded to repeat.

Now, as we have seen, usages of this kind cannot conceivably have been copied by any one of the liturgical families from another. There is no common centre, after the Apostles, on which they can be supposed to converge—not even Rome. If such minute matters were preserved and handed down concurrently in each, they can have come only from the scrupulous care of those who saw and heard the

great act, and themselves directed the manner of its commemoration.

As for the literary witness of the earliest Christian centuries, it would be a long labour to discuss it in detail. The heathen testify by their jests and their calumnies, as well as the Christian documents of every class, and the chance indications even of the early heretics. Pliny's inept account to Trajan of the worship of the despised sect confirms, as do the other Roman travesties, the internal and very accurate account we have from Justin Martyr. The Roman uses the word "sacrament," though he does not know its meaning. Justin even uses the word "sacrifice," Irenæus is not very far removed from the Apostles, and his writings teem with allusions to the doctrine of the Real Presence; but he gives us a stronger piece of evidence than his own, for he tells us in distinct and technical terms how the heretic Marcus, whom he was attacking, had himself retained, though in a perverted form, the Mass and the Real Presence, so that he professed to make the wine show as red-blood in the cup after his words of invocation. Why should a heretic of the second century have carried away these things, even in his revolt, if they were not then one of the essentials of the Apostolic faith?

I have mentioned already the minute account of the then ritual of Jerusalem in the catechism of Cyril, written about 337; and I cannot now dwell, as I would wish to do, on the extraordinary strength of the argument as to the antiquity even of the minutiae of the office I have described, which we derive from this and the far earlier account of Justin. In the Mass known to the latter not long after 100, we can distinguish the Entrance, the Offertory, the Preface, the Eucharistic Prayer and the Formula of Institution, the Exclusion of the Catechumens, the Communion of the presiding priest and of the people, and the explicit doctrine of the Real Presence. What stronger evidence need

we require to prove that the Mass was the accepted Christian ritual of the contemporaries or successors of John?

The references presented by chance among the fathers of the first three centuries have lately been brought together by the care of German scholars; and the result is so self-evident, that I venture to say no competent person will now deny that the broad lines of the Liturgy of the Mass are as old as anything in the forms of Christianity.

So far I have been seeking to make clear the basis and history of the Mass, and have dealt with it as one of the visible facts of human life. But each of the great institutions of the world is more than a mere fact of history. It is great, because it has behind it a group of antecedent ideas which it presupposes, embodies, and translates into the actualities of life. I pass therefore to consider the Mass in this light also.

The fact of knowledge, the existence of ethics, the possibility of political or social life—all these involve, as any of you who are familiar with Kant's fundamental arguments will allow, certain ideas as the antecedent conditions of their possibility. So also does the existence of religion. It is not, however, to the present purpose to analyze religion as a whole. My task is rather to set out those broad general ideas which are implied in that expression of religion with which we have to deal. I do not disguise from you my conviction that either process would lead to much the same result; but this is not the occasion for so fundamental an inquiry. If you study the Mass itself, you will observe that the four ideas which stand out as fundamental are: *the need of prayer, the fitness of worship, the craving for a Divine communion, and, above all, the realization of the personal presence of God.* These form what one may call the abstract basis of the Mass—as distinguished from the dogmatic aspect of it already referred to, in which it is the public profession of the Catholic faith, the commemoration of the death of Christ, the fulfilment

of His last behest, and the mystical renewal of His sacrifice.

We hold, and I think the candid student will agree, that all the four ideas belong to the very essential character of religion, as distinguished from other ways of spiritual expression, such as ethics or poetry. Ethics is the side of life on which I stand related to an abstract, imperative, rigid law—a pitiless, infinite Yea or Nay. Poetry—indeed, art in general—is that phase of life in which I stand related to an infinite beauty, revealed in endless subtleties of unexpressed suggestion. Religion also is a relation between the finite self and the infinite ; but it is distinguished pre-eminently in this, that for it the relation is always and above all things a *personal* one.

That the attribution to infinite being of all we mean, in any positive sense, by personality, is involved not only in ethics but even in knowledge, and in all life, is capable, I am certain, of strict proof. But neither in the intellectual nor in the ethical side of things is the personality of the infinite the prominent note. In the religion of intellectual life, the infinite is truth ; in the arts, it is beauty ; in the ethical world, it is law ; but in religion, beyond and above all else, it is love. Knowledge may imply a universal mind, and law may pre-suppose a lawgiver ; but love cannot even be stated or thought of but as the love of one person for another.

