

## THE LAY PRIESTHOOD: REAL OR METAPHORICAL?

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FOUR centuries ago Martin Luther made the statement that was destined to become the rallying cry for all Protestants: "All Christians are priests and all priests are Christians. Anathema to him who distinguishes the priest from the simple Christian."<sup>1</sup> The notion was not altogether new; thirteen centuries earlier, Tertullian, the Montanist, in his endeavor to break down the traditional distinction between priest and laity, had apparently gone so far as to allow the layman to celebrate the Eucharist.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Tertullian in exaggerating the priestly prerogative of the layman was far less heterodox than the later reformer. Tertullian continued to regard the Eucharistic sacrifice as the central act of Christian worship, and in allowing the simple layman to celebrate it, he implicitly conferred on him a dignity that was real even though it was exaggerated and unwarranted. Luther, by reducing the Eucharist to a mere commemorative repast, denied to layman as well as priest any strictly sacrificial function. All Christians without distinction would be priests, but they would be priests only of an intimate and personal cult. In the words of St. Peter they would be called upon to "offer spiritual sacrifices" (I Pet. 2:5); or, to cite St. Paul, they would be exhorted to present "their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God" (Rom. 12:1).<sup>3</sup>

Catholic apologetes at the time were shrewd enough to see in Luther's attack on the priesthood of orders a denial of the Eucharist as

<sup>1</sup> *De Captivitate Babylonica Ecclesiae (Opera Latina Lutheri)*, Frankfort, 1886, V, 10). For an excellent survey of Luther's teaching on the priesthood of all believers, cf. the recent work of Rev. James E. Rea, *The Common Priesthood of the Members of the Mystical Body* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Bookshop, 1947), pp. 104 ff.

<sup>2</sup> "Differentiam inter ordinem et plebem constituit ecclesiae auctoritas. . . Adeo ubi ecclesiastici ordinis non est concessus, et offers, et tinguis, et sacerdos es tibi solus" (*De exhortatione castitatis*, 7; ed. Oehler, I, 747).

<sup>3</sup> "Habemus ergo hoc loco, Pauli auctoritate, non solum quod sit sacerdotium et qui sacerdotes novi Testamenti, sed et quod sit eorum officium et sacrificium, nempe se ipsos mortificare et offerre in hostiam sanctam" (*De abroganda missa privata; O.L.*, VI, 129). Earlier in the same work, Luther insists that the sacrifice of Christians is wholly subjective: "Atque itaque sacerdotium novi Testamenti prorsus sine personarum respectu regnat communiter in omnibus in spiritu solo" (*ibid.*, p. 121).

a sacrifice. Hence their main preoccupation was to establish from Scripture and tradition the validity of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, and to justify from the same sources the exclusive role of Christ's duly ordained priests in its celebration. The demands of controversy called for no more. They were perfectly willing to regard the priesthood of the laity in a wholly metaphorical sense, since this admission easily confirmed the traditional orthodox teaching that the layman's priesthood was on an altogether lower plane than that of the priesthood of orders. Accordingly, all Christians might be called priests, but in a figurative, metaphorical, or mystical sense. They could offer up a sacrifice of prayer, pious aspirations, and good works—an ascetical sacrifice, if you will, but one which in no sense is to be confused with the objective and liturgical sacrifice of the Mass.<sup>4</sup> Unquestionably, this metaphorical or mystical interpretation of the universal priesthood was convenient and even necessary to delineate the distinction between clergy and laity. But it was also regrettable; for, by seeming to divorce the sacrifice of Christians from the sacrifice of the Mass, the layman's role at the august sacrifice tended to be regarded as that of a mere spectator or hearer—terms reserved in the early Church for the inquiring pagan or catechumen.

Today, Luther's view has found an echo in Protestant propaganda, and the expression "priesthood of all believers" has been made a slogan for those who want a "democratic church."<sup>5</sup> Except for a small remnant of Anglo-Catholics, however, the term priesthood is just as meaningless on the lips of Protestants as it was for Luther when he

<sup>4</sup> With the exception of A Lapidé, Maunoury, and a few others, who make some attempt to associate the sacrifice of the royal priesthood with the sacrifice of the Mass, commentators are practically unanimous in opposing the term "spiritual" to the objective sacrifice of the Eucharist. Even as late as 1925 Ceulemans pays tribute to the more common view when he defends the metaphorical character of the royal priesthood from the nature of the sacrifice which they are exhorted to offer: "Et hoc patet ex addito, 'offerre spirituales hostias,' i.e., non hostias materiales et tangibiles quae externo et publico ritu offeruntur a sacerdotibus proprie dictis, sed immateriales consistentes in actibus virtutum et bonorum operum" (*Commentarius in Epistolas Catholicas*, Mechliniae, 1925, p. 65).

<sup>5</sup> "No priestly caste is to rule the Church, no dictator is to pass decrees. Thus writes St. Peter, I Pet. 2:9: 'Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar (separated) people'. . . The church of Christ is democratic" (cited as one of the six "Precious Jewels of the Reformation," by Lon Francis in "Professor, Bring your Seminars up-to-date," *The Priest*, Dec., 1946, pp. 36 f). According to the author the "Jewels" have been widely advertised in the daily press as expressing the platforms of the Lutheran Church and the Federal Council of Churches of America.

first threw out his challenge.<sup>6</sup> Hence, there is little need for Catholic theologians to prepare new weapons to meet the renewed challenge of Protestants.<sup>7</sup> Rather, there is need now to explore the full significance of the term priesthood as applied to the laity without so impoverishing the concept as to reduce the Catholic layman to the unenviable status of the pious Protestant whose priesthood can be exercised only in the temple of his own soul. This we propose to do, by considering, or better reconsidering,<sup>8</sup> the data of Scripture and tradition in order to arrive ultimately at a synthesis and a way of speaking which will safeguard the reality of the layman's priestly dignity and function without prejudicing the exclusive prerogatives of the priest in orders.

