

The Sacrifice of the Mass

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IN last month's article we made pointed reference to the attendance, at a Requiem Mass in Aberdeen for a deceased Roman Catholic Bishop, of Principal Sir G. A. Smith and others as representatives of Aberdeen University, the Principal being at one time a theological professor, and still a prominent leader, in the United Free Church. Whether the gentlemen referred to were believers in the doctrines and rites of the Roman communion or not, their action was unnecessary and wrong, and they set a bad example to the Protestant community.

They gave countenance to the most outstanding rite of the Papal system, a rite that embodies some of its worst and most dangerous features. It has occurred to us that it may not be without profit at the present moment to give a brief explanation of the sacrifice of the Mass, and some account of the delusive errors involved in it. Protestants may sometimes take it too easily for granted that they know all about such a matter when their memories require to be refreshed.

1. Let us then notice, first, the peculiar character of this service. It consists of the offering up by the priests of the bread and wine, which have been already changed (as they hold) through the words of consecration into the actual body and blood of Christ, as a real propitiatory sacrifice unto God for the sins of the living and the dead. Observe the following statements taken from the Catechism of the Council of Trent: "We confess that the sacrifice of the Mass is one and the same sacrifice with that upon the cross; the victim is one and the same, Christ Jesus, who offered Himself once only a bloody sacrifice upon the cross; the bloody and un-bloody victim is still one and the same, and the oblation of the cross is daily received in the eucharistic sacrifice; the priest is also the same Christ our Lord; the ministers who offer this sacrament consecrate the holy mysteries, not in their own, but in the person of Christ; the priest does not say, This is the body of Christ, but This is My body; the holy sacrifice of the Mass; therefore, is, not only a commemoration of the sacrifice of the cross, but also a sacrifice of propitiation by which God is appeased and rendered propitious." Again, it is declared in "the Missal" that the Mass "serves to appease God's wrath, to obtain remission of sins, redemption of souls, and

all spiritual grace and salvation. It serves for all other necessities, as well of man as of beast, as well for the dead as for the living."¹ These are Rome's own explanations of the rite.

2. Let us next point out some of the serious errors involved.

(1) There is the erroneous dogma of Transubstantiation. According to the Roman creed, it is maintained that no sooner does the priest pronounce the words, "This is my body," than the bread and wine are changed into the veritable "body and blood, soul and divinity, bones and nerves" of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, it must have been that Christ, at the first institution of the Supper, made the bread and wine into His own "body and blood, soul and divinity, bones and nerves," and so there were then present two Christs, absolutely distinct from one another, and yet absolutely the same. Could any dogma be more absurd, monstrous, or self-condemnatory? Still further, as every priest professes ability, according to his creed, to do the same thing, there have been millions of Christs called into existence since this error budded forth, and all identical with the one true Christ. This is a monstrous blasphemy, contrary to Scripture and reason in the last degree, though received in simplicity as truth by thousands of our fellowmen who regard the Pope as the head of the Church. The extraordinary dogma of Transubstantiation is at the foundation of the Mass.

(2) The gross error of a repetition of Christ's sacrifice. The sacrifice of the Mass is expressly declared to be "one and the same sacrifice with that upon the cross; the victim is one and the same, Christ Jesus," etc. The only difference allowed is that the sacrifice upon the cross was a bloody sacrifice, but this an un-bloody one, and yet with the usual inconsistency it is also asserted that the "victim is still one and the same." Surely there is something appalling in the idea that the Mass is to all intents and purposes a repetition of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross, not a commemoration or anything of that kind. It is difficult for the Protestant, whose Christian intelligence or ordinary reason is left unimpaired, even to grasp the fearful absurdity of this figment of the imagination. And yet this is what Roman Catholics are required constantly to believe, that there is a regular repetition (in an un-bloody way) of Christ's sufferings and death upon the cross every time the sacrifice of the Mass is offered. How expressly contrary it is to the plain statements of God's Word,

¹ See Macdonald's "Romanism Analysed"

that "Christ hath once suffered for sins" (I Peter iii. 15), and "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Heb. ix. 25-28).

(3) This sacrifice pronounces in effect Christ's sacrifice on the cross as without efficacy. Rome maintains that the Mass "serves to appease God's wrath, to obtain remission of sins and redemption of souls." What is this but declaring that Christ's sacrifice, in the days of His flesh, was insufficient for these ends? In professing to exalt His sacrifice to the highest pitch of honour, Rome only dishonours it to the utmost, and by necessary consequence, also, reflects upon God the Father in His judicial capacity, as always unsatisfied and unappeased.

(4) The erroneous doctrine of Purgatory underlies the sacrifice of the Mass as offered for the dead. Masses for the souls of the faithful dead clearly teach that these souls are in a supposed place called Purgatory undergoing purification from their sins. Rome's system of doctrine and worship is full of the most palpable absurdities. Though masses are observed for the living, in which Christ's sacrifice is constantly offered to God, these do not avail to take all sins away, but the faithful must go at death to a fancied Purgatory, where they may remain thousands of years, till the work is completed. The recent Mass for Bishop Chisholm at Aberdeen was a Requiem Mass, a mass for the rest of his soul, clearly implying that his soul had gone to Purgatory. We see, then, that the delusive errors of Purgatory and Prayers for the dead are mixed up with this blasphemous sacrifice. God's Word tells us of one all-sufficient purgatory now in time, in the memorable sentence: "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (I. John i. 7).

(5) The idolatrous place given to the priest in connection with this sacrifice is to be noted. Let readers observe the quotations already given from the Catechism of the Council of Trent: "The priest is also the same Christ our Lord; the ministers who offer this sacrament consecrate the holy mysteries, not in their own, but in the person of Christ; the priest does not say, "This is the body of Christ," but "This is My body." One would almost conclude from these words that the opinion is held that, not only are the bread and wine changed into the body and blood of Christ, but the priest is changed into the person of Christ. What dreadful presumption, to say the very least, is this! It should be explained that the service, as received by the faithful, is described as a sacrament, but when offered to God in the Mass, as a propitiatory sacrifice. For this latter aspect there is no foundation in Scripture, as already shown.

We now conclude our remarks meantime on this subject, and trust they will contribute to show how dishonouring to Christ and His truth is the sacrifice of the Mass.