This spiritual life is the beating heart of the universe. Unless you are audacious enough to say that all the religion of the human centuries is a mere absurdity—nay, even if you were—we can with cogent reason appeal to the mere existence of religion as a fact of life, in proof that the infinite distances are not a silent void, that in the tideless reaches of the past the seeing eye would find, not the blind onset of an iron fate, but the personal tending of a tireless care, and that the shut portals of future shall disclose not death, but the living God.

Now if religion pre-supposes and means a personal

relation between each personal self and a personal God, this common relation would naturally, indeed necessarily, form a bond of community among men ; and in every age, accordingly, it has presented itself in public as well as in private forms. All kinds of men have felt that public assemblies for religious observance were a natural need. If one asked, what such a sacred office would imply, I should say that by the very necessity of the case, it must imply exactly those four elements which I have already named. Let us consider them separately.

It must involve the element of *prayer*. If there were no such thing as prayer, religion would be an idle sentiment—indeed, a mockery. If I stand face to face across the universe of things with another Person who cares for me infinitely, and whose power is limitless, I shall surely cry to Him in my need. Some access, some way of intercourse, is involved in the very thought of such a Godhead. We speak to Him and He will hear us. But there are those who ask, How can He answer? and they tell us that the course of things is fixed by a beneficent and unswerving law. Now none of us deny the cosmic order, nor the sequences of cause and effect. I am not talking of praying for a miracle, nor need I even discuss here whether there be such things. There is scope enough for God's answer to our prayer without violence to any of the so-called "laws," which are the fetish of the lesser sort of scientific men. You do not prove, by pointing us to causes and events, that Providence must stand aside and see the cruel wheels go round. I venture to say you will prove nothing against a rational belief in prayer, until you go the whole reckless range of pure materialism, and deny all freedom of human action as well as of the Divine. Are any of you prepared to say the universe is but a gigantic mechanism? If you think you are, let me remind you that the theory will do more than destroy religion. It will end at once all ethics, all effort, all ideals. It will reduce consciousness to a

mockery, spirituality to a dream, and love to a chemical attraction; and, after all, it will have explained nothing, but rather rendered everything insoluble.

No such wild hypothesis can be rationally described as the result of science; and, consistently with all we do know, there is ample scope for our belief. In the first place, we know, as clearly as we know anything, that our action is every instant changing, sometimes on issues of enormous moment, the "natural" trend of the forces about us. A ship is driving on a lee shore. To a savage eye her wreck is an obvious inference from law. But a man's will, by a power of selection and adaptation simple enough to us, can turn the very engines of destruction into the servants of his design. So God, we say, upon His greater plane.

Again, a thing of daily experience for us, as between the human lives we know, is the fact of influence. Exactly how the personality of a man or woman acts on other lives, we cannot pretend to say. But friendship and love, hate and help, rivalry and discipleship, we have all seen to spring into being, sometimes in a moment, for a mere nothing, a casual meeting, a passing word. Some subtlety of character, or a so-called personal magnetism yet more impalpable, may bind, as by a spell, not only individuals but mighty masses of men. We see such things among ourselves. When we pray God for the light and growth, for purity and healing, for help and hope and holiness, why shall not He act also by such ways of influence in His far wider way?

We pray, then, in the Mass, for our own needs and for all the world's, in due obedience to the will of God. A common form of general prayer—the "great intercession"—is a factor of that archetype of all the Liturgies for which we claim an apostolic origin. In all of them it takes the form of a prayer first for all the living, and then for all the dead. To us they are all members of that body of Christ,



which is the Church ; for to us the life beyond the grave is not the Calvinist alternative of instant heaven or hopeless misery, with no world of redress and preparation set between. If by prayer we can help our brethren whom we see, then we believe that by prayer, if God will, we may help also our brethren who have gone before us—out of sight, indeed, but not beyond our reach ; for they also are but another of the folds of God.

But it is not on this venerable formula alone that Catholics rely for the element of prayer. In the Mass the ritual words are but the guides, and not the fetters of devotion. The whole course of the office is to the devout Catholic one long occasion for prayer. It is made intense and living by the solemnity of the action. It is assuredly not chilled, but rather constantly upheld, by the familiar form and ceremonial. Every movement of the priest and his attendants, every time a bell is rung or a salutation or response is heard, is but another warning to pray—eagerly, keenly, ceaselessly—using the moments well, for now is the acceptable time. The Mass has hardly begun when in the Collects we pray for the good estate of Christendom. After an interval the Offertory warns us to present our lives as a living sacrifice before the Lord, and to pray for our personal needs. The ceremony of the “*Lavabo*” bids us pray for purity of heart and forgiveness of our remembered sins. As we join in the Great Intercession, we are taught to make a special mention of every individual soul, in life or death, for whom by any personal reason we are moved to pray. Presently, raising his voice, the priest cries, “*And to us sinners also.*” It is a call to the hearers that they should turn again to ask of God, each for himself, the helps that, in their human frailty, they need. A few moments more and you will hear the lifted voice reciting the ancient formula with which the Lord’s Prayer is ushered in ; and all will follow it, for it is said aloud ; and all will answer at the closing words, and join in that echo o

them which comes after, in the "prayer against temptation." The "Agnus Dei" is another summons, and its cry for mercy and for peace is echoed again by the beautiful prayer for the peace of the Church, which leads on to the Communion and the solemn close.

Any one is free, of course, to read the ritual words with scrupulous observance, and if it be helpful to his personal devotion he does well; but every one is likewise free and is advised to adapt the course and movement of the ritual to his own soul's wants, and to his own best methods of spiritual expression. Therefore the Mass is never rigid, cold, inert, as other rites have been where ritual was the beginning and the end. The whole great company of worshippers in a Catholic cathedral are doing but one thing—they are joining, and they feel themselves to be joining, in one and the same great act; yet at the same moment each is standing face to face in instant personal relation with the presence of his God.

If it were possible I would have wished to indicate to you a few of the many common plans of individual prayer, called "Methods of Hearing Mass,"<sup>1</sup> which are to be found in our various books. But prayer is not the only phase of that personal relation which religion means, and I must pass now to another manifestation of it, which is at least as universal. No one can deny the constant recurrence in human history of the idea of *worship*—that homage paid to the infinite Lord, which we commemorate in the common use of language when we describe any religious office as "divine service."

If it be true that religion means a relation of person to person, it is also evident that that relation does not imply any equality of rights such as we assert or expect in the human relations we know. Freedom of one individual as against another we assume in our human conduct. For every assertion of a right to make *me* alter my own course for *your*

<sup>1</sup> *A Book of the Mass* (Catholic Truth Society, 2d.) gives some of these.

advantage or desire, must prove itself or be denied. Until you can show good reason to the contrary, I am among men my own master, and, in right of my mere manhood, equal comrade of every man who breathes. But as between any man and the Divine, how vast, how ineffable is the difference !

In the post-Reformation systems of thought, and above all in those American new departures of which Emerson and Walt Whitman are the true exponents, there is a strong tendency to suggest that there is something base and servile in the acknowledgement of any dependence of a human person, even upon the Divine. Some of these people talk as if they might shake hands with God ; others, as if it were a fine thing to shake their fist at Him. One of the most brilliant, and, as I fear, most subtly mischievous, expositions of this kind of human pride is to be found in Emerson's remarkable " Essay on Self-Reliance." Yet what utter nonsense it all is ! One is tempted to cry out, like the sour sage, " How God must laugh, if such a thing could be, to see His wondrous mannikins below !" If we are in fact face to face with a personality which is *not* one among other equal selves, but infinite—a self as *against* whom neither right nor duty can be predicated at all—for whom all conceivable limitations are but as an idle fancy, and every imaginable power but as the lightest motion of His will—then our self-assertion against such an one is a mere insanity. All ultimate goodness is and can be nothing but the adjustment of our personal volition to the standard of that one effectual will. If, then, revolt can be nothing in the end but self-destruction, it is merely ludicrous to inquire whether our human dignity is injured by the act of adoration. As from Him we derive our being, it cannot be false to say He is our Lord. If there be any sense in which we can talk of justice entering into so unequal a relation, it is most just that we should do Him service. The best reason for it, however, is not that it is His due, for our refusal will hardly make Him poorer. But as it is with prayer,

so with worship also—it is for *our* sakes that we must lift our hearts to Him. It is exactly because the emptiness of human folly is prone to raise itself against the Master; it is because pride, rebellion, swollen insolence are possible, that it is well we should remind ourselves of that eternal infinite disparity, and bow down and bend the knee. Not even of purity or truth did Christ so strongly speak, as of humility, meekness, lowliness of heart.

Not that there are not forms of self-reliance and respect which are wholesome and honourable, nay, even needful for the perfect service of our God. If each man revered himself to every height consistent with all other reverence, the world would be quickly purified. It is only against the self-insistence in the face of the Divine that we protest. Because to set our will against the Holy Will is the very mark of sin, therefore to worship is the essence of religion. I have seen the stout burghers of a Dutch town, assembled in their Groote Kerk, marching about with hats on, talking sturdily, to show that they disclaimed the folly of a reverent bearing. If their manner did not belie them, they were minded, one must believe, to *obey* no more and no farther than they chose. For any of us to say that, would be to set up as an independent centre of action in the universe; and these, like independent centres in our own or any other organization, are in fact a disease, and must work out their own elimination.

I fear that not a little of the common prejudice of a certain robust type of Englishman against the Catholic religion arises out of such a distaste as these Dutchmen, or as the typical John Bull of the past, would certainly have felt for anything in the way of worship which involved any obvious abasement before a higher power. To the Catholic mind this is not dignity, but a monstrous littleness of soul. To us the acknowledgement of our dependence upon the Father, as those "little children" of whom Christ spoke, is a good and a beautiful thing. We believe that they who in this sense are "poor in spirit" are

"blessed," as the Master said. We confess our nothingness in the face of the Almighty Love, not grudgingly but joyously; and every time that we are privileged to assist at the offering of the Mass, we rejoice in it as a special and most fitting opportunity for the act of adoration.

It is to this ruling idea of worship that all our formal usages refer: a kneeling posture, a reverent demeanour, and all such symbols as the offering of incense, or of flowers and other precious things about the altar, which we think of as His throne. They are but poor attempts after the expression of that sense of reverence which it surely is our interest not to lose. Ruskin said once that "in reverence lies the chief joy and power of life." The lack of it in the modern world is an evil deeper than we know. If you abolish the fashion and semblance of reverent worship in religion, where else, think you, will it survive?

Apart from symbolism, the note of worship is continued throughout the whole office, by the constant recurrence of the poetic expression of the Divine praise. Some one may say that it is unmeaning that men should "praise God"; and so it would be, if it were not that spontaneous expression of our gladness in His perfect majesty which is but the translating of our adoration into words. Your blustering burgher chanting formal psalms might seem to be "a sounding brass"; but the humble soul, who for the pure delight of thinking upon God must needs proclaim His glory, is but joining, as our own Preface puts it, in the Heavenly Song.

There is yet another sense in which the Mass is charged with an intense adoration, such as must often amaze an earnest stranger. As the action rises towards its culminating point, you cannot fail to notice how the signs of waywardness, or vanity, or inattention gradually cease. Those who have been sitting, kneel—those who have been reading, lay their brows upon their hands to pray, and when the warning bell has rung, there is throughout a

Catholic church an intense silence, a rapt devotion, such as I, at least, have never elsewhere seen. It is in that moment that you may see how reverence alone can solemnize and glorify the trivialities of life. From the squalid warrens of the poor, from the sordid worries of the middle class, from the idle vanities of fashion, they are gathered together—as of old—for the “breaking of the bread.” They have come to pay their service to that Majesty before whom all differences fade. And as the great words are said, the great act done, they are rapt beyond the little things about their feet, and are forced to look up, if it be but for a moment, at the mighty things that are eternal. In that strange stillness, even the least of His little ones may be glorified by the solemnity and the enthusiasm of adoration. The inspiration of high poetry and of glorious music is a noble thing; but for us there is a way of nobler inspiration, open to the dull and the unlearned at least as readily as to the wise, wherever Mass is said.

The third idea I have called the need of a *Divine Communion*; but I know not how I may express to you with any clearness what to us that word conveys. I have said that the idea of prayer—the access from our side to God—is inherent in the very conception of a personal relation between the Finite and the Infinite. If that is one side, Communion is the other. The sense of our dependence, which we express as worship, is not inconsistent to the Christian with the belief that in another sense, transcending our imagination, we may be made one with the Divine. If you will read the intense chapters at the end of St. John's Gospel, or any of the great books of religious utterance, such as the “Imitation,” you will see that the sense of the Divine Love cannot remain for the religious soul a merely intellectual proposition. “Whosoever eateth My flesh abideth in Me, and I in him.” “That they may be one, as we also are one; I in them and thou in me.” Such phrases, commonly de-

scribed as mystical, are reiterated over and over again. And in the passion of the love of God, the great writers of the Church have delighted to talk of dying to themselves and to all earthly things that they may be the more lost in their Beloved—and they have meant what they said.

These things are of personal experience, and to those who are without, they may seem nothing. I desire now only to repeat that the personal relation of each finite self to the Infinite Self cannot be otherwise thought of than as a union of love, whatever in the marvels of the infinite such love may mean. This love, not merely of man for God, but of God for man, is of the essence of the Christian, as indeed of any religion that is more than childish. Now of love itself, in any phase of it, what can we say? Men have said and sung an infinite deal about it; but they can say little more than that it is a union of two souls, wherein in some sense their personal interests have fallen away so that they are to each other no longer alien, but as one. What, then, would such love be, if it could transcend our limits and be taken up into the Divine? We could not, apart from any revelation, have professed to say; but we may say without unreason that in such a conception we have a key at least to some of the aspects of the sacramental and mystic conceptions of the Divine Communion; of an Infinite Love, who gives Himself to us, whose delight it is to dwell with us, whose yearning is for our answering love, who makes Himself like to our lowliness that He may reach us and draw us to Himself; who can, indeed, if we will love Him, be one with us and yet our God, as we too can be lost in Him and yet be none the less the personal selves He made.

I cannot pretend to tell you, even remotely, of that hidden wisdom of the spiritual life of the Church. None of you who have read the lives and writings of the Saints can doubt that they lived by it, and that those who expressed it were uttering

the most sacred truths they knew, for which they would each and all have counted it a joy to die. You may think they were deceived, but that intense belief of all these great and holy men is a tremendous fact of our humanity, and has had and still has its immense results. There is, however you explain it, a human craving for such oneness with the far-off Infinite; and in the Mass it has found, among all manner of men, a full and abiding satisfaction. The idea of such communion is, as you already know, inherent in its earliest plan, as it was the main idea of the Last Supper itself. In early times, the actual reception of the Sacramental Communion by all present was the usual custom; though at an early date, for various reasons, that ceased to be expected. Nevertheless, so strongly is this side of the Mass insisted on, that you will find that all our books of devotion exhort the hearer, if he is not prepared for the actual reception of the Eucharist, to make at that part of the Mass the meditations and exercises which are known as a "Spiritual Communion," that he may thereby take unto himself, if not the sacramental fulness of the Divine Love, at least so much of the sense and effect of that union with the present God as in his duller spiritual state he may.

The three ideas to which I have now sought to direct your attention are, however, all dominated by the last, which contains in itself the wide and fundamental distinction between the Mass and every other form of public worship. I have called it *the realization of the presence of God*.

To all who believe in God, He must of logical necessity be, in some sense, always present. But when Christ said that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," He was referring to the evident fact that for the human consciousness there may and must be a special presence of God, on those occasions when His children come before Him.



Here, as so often in the Catholic Creed, we come upon the note of human solidarity. God is present to any religious soul; but where the brethren are gathered together—where the collective life of the Christian society is manifested—there He is, so to say, more fully present and more near. It is good to pray alone, and to lift up the silent worship of the heart; but it is better, it is indeed a duty, to come forth and join with others in a social act of worship, in a common prayer for the common need. For the Church of Christ is above all things an organic community, wherein none are isolated, none rejected, none sent empty away. The representative office of the priest, offering the Mass in the name of all the people, absent as well as present, dead as well as alive, is the sign and token of this corporate character. The congregation—each particular ἐκκλησία—is but the representative of all the Church; and to each there comes, as we believe, the Real Presence of that Lord, who called the Church His Bride.

It is not enough that one should know, as an intellectual proposition, that God is here. It is of much more consequence that we should realize it—that His personal nearness should be brought home to each man's heart. We may know that a friend is not far off, but that knowledge has on us a very different effect from the sound of a well-known step, or the hearing of a long-remembered voice. So the one thing which, above all else, I venture here to claim for the great office of the Catholic Church, is that it brings home to us the vivid, palpable sense of "God with man."

At this point, however, the subject passes out beyond our reach. I have more than occupied the space of time appointed to me. And I could not hope, even if I delayed you far longer, to bring home to you what is meant, in the spiritual experience of the Catholic world, by the Sacramental Presence. There are some things which it is not granted to man to utter, at least in the ordinary ways of speech.

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