#### THE LAY-PRIESTHOOD IN SACRED SCRIPTURE

Although the expression "priesthood of the layman" (*sacerdotium laici*) was first used by St. Jerome in the late fourth century,<sup>9</sup> the truth

<sup>6</sup> "As for the people, when they hear the name (priest), it draweth their minds no more to any cogitation of sacrifice than the name of a senator or of an alderman causeth them to think upon old age." This observation of Richard Hooker (cited by E. C. Messenger, *The Reformation, the Mass and the Priesthood*, II, 349) is with the exception noted above even more valid today.

<sup>7</sup> Thanks to the directives of the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* of Pius XII, ecclesiologists will turn their attention more and more from a defense of the Church as an external organization to a more fruitful appreciation of the Church as a life-giving organism. It is to be hoped, in similar fashion, that students of sacramental theology will stress the priestly role of the whole organism in the communication of that life. Nor will this mean a withdrawal before the controversial fire of our opponents, but rather the simple recognition that the battle is elsewhere, and that theologians can turn their attention chiefly to feeding those who are of the household of the faith. On the importance of the above-mentioned Encyclical cf. J. J. Bluett, S.J., "The Theological Significance of the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*," in *Proceedings of the Foundation Meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America* (New York, 1946).

<sup>8</sup> "Reconsider" is used advisedly. The writer's task has been simplified by the more original research of others, and in offering the following selected bibliography we are actually expressing our indebtedness to the authors: M. de la Taille, S.J., *Mysterium Fidei*, Paris, 1921; W. A. Kavanagh, *Lay Participation in Christ's Priesthood*, Washington, 1935; J. E. Rea, *The Common Priesthood of the Members of the Mystical Body*, Westminster, Md., 1947; Abbé Lionel Audet, *Notre participation au sacerdoce du Christ*, Quebec, 1938; T. Hesburgh, *The Theology of Catholic Action*, Notre Dame, Ind., 1946; of the periodical literature we shall mention but one article, which is marked by fine balance in avoiding extremes: "Das Amtspriestertum und das allgemeine Priestertum der Gläubigen," by Johann Brinktrine, *Divus Thomas*, Freiburg, XXII (1944), 291-308.

<sup>9</sup> "Si laicus errasse se confitetur, quomodo laicus perseverat? Deponit sacerdotium laici, id est, baptisma, et ego do veniam poenitenti?" (*Dial. contra Luciferanos*, PL XXIII, 166).

therein expressed has its roots deep in the past. To the Israelites gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai Moses brought the following message from Jahweh: "If, therefore, you hear my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my peculiar possession above all the people; for all the earth is mine and you shall be to me a priestly kingdom (Hb. a kingdom of priests) and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6). Although all commentators will not agree,<sup>10</sup> it would appear that the promise made by God was never realised in the Jewish people as such. In any event, long after the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood, the promise is repeated in almost similar terms through the mouth of the prophet Isaias: "But you shall be called the priests of the Lord; to you it shall be said: Ye ministers of our God" (Isai. 61:6). Unlike the earlier promise given on Sinai, this promise is no longer conditioned; it is absolute and will be realised in a new covenant which the Lord will make and which will be everlasting: "I will make their work in truth and I will make a perpetual covenant with them" (Isai. 61:8).

It is against this Old Testament background that we should interpret the First Epistle of St. Peter to the Christians of the Diaspora. To the Jews as a nation, Christ had proven a "stone of stumbling and a rock of scandal" (I Pet. 2:8). "You, however, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people" (2:9). And the prophecy is fulfilled in them because they had accepted Christ, the living stone rejected by men: "It is by drawing near to Him, the living stone, rejected indeed by men but chosen and honored by God that you yourselves are built thereon into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5).

St. John, in his Apocalypse, completes the picture by glorifying Christ "who has made us a kingdom and priests to God His Father"

<sup>10</sup> There are several possible interpretations of the expression "kingdom of priests."  
 (1) The Jews, after the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood will be a people with priests and thus become the type of the Christian people. (2) The Jewish nation acting as the mediator between God and the pagan world will be priestly in an improper sense. (3) The Jews are promised a perfect theocratic government ruled by priest-kings, provided they are faithful. (4) The promise of a kingly priesthood is never realized in the Jews as a people. They will become a kingdom with priests, but never a kingdom of priests. This latter privilege will be realised only in the Christian people where all, priest and layman alike, share in the unique priesthood of Christ. For reasons advanced in the text it is this last interpretation that we shall follow.

(Apoc. 1:6; 5:10), and by assuring Christians that their priestly dignity will be a lasting possession: "Over these the second death has no power: but they will be priests of God and Christ, and will reign with Him a thousand years" (Apoc. 20:6).

These passages from Sacred Scripture represent for all commentators, Protestant as well as Catholic, the point of departure in answer to the question, is the priesthood of the laity real or metaphorical? Protestants for the most part will assert that the priesthood of the laity is just as real as the so-called hierarchical priesthood. But what they really mean is that there is no real priesthood at all; Christians are all priests of an intimate and personal cult that is altogether divorced from external ritual and ceremony.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, some Catholics consider the royal priesthood to be metaphorical in two senses. First, the term priesthood may be applied to the laity by way of extrinsic denomination; thus, just as the individual Jew could be called priestly in the sense that he belonged to a people with divinely ordained priests, so too the individual Christian may be graced with the title priest from the fact that he belongs to a Church with a divinely constituted hierarchy; and it is in this sense that the "kingly priesthood" of Exodus finds its parallel in the "kingly priesthood" proclaimed by Peter—the first is more the type than a promise of the latter.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, the term priesthood can be applied to the laity in an ascetical or mystical sense to distinguish it from the priesthood of orders, which alone has for its function the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice. The layman's function, on the other hand, is to offer "spiritual sacrifices" (I Pet. 2:5).<sup>13</sup>

Personally, we do not feel that the real or metaphorical character of

<sup>11</sup> "Hort opens his long note on *πνευματικὰς θυσίας* with the statement that 'St. Peter cannot be thinking of any ritual acts whatever'; and among more recent commentators Windisch is equally emphatic: 'in no event, is the Eucharist in mind . . .'. And this has been the general drift of exegesis both ancient and modern" (E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, London, 1946, pp. 294 f.). Selwyn feels that the above exegesis is inadequate and agrees with E. Lohmeyer, another non-Catholic, who extends the sense of "spiritual sacrifices" to include the Eucharist (*op. cit.*, pp. 295 ff.).

<sup>12</sup> Thus, Estius, A Lapide, and commentators generally. Ceulemans is faithful to this tradition when he writes: "S. Petrus hic populo christiano tribuit eas appellationes quae in V.T. tributae leguntur populo Israelitico: unde rursus apparet 'regale sacerdotium' dici analogice tantum" (*op. cit.*, p. 66).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *supra*, note 4.

the layman's dignity or function will be decided from Scripture alone. Without denying that the clearly defined distinction between priest and people in the Old Dispensation is a type of the equally marked distinction between priest and layman in the New, it does appear that a much more personal priesthood is promised in Exodus and in Isaias, which is fulfilled only in the royal priesthood proclaimed by the Prince of the Apostles. In the first place, what is promised in Exodus is not a kingdom in which some of the members will be priests, but a kingly priesthood, or if we consult the Hebrew "a kingdom of priests." Again, in the prophecy of Isaias which is admittedly messianic, the people of the New Covenant will be called "priests of the Lord" and "ministers of our God" (Isai. 61:6). Hence, to say the least, there is no Scriptural compulsion to interpret the royal priesthood of Peter in a figurative sense, if by figure is meant extrinsic denomination. Nor should the reference to "spiritual sacrifices" necessarily exclude the Eucharistic sacrifice as the proper object of the Christians' sacrificial function. The term "spiritual" is certainly opposed to the "carnal" sacrifices of the Old Law, but it is hardly opposed to the "clean" oblation foretold by Malachy (Mal. 1:11). Nor do we feel that St. Peter is wholly unmindful of the central act of Christian worship when he speaks of temple, priesthood, and sacrifice (I Pet. 2:5). And this supposition becomes even less likely when we recall that St. Peter's Epistle would be read to a group of Christians gathered for the very celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>14</sup>

However, what is left undecided from Scripture alone becomes more decisive in the use made of our texts by the Fathers and theologians who were less embarrassed by the heterodoxy of those who would exaggerate the layman's privileges. At the risk of some reduplication we shall consider separately the layman's priestly dignity and his sacerdotal function. There is some need for this, since the weight of the evidence is not quite the same. Again, as we shall see, many authors will admit that the layman's dignity is personal and real, and at the same time argue away that admission by insisting on the metaphorical character of his function. Ultimately, we hope to establish two points: first, the layman's priestly dignity is intrinsic to him, having an ontological basis in the character of baptism and confirma-

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Selwyn, Note III, "The Spiritual Sacrifices," *op. cit.*, pp. 294 ff.

tion; secondly, his function is to offer not only himself, but, together with all Christians, the objective sacrifice of the Eucharist.

#### THE LAYMAN'S PRIESTLY DIGNITY

In our commentary on the scriptural references to the lay priesthood we preferred to regard the royal priesthood of I Peter 2:5 and 2:9 as the fulfillment of a promise made by God in Exodus and in Isaias rather than the fulfillment of a type of priesthood that was realised in the individual Israelite. This preference is confirmed in a brief but striking passage from Origen: "In accordance with the promises of God, you are the priests of God, 'for you are a holy nation, a holy priesthood.'"<sup>15</sup> True, the priestly dignity of Christians belongs to them because they are members of a "holy priesthood," but their priesthood actually touches them as individuals and is not theirs merely from association with those who are priests. And this truth is presumed by Origen as well known to his hearers: "Or, are you ignorant that to you also, that is, to the whole church of God and a nation of believers, the priesthood has been given? . . . You have then a priesthood, because you are a priestly nation, and therefore you ought to offer to God the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of prayers, the sacrifice of pity, the sacrifice of chastity, the sacrifice of righteousness, the sacrifice of holiness."<sup>16</sup> Prescinding for the time from what appears to be a function of priesthood which is metaphorical,<sup>17</sup> this much is clear: the Christian's priesthood is a personal possession and is exercised by offering sacrifice.

This same truth, and a rather striking indication of the objective character of the Christian's priestly function, are given by St. Justin Martyr. Searching for a type of the priesthood of all believers, St. Justin finds it in the person of the High-priest Jesus, the son of Josedec (Zach. 6:11):

We, who through the name of Jesus believe as one man in God the Creator of the universe, have put off our filthy garments, that is, our sins, through the name of His first-begotten Son, and are set on fire by the word of His calling, and are the true high-priestly race of God, as God himself testifies, saying that in every place

<sup>15</sup> In *Leviticum*, Hom. 6 (PG XII, 467).      <sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.*, Hom. 8 (PG XII, 508).

<sup>17</sup> We shall endeavor to show later that the subjective sacrifice of Christians can and should be made one with the sacrifice of the Mass.

among the Gentiles they offer unto Him acceptable and pure sacrifices. But God receives not sacrifices from any except through His priests. God therefore testifies beforehand that all who through this name offer the sacrifices which Jesus the Christ commanded, that is, at the Eucharist of the bread and the cup, which are offered in every part of the world by Christians, are acceptable to Him.<sup>18</sup>

Although St. Justin does not appear to have the classical text of St. Peter in mind—an allusion may be seen in his reference to the “high-priestly race of God”—yet his teaching on the priestly character of all believers and their strictly sacrificial function is quite extraordinary. Not only are all believers called priests but their priesthood is stressed from the fact that “God receives not sacrifices from any except His priests.” Although we shall develop the point later, it will be well to note that the sacrifice in question is not a purely subjective sacrifice divorced from the sacrifice of the Mass; rather it is the sacrifice foretold by Malachy, commanded by our Lord, and actually offered “at the Eucharist of the bread and the cup.” More pertinent to our present purpose is the significant fact that Justin finds the type of the royal priesthood not in the Jews as a people but in the person of Jesus, the son of Josedec, a high-priest of the Old Law.

### *The Sacerdotal Anointing*

In assigning the basis for the layman’s priestly dignity, St. Justin had contented himself with the simple assertion that all are priests “who through the name of Jesus have believed as one man in God.” In the text of I Peter 2:5, Christians are graced with the title of a royal priesthood through association with Christ. That this association is more than one of faith, that it is actually an effect of baptism and of confirmation is early adumbrated in the Fathers, and their teaching will furnish the doctrinal background for the later teaching of St. Thomas and theologians generally on the significance of the sacramental characters of baptism, confirmation, and orders as “certain participations of the priesthood of Christ derived from Him.”<sup>19</sup>

Tertullian, long before his defection to Montanism, foreshadows the line of development that will be followed by later writers in discussing the significance of the anointing that follows baptism. “Thereupon,

<sup>18</sup> *Dial. cum Tryphone*, c. 116 (PG VI, 745).

<sup>19</sup> *Sum. Theol.*, III, q. 63, a. 3.



as we come forth from the laver, we are anointed with the holy unction, just as in the Old Dispensation priests were anointed with oil from the horn of the altar. With this unction was Aaron anointed by Moses. Whence the term *Christus*, from the chrism which is the anointing, a name that is now appropriated to the Lord."<sup>20</sup> This striking parallelism between the sacerdotal anointing of Aaron and the anointing that follows baptism underlies the teaching of the Fathers of the East and the West and explains the priestly dignity and privilege of the consecrated Christian.

St. Ambrose in his commentary on St. Luke's Gospel assures his readers that all are priests "who are consecrated by the unction of gladness into a kingdom and a priesthood."<sup>21</sup> And earlier in the same work he explains the action of David and his associates in eating the loaves of proposition which "were not to be eaten except by priests" as a figure or foreshadowing of the priesthood of all the faithful: "All the children of the Church are priests, for we are anointed unto a holy priesthood."<sup>22</sup>

St. Jerome seems to identify the unction in question with the sacrament of baptism and actually calls the *sacerdotium laici* the priesthood of baptism. Justifying the practice of reinstating heretical bishops who have given evidence of repentance, he argues from the permanence of the lay priesthood of baptism to the permanence of the episcopal dignity: "Does the penitent lay aside his lay priesthood, that is of baptism, and only then do I pardon him? For it is written: 'He has made us a kingdom and priests to God His Father,' and again: 'a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a purchased people.'"<sup>23</sup>

With St. Augustine a new note is stressed. The basis for the priestly, and we might add, royal dignity of the layman is found in the baptismal anointing, but the anointing itself and the twofold dignity that results is actually a sharing in the anointing of Christ and in His kingship and priesthood. In his commentary on Psalm XXXVI, St. Augustine finds in the kings and priests of the Old Law a type of Christ and of all Christians who share in the anointing of Christ:

<sup>20</sup> *De Baptismo*, c. 7 (PL I, 1206).

<sup>21</sup> *Expositio evang. sec. Lucam*, V, (PL XV, 1781).

<sup>22</sup> *Op. cit.* (PL XV, 1645).

<sup>23</sup> *Dial. contra Luciferanos* (PL XXIII, 166).

Then, only the king and the priest were anointed; at that time these two alone were the anointed ones. And thus in two persons was prefigured the one future King and Priest, the one Christ for both offices, and so named Christ from the chrism. However, not only has our Head been anointed, but we also, His body.<sup>24</sup>

This rather exalted symbolism of the baptismal anointing, which strikes us as somewhat daring, was evidently well known to Augustine's hearers.

None of the faithful doubts that the priesthood of the Jews was a figure of that royal priesthood which is in the Church, to which are consecrated all who belong to the Body of Christ, the sovereign and true Head of all priests. For now all are anointed, something that was done formerly only for kings and priests; and when St. Peter proclaimed to the Christian people that they were a 'royal priesthood,' he meant that both names belong to the people to whom the anointing pertains.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, it is the hierarchical priesthood of the Jews and not the extrinsic priesthood of the Jewish people which is regarded as the type or figure of the priesthood of the ordinary Christian. All Christians, priests as well as layman, share in the unique priesthood of Christ, since it is Christ who is the "sovereign and true Head of all priests."

It would, however, be a mistake to exaggerate the teaching of St. Augustine. The royal priesthood applies to the laity, but he clearly distinguishes the lay priesthood from the priesthood of those who "are properly called priests in the Church of God."<sup>26</sup> Both priesthoods are derived from Christ, who alone merits the title priest in all its fulness; but in this unique priesthood of Christ priest and layman do not share alike. The layman's priesthood is on an altogether lower plane. And yet lowly as it is, it far surpasses the priesthood of the Old Law, which was but its type. In his *City of God* St. Augustine has the Christian layman address Christ in words that are eloquently appreciative of his dignity: "I do not wish to be raised to the honor of my fathers [i.e., to the Aaronic priesthood], which is nothing: grant me a share of Thy priesthood. I have chosen to be a menial in the house of God. I

<sup>24</sup> *Enarratio in Ps. xxvii* (PL XXXVI, 199-200).

<sup>25</sup> *Quaestionum evangeliorum*, ii, 40 (PL XXXV, 1355).

<sup>26</sup> *De civitate Dei*, 20, x (PL XLI, 676).

desire to be a member, however insignificant and lowly, of Thy priesthood."<sup>27</sup>

This unequal participation of the layman and of the priest in the priesthood of Christ is simply taken for granted by all the Fathers and is challenged only by Tertullian in his Montanist period. This will explain, perhaps, why the Fathers felt less constrained to insist on the peculiar dignity that was their own. Rather their purpose was to make the ordinary Christian conscious of his own priestly dignity by showing that his priesthood as well as their own was derived from the same source. No one expresses this truth more beautifully than St. Leo the Great. The occasion is the anniversary of his own elevation to the supreme pontificate, and his great desire is to share his joy with all Christians:

You have good reason to celebrate this anniversary; for by baptism, according to the teaching of St. Peter, the royal dignity of the priesthood is common to all of you. The anointing of the Holy Spirit has consecrated all of you as priests. It is good and religious that you should rejoice in our elevation as in an honor in which you yourselves share. In the entire body of the Church there is but one sole pontificate. And if the mysterious grace of Him who holds it descends with the greater abundance upon the members who hold high place, it flows with no little generosity upon those of lower place.<sup>28</sup>

St. Maximus of Turin, a contemporary of St. Leo the Great, will be our last witness drawn from the Fathers of the West for the significance of the post-baptismal anointing. His teaching will serve as a compendium or summary of the evidence already seen. In his third dogmatic tract on baptism, in which he discusses the symbolism of the rites that follow baptism, he gives the traditional interpretation of the rite of unction: "After baptism we anoint your head with chrism, that is, with the oil of sanctification, by which it is shown to the baptised that a royal and priestly dignity is conferred by the Lord."<sup>29</sup> Then, in words that are reminiscent of the teaching of St. Jerome, he assures his Christians that, unlike the ephemeral character of the royal and priestly dignity in the Old Law, their dignity will be a lasting possession: ". . . this unction which is poured out upon you confers a priestly dignity which, when once it has been granted, can never be effaced."<sup>30</sup> Finally, lest his teaching appear somewhat startling, he

<sup>27</sup> *Op. cit.*, 17, v (PL XLI, 535).

<sup>29</sup> *De baptismo* (PL LVII, 777-8).

<sup>28</sup> *Sermo IV* (PL LIV, 148).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 779.

assures his brethren that his teaching is not his own but that of Christ made through St. Peter: "Truly it is not I, but the Apostle Peter, or rather Christ, through Peter, who proclaims to you the dignity that has been conferred upon you. For thus does he write to the faithful, that is, to those who have been washed and consecrated with the chrism: 'You, however, are a royal and priestly people.'"<sup>31</sup>

Turning our attention to the Fathers of the East, we find that they are as prompt as those of the West in ascribing to the ordinary layman a priesthood which is intrinsic and a personal possession. On only one point will they appear to differ. Tertullian had referred to the post-baptismal anointing as the symbol or sign of the sacerdotal anointing and consecration of Christians.<sup>32</sup> Whether this anointing was actually part of the rite of baptism or whether it belonged to confirmation, which usually followed immediately upon baptism, is not clear. From the citations already given, it would appear that the Latin Fathers associated the layman's priestly dignity with the sacrament of baptism. The Greek Fathers, without denying that the baptised are already sharers in the Priesthood of Christ, seem to reserve to the unction and sealing of confirmation the special gift of the Spirit by which Christians are anointed priests. The apparent conflict may be resolved by stating without proof that the teaching of the East complements the teaching of the West, just as the sacrament of confirmation is itself a complement to baptism. Thus, what is begun in baptism is brought to completion on the lay level in confirmation. The point is of some importance in justifying the teaching of St. Thomas and later theologians on the basic unity of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and orders, and the priestly character that all three impress upon the soul. However, insistence on this point would prove a distraction from our main purpose which is to show the significance of the anointing with chrism, whether the anointing belongs to the sacrament of baptism or of confirmation or of both.

Origen is perhaps the first author in the East who finds in the anointing with unguent the basis for the priestly dignity of Christians and their consequent privileges. Whether the anointing in question belongs to baptism or to confirmation is not stated. Of more importance is the reality of the dignity itself and the peculiar privilege

<sup>31</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 581 f.

which that dignity implies. In a striking contrast between the structure of the Jewish temple, with its divisions for high priest, priests, and people, and the Christian edifice which is open to all alike, Origen explains why Christians can draw near the altar, a privilege reserved in the Old Law to priests alone: "Do not be amazed that this structure is open only to priests; for everyone who has been wetted with the sacred unction has been made a priest. You, therefore, are a sacerdotal race and therefore you approach the holy place."<sup>33</sup>

In passing, we might stress again that the priestly dignity of Christians is prefigured not in the priesthood of the ordinary Israelite, if he actually possessed such, but in the hierarchical priesthood of Aaron and the tribe of Levi. And the basis for this peculiar dignity is to be found in a special consecration or anointing. This truth which we found fully developed by the Fathers of the West becomes in the Church of the East part of the Christian catechesis.

Didymus the Blind, who was appointed by St. Athanasius head of the catechetical school at Alexandria, was no doubt familiar with the teaching of Origen. However, it would appear that he is more indebted to Tertullian in describing the significance of the Christian's anointing: "The chrism with which Aaron was anointed by Moses, and not only Aaron but also all who were anointed from the priestly horn, so that all were surnamed from the unction 'anointed ones,' was a type of the anointing with holy chrism which we all receive."<sup>34</sup>

Writing in the same vein, St. Cyril of Jerusalem in his famous *Catechesis* presumes that his neophytes have been well instructed in the significance of the anointing with chrism. By this time, however, it is clear that the anointing is actually a part of the rite of confirmation, and the sacrament itself can be referred to simply as "chrism":

You should know that there is a figure of chrism in the Old Testament. For when Moses communicated the divine command to his brother, after he was washed with water, he anointed him, constituting him high priest, and he was called the anointed. So also the high-priest, making Solomon king, anointed him, after he had washed in Gihon. And these things took place in figure; but for you they do not take place in figure but in truth, since you are truly anointed by the Holy Spirit.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *In Leviticum, Hom. 9 (PG XII, 251).*

<sup>34</sup> *De Trinitate, II, 14 (PG XXXIX, 712).*

<sup>35</sup> *Cat. Myst., III, 6 (PG XXXIII, 1093).*

We are now far removed from a priesthood that is but a metaphor. Actually it would appear that the priesthood of Christians is more real than the priesthood of Aaron. Aaron surely received a special consecration, but his consecration is but the figure or shadow of the reality that is verified in the consecration of the layman. Later in the same *Catechesis* what is ascribed to the chrism is attributed to the seal: "He anointed your head with oil, by the seal of God which you have on your forehead, that you might be made the likeness of the seal, the sanctification of God."<sup>8</sup> The significance of this allusion will be the better appreciated if it is recalled that the words "sanctification of God" (translated in the Vulgate "sanctificatio Dei") were engraved on a thin piece of metal and attached to Aaron's tiara, and this at God's command (Exod. 28:36, 37). Thus was Aaron made the "sanctification of God," or better, "holy to the Lord."

Gathering together the various statements made by the Fathers and early ecclesiastical writers relative to the priestly dignity of Christians, we feel that the following synthesis is representative of their thought. The priestly dignity is the personal possession of the Christian; it is not merely appropriated to him because of membership in a Church which possesses a hierarchical priesthood. Rather, the layman's priesthood, as all priesthood, is a sharing in the priesthood of Christ, from whom all priesthood is ultimately derived. True, there is a sharp dividing line between layman and priest, but the distinction does not lie in the reality of their respective priesthoods but in the degree in which they share in the fulness of Christ's priesthood. Actually, it is the reality of the Christian's priesthood which distinguishes the members of the royal priesthood from the rest of mankind. And we would not hesitate to state that no distinction between one member of Christ's priestly body and another can be compared to the distinction between those who are baptised and confirmed and those who are not.

#### *The Sacramental Character*

The sacerdotal symbolism of baptism and confirmation, stated so clearly in the writings of the Fathers, was apparently obscured by the early Scholastic speculations on the nature and significance of the

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, IV, 7 (PG XXXIII, 1096).

sacramental character. Thus, Alexander of Hales, to whom so much is owed for a reawakened interest in the theology of the character, failed to discover the basic unity that underlies the threefold character of baptism, confirmation, and orders. All three characters admittedly assimilate the soul to Jesus Christ, but it is only through the character of orders that the recipient is configured to Christ as Priest. The baptismal character assimilates one to Christ as Lord and Leader of the Church; that of confirmation to Christ, King of the sacred hosts; and only that of orders to Christ, the sovereign Priest.<sup>37</sup> In this way, Alexander found a clear distinction between each of the three characters, but the reality of the layman's participation in the priesthood of Christ was at least obscured. Priesthood no longer found its origin in the sacrament of baptism but in that of orders.

Fortunately, the obscurity did not last long. In his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, St. Thomas had stressed the significance of the character of orders whereby the recipient not only shares in the priesthood of Christ but is made conformable to Christ the principal Priest.<sup>38</sup> In the *Summa*, however, what is said of the character of orders is made to apply to the character in general:

The whole rite of the Christian religion is derived from the priesthood of Christ and hence it is clear that the sacramental character is especially the character of Christ, to whose priesthood each of the faithful is configured according to the sacramental characters, which are nothing else but certain participations of the priesthood of Christ, derived from Him.<sup>39</sup>

In this single sentence St. Thomas has epitomised and harmonised the teaching of the East and West on the unity of the Christian priesthood and the basic similarity of the three sacraments in which this priesthood is conferred. Accordingly, the Christian priesthood has its origin in baptism, is perfected on the lay level in confirmation, and brought to full completion in the sacrament of orders. St. Thomas' teaching, which is so much in accord with the tradition of the past, was immediately accepted and has since become the doctrine

<sup>37</sup> *Sum. Theol.*, IV, q. 8, membr. 8, art. 1; cf. Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments* (St. Louis, 1924), p. 247.

<sup>38</sup> *In IV Sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 3, q. 5 ad 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Sum. Theol.*, III, q. 63, a. 3.

common to theologians of all schools.<sup>40</sup> While there is not the same agreement on the intrinsic nature and function of the character, all are agreed that the character is a physical entity which in some way reflects in the soul the priestly countenance of Christ. Whether the character is a strict potency which exercises its efficiency in the physical order—the view proposed by St. Thomas—is a question upon which opinion is still divided.<sup>41</sup> However, in the general agreement on the ontological reality of the character and its priestly significance we have at least an implicit admission that the layman's priestly dignity is as real as the character which ontologically founds it.

The Christian layman is, then, in a very real sense a priest. By the fact of baptism and confirmation and the twofold consecration that these sacraments imply, the layman is set apart from the rest of men and incorporated into a society which is priestly "to the very hem of its garments."<sup>42</sup> His sacerdotal anointing, having its type in the anointing of Aaron, is actually a sharing in the anointing of Christ. In the layman, then, in a derived yet real sense, is verified the admonition of St. Paul: "Let no man take this honor upon himself but he who has been called by God as Aaron was" (Heb. 5:2).

#### THE LAYMAN'S PRIESTLY FUNCTION

Theologians today, and for some time, have been all but unanimous in admitting the main premise from which we concluded to the reality of the layman's priestly dignity. Nevertheless, not all will admit the conclusion itself. The layman, they will grant, shares in the priesthood of Christ, but his priesthood remains figurative or metaphorical. Many theologians and commentators on the classical texts of St. Peter feel that they are justified in their view from a consideration of the layman's function as described by the Prince of the Apostles.

In the passage in question, St. Peter describes the function of the royal priesthood as twofold: "to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5); and "to proclaim the perfections of Him who has called you out of the darkness into His

<sup>40</sup> For the influence of St. Thomas' teaching on the character, cf. Rea, *op. cit.*, pp. 201 ff.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Rea, *loc. cit.*

<sup>42</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *De adoratione in spiritu et veritate*, 9 (PG LXVIII, 761)



marvellous light" (I Pet. 2:9). According to the more general view, the sacrifices referred to are called spiritual to distinguish them from the objective sacrifice of the Mass which only the priest in orders may offer. The layman is not to offer the Body of Christ; rather he is to present his own body a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This metaphorical or mystical interpretation of "spiritual sacrifices" is confirmed, we are told, by the second function of the royal priesthood, which is to proclaim by personal example the perfections of Christ.<sup>43</sup>

In answering this line of reasoning, let us state at the outset that the more general interpretation is wholly true in what it affirms, but questionable in what by implication it denies. Certainly, all Christians are to offer themselves as living sacrifices to God, and even in the sacrifice of the Mass, as we shall see, they are with the priest at the altar to unite themselves to Christ as Victim. Hence, even granted that St. Peter has principally in mind the subjective and personal oblation of oneself, it would be wrong to assume that this self-oblation cannot be made objective in the sacrifice of the Mass. Rather, the very concept of sacrifice as the external sign of an internal oblation presupposes the subjective element. Again, the passage from I Peter 2:9, where the apostolic function of Christians is stressed, will derogate from the strictly priestly function of Christians only if it is assumed that the role of a witness to Christ by word and example is not at least an integral part of the strictly sacerdotal office.

This last point is of some importance for an understanding of not a few passages from early Christian writers who stress a function of priesthood which is more apostolic than strictly sacrificial. Thus, Clement of Alexandria in his commentary on the text of Peter stresses the apostolic function of priesthood when he states that Christians exercise their priesthood through sacrifice "which consists of prayer and teaching, by which means souls are won and offered to God."<sup>44</sup> This same subordination of the strictly liturgical to the apostolic function of the royal priesthood is found in Clement's *Exhortation to the Gentiles*, where he assures his hearers that they are more truly priests than are the Jewish and pagan priests. After exposing the

<sup>43</sup> Thus commentators on I Pet. 2:9, more generally.

<sup>44</sup> *Hypotyposes*, in I Pet. 2:5 (PG IX, 730).

absurdity of the pagan rites in which priests carry about lewd images of stone, wood, ivory, and gold, calling them god, or images of the gods, Clement portrays quite graphically the superiority of the priesthood of the baptised:

But we, yes, we are the ones who in this living and moving image which is man, carry about the image of God, an image which dwells with us, is our counsellor, companion, hearth-sharer, which feels with us and feels for us. We have been made a consecrated offering to God in the place of Christ. We are the chosen race, the kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, who were once not a people, but now are a people of God. We are not those who, according to John, are from below, but those who are from above, who have learned the whole of the economy of God and understood it, who have practiced as a profession 'walking in newness of life.'<sup>45</sup>

Clement, then, may be regarded as a witness to a strictly metaphorical interpretation of the royal priesthood only if we refuse to see in the apostolic mission of Christians a proper function of priesthood. For, obviously, if the notion of sacrifice, while essential to the concept of priesthood, exhausts that concept, any function that is not related to sacrifice will be priestly only in an improper or figurative sense. Hence what is needed is a clear concept of the function of priesthood, and since in the present economy all priesthood, hierarchical as well as lay, is derived from the unique priesthood of Christ, a brief discursus on the role of Christ as Priest is in order.

### *The Role of Christ as Priest*

In his treatise *De Sacerdotio Christi*, St. Thomas sets himself immediately to handling an objection which is basically the same as that which has called forth the present discursus. As the objection reads, it would appear that Christ cannot be a priest because He is a legislator and a teacher, and in the Old Law the prophetic and priestly offices were distinct. In answering the objection, St. Thomas takes a wider view of priesthood but insists that his view is the proper view:

It is properly the office of the priest to be a mediator between God and the people, insofar as he transmits divine favors to the people, whence he is called 'sacerdos,' as it were 'sacra dans' . . . ; and again, insofar as he offers the prayers of the people to God and somehow satisfies for their sins to God, whence the Apostle

<sup>45</sup> *Exhortatio ad Gentes* (PG VIII, 157).

(Heb. 5:1) says: 'Every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in the things that pertain to God that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.'<sup>46</sup>

According to St. Thomas, therefore, a priest is basically a mediator, and his mediatorship is twofold: to bring to men the things that belong to God and to bring to God through sacrifice the gifts of men. His mediatorship is ascendant or Godward, through intercession and sacrifice; but it is also descendant or manward through the dispensation to men of God's truth and God's life. It is this fuller concept of priesthood which is applied to Christ: "Insofar as Christ is man, it belongs to Him to join men to God by proffering the precepts and gifts of God to men, and by sacrificing and interceding for men to God."<sup>47</sup> And it is this fuller concept of priesthood that should be applied to the priesthood of the laity as well as to the priesthood of orders. St. Paul was able to speak of himself and his colleagues in the apostolate as "the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God" (I Cor. 4:1). Now among these "mysteries" were surely the gift of God's truth and the gift of God's life. And among those who shared in the distribution of these divine favors, although their role was always subordinate, were the Christian layman and at times even the Christian laywoman, as is clear from St. Paul's request to "help those (*eas*) who have labored with me in the gospel."

What has been said will appear less surprising if it is heard from the lips of the great Pope of Catholic Action, Pius XI. Elaborating on the use made of the layman by the Apostles, he does not hesitate to declare "that a great part of the marvellous success of the apostolate was due to the co-operation of the laity with the Apostles."

What could the Twelve have done, lost in the immensity of the world, if they had not called around them collaborators—men and women, old folks and young—to say to them: 'We bring treasures from heaven. Help us distribute them.' The historical documents of the primitive age are magnificent. St. Paul ends his letters with a litany of names among which there are few priests but many laymen and even women: 'Adjuva eas quae mecum laboraverunt in evangelio.'<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Sum. Theol.*, III, q. 26, a. 2.

<sup>47</sup> *Loc. cit.* Scheeben writes in the same vein: "The entire mediatorship of Christ is at bottom nothing but a priesthood, just as His priesthood is nothing but a mediatorship between God and man" (*The Mysteries of Christianity*, tr. Cyril Vollert, S.J., St. Louis, 1946, p. 412).

<sup>48</sup> "Address to the workers of the Italian Confederation of Catholic Young Women,"

In the distribution of the treasure of God's life the layman will ordinarily play at most a dispositive role. By prayer, exhortation, and example he will prepare the soul of his neighbor for the seed of God's grace. In two sacraments, however, he is privileged to play a part which is strictly ministerial. As the extraordinary minister of the sacrament of baptism he leads others into that priesthood of which he himself is a member, while in the sacrament of marriage he becomes the ordinary channel of grace to the soul of the beloved, and she to him.<sup>49</sup> And thus in the sacrament of marriage by virtue of the priestly character of baptism bride and groom not only are lovers but exercise in a very real sense their priesthood.

It is, however, in the mediation of God's truth that the layman will more frequently be called upon to exercise a priestly mediation that is manward or descendant. And it is this function of priesthood, which stems rather from the character of confirmation, that is the doctrinal basis of the movement newly called "Catholic Action" but which has Christ Himself as its founder.<sup>50</sup> True, in the mediation of God's truth the layman will always be dependent on the hierarchy to whom God's truth has been entrusted. Thus his mediation will itself be mediate and his apostolate will be subordinate to that of the hierarchy. And yet his mediation will be part of his priesthood—a truth that Pius XI stresses in a passage that is not a little remarkable for seeing in the apostolate of the laity a function of the royal priesthood proclaimed by St. Peter: "Recall to the attention of your faithful that it is in working in the field of private and public apostolate, under your direction and that of your clergy, that they merit the

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March 19, 1927; cited by T. Hesburgh, *The Theology of Catholic Action* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1946), p. 17.

<sup>49</sup> Karl Adam finds in marriage the noblest and highest expression of the general priesthood and regards marriage specifically as the sacrament of the laity: "Das in der taufe empfangene allgemeine Priestertum wirkt sich in der Ehe in seiner reichsten und höchsten Form aus. . . . So ist das Sakrament der Ehe das spezifische Laien-Sakrament. . . ." (*Die Sakramentale Weihe der Ehe*, Freiburg, 1930, p. 13).

<sup>50</sup> "Jesus Himself laid the basis of Catholic Action in choosing and forming in His Apostles and disciples collaborators in His divine apostolate, giving an example that was immediately followed by the first holy Apostles, as the sacred text attests" (*Non abbiamo bisogno*, AAS, XXIII, 303-4). On the relation of the character of confirmation to the apostolic phase of the layman's priesthood, cf. the excellent work of Father Hesburgh, pp. 162 ff.

magnificent title of 'a chosen race, a holy priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people.'"<sup>51</sup>

### *The Layman's Sacrificial Office*

Although the priestly office is apostolic, bringing to men God's truth and God's life, it is essentially sacrificial, bringing to God, through sacrifice, the gifts of man. In fact, so essential is this latter office that any discussion of the reality of the layman's priestly dignity must necessarily turn on the part that the layman has to play in the distinctive sacrifice of Christians which is the sacrifice of the Mass.

As already noted,<sup>52</sup> most commentators refuse to see in the "spiritual sacrifices" of I Peter 2:5 any reference to the Eucharistic sacrifice as the proper function of the royal priesthood. Admittedly, the point is debatable. Hence, just as we arrived at a decision relative to the layman's priestly dignity from a study of the early tradition and the consent, at least implicit, of later theologians, so too we shall study the same tradition relative to the layman's strictly sacrificial office. From this study, which will follow an historical rather than topical order, we hope to establish two points: (1) the layman's personal or mystical oblation can and should be made one with the Eucharistic sacrifice; (2) the substance of the Eucharistic sacrifice is actually offered by the whole Church, although the priest alone posits the external act of oblation.

### *The Early Tradition*

Anyone familiar with the early Christian apologetes will recall the difficulties they create on the objective character of the Eucharistic sacrifice. So strong is their repudiation of carnal sacrifices, so decided their insistence on the whole Christian life as the only sacrifice which is acceptable to God, that one might suspect that they knew of no other sacrifice than one which was wholly metaphorical.<sup>53</sup> Thus the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* speaks of "the oblation not made by hands" which pertains to the New Law of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Ubi Arcano*, AAS, XIV, 695; cf. Hesburgh, *op. cit.*, p. 34 and note.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 578.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. De la Taille, *Mysterium Fidei*, pp. 227 ff.

<sup>54</sup> *Epistola Barnabae*, II, 6 (*Florilegium Patristicum*, I, 42). We might note with De la Taille (*op. cit.*, p. 228) that St. Paul in his peroration to the Athenians insisted that "God

Athenagoras, mindful of the Lord's prophecy that Christians would worship "in spirit and in truth," asserts that it is the knowledge of God and pure hands raised to him which alone are an acceptable sacrifice; and since God has need of nothing, our victim must be unbloody and our worship spiritual.<sup>55</sup> So insistent is this emphasis on what might be called the spiritual or strictly subjective sacrifice of Christians that Aristides does not hesitate to conclude that "God asks no sacrifice and no oblation nor any of the things that are visible."<sup>56</sup>

Now these passages, which might easily be multiplied, could be regarded as a denial of the Eucharist as a sacrifice only if one were to divorce the personal oblation of Christians from the objective sacrifice itself—only if one were to separate the gift from the giver. Without denying that the gift offered is the Body and Blood of Christ, the apologetes strongly insