

EDITORIAL

FOR nearly half a century the authority of the Church, in the person of the Popes, has been urging in encyclicals and elsewhere the necessity of a more active and indeed more vocal participation of the faithful in the offering of the Mass. It is of course possible for anyone possessed by a deep love of the Mass and well instructed in its meaning, to participate in it actively and completely and therefore with great fruitfulness, yet in silence. But a love of the Mass presupposes two things. It presupposes a love of Christ crucified and risen, and a deep sense of what he has done for us by his redeeming power. It presupposes too a corresponding sense of the intimate connection and even identity between what Christ our Lord did for us once for all on the Cross of Calvary, what he does for us perpetually in pleading that sacrifice in the heavenly places where he now is, and what in consequence he is doing for us sacramentally in the Mass by the ministry of his priests.

For the Mass is a mystery, the whole mystery of redemption, made available to us here and now in our day-to-day twentieth-century lives, by the operation of the Holy Spirit within the life of the Mystical Body. It is therefore primarily something done for us, not by the priest, who is one of us, acting on our behalf in Christ's name, but by God himself, in his mercy and pity for our helpless human condition. Only a deep realization of this, not necessarily a realization that can be explained or put into words, will lead to that love of the Mass which enables us to appropriate through it the fruits of our redemption. Without this co-operation on our part by the grace of the Holy Spirit even the power of the Cross made available to us in the Mass will be unavailing.

Primitive peoples in past ages, and even today in countries to which the good news of Christ's redeeming love has hardly penetrated, have had and have a deep sense of their dependence upon the powers of the unseen world, and with this goes also a sense, inadequate and distorted though it may be, of sin and the need of atonement for sin by sacrifice. But today the world in which we live has moved rapidly away from the realization of any kind of dependence upon God, and in consequence the sense

of sin with its need for redemption is greatly weakened and diminished.

In a recent Gallup poll instituted by the *News Chronicle* only five to six per cent of the 2,250 persons interviewed declared against belief in a God, yet 85 per cent gave a negative answer to the question whether to be a Christian there is any need to go to church. Of course the conclusions to be drawn from such enquiries must necessarily be very rough and ready. Yet these statistics at least seem to indicate that the common conception of God is largely *deistic*; that is to say, his relation to us and our obligations to him are regarded as extremely restricted, so much so that they may be summed up by the belief that, apart from the grosser and more obvious forms of wickedness, we can normally go our own way without regarding him, and everything will somehow come right; but that in a crisis he may be profitably appealed to for help. It would not perhaps be unfair to say that this represents the attitude of a large number of the 85 per cent who do not think the worship of God in church to be a necessary element in living a Christian life.

It can hardly be doubted that this *deistic* attitude impregnates the contemporary religious atmosphere or that Catholics as a body are deeply influenced by it. There is a tendency in all of us to adopt a *cosy* conception of God, a projection of human wishful thinking, and a consequent neglect of God's providential guidance of our lives and of the obligation of doing his will, not merely at certain definite points, but in all things and at every moment. A further consequence of this is a minimal sense of sin and of the need for redemption from its power over us. Hence there follows a lack of appreciation of the Mass, especially in its corporate aspect, making available to the members of the Mystical Body as such the atoning work of Christ.

The three main articles of this number of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* all deal, from different angles, with the Mass at its deepest level as the all-sufficient sacrifice. Much may be done to deepen the sense of this fundamental significance of the Mass by promoting ways and means of a more active and corporate participation in it. But such ways and means must be wholly free from the tendency, which they appear in some cases to foster, to substitute instruction *about* the Mystery of Redemption for penetration *into* it by faith and the gifts of the Spirit. Thus unwittingly the

fundamental need of our human condition, a realization of our utter dependence upon God's mercy and upon the redeeming power of the Cross of Christ, is in danger of remaining largely notional, and elements of the contemporary deistic attitude are unconsciously cultivated.

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We are grateful to Fr Ambrose Farrell for his clear and unequivocal statement of the law of the Church concerning non-Catholic baptism in the Comment he contributes to this issue of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* and which appears on page 574. In justice, however, to the other commentators on this subject we feel it should be pointed out that neither Fr Bullough, Fr Hastings nor the Editor has in any sense called that law in question. The argument is not about the law, which is not impugned but upheld; it is about the carrying out of the law.

Fr Farrell says that due investigations should be and are made, in the individual case, into the question of the validity of non-Catholic baptism. He implies therefore that it is the duty of the clergy to make such investigations in the case of each convert they receive, and that they do in fact do so. Fr Hastings maintains that in the great majority of cases conditional baptism is administered automatically without any investigation whatsoever; thus giving rise to the supposition, common among non-Catholics, that their baptism is considered by us *ipso facto* invalid because it lacks Catholic authority. This was of course a Donatist position, and it gives Fr Hastings' remark its point.

So far from 'stirring up public opinion in the hope of discouraging the clergy in the performance of their duty' (the words are Fr Farrell's), Fr Hastings thinks it reasonable that public opinion should be stirred up in the hope of encouraging the clergy to carry out the duty of investigation which Fr Farrell himself declares to be theirs. Nor is Fr Farrell very happy in his implication that Fr Hastings and the Editor, in favouring this, are propagating a Protestant conception. The Church does not of course, at least in the last resort, determine her teaching and discipline by the public opinion residing in the minds of the faithful, but as history repeatedly shows she necessarily makes use of it both in the process of defining dogma and in making

and changing her laws. The definition of the Assumption, as the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* shows, and the changes in the law of the Eucharistic fast are cases in point. She often, too, sets about the correction of abuses in response to public opinion. These are not Protestant but thoroughly Catholic conceptions.

The burden of THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT discussion therefore is mainly confined to a difference of opinion concerning the extent to which it is at present feasible by investigation to be certain of the valid performance of any particular non-Catholic baptism. It also concerns ways by which the necessary evidence for this might be made more readily available. It is in no way concerned to criticize or change the law of the Church itself.



THE ALL SUFFICIENT SACRIFICE

Sidelights from Psychology and Anthropology

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

THE Editor asks me to write on 'the nature of sacrifice, showing how the Mass is a sacrifice'. It sounds quite simple. It is as if I were asked to speak on the nature of Buttercup, and show that the flower you have picked is a buttercup. I can get a dictionary description of Buttercup, show you pictures of the species of *Ranunculus* called buttercup, compare your specimen with these descriptions and pictures, prove to you that there is no difference whatever between them, and conclude without a shadow of a doubt that you have picked an authentic, genuine sample of the class 'Buttercup'.

We might proceed in the same way with this present assignment. We might look up the word 'Sacrifice' in a standard dictionary; or start from some good definition of 'Sacrifice' from some Doctor of the Church. Then we could take a good look at what happens at Mass, show how it fits the definition, and conclude that Holy Mass is undoubtedly a genuine specimen of the class 'Sacrifice'. Or we could do some original research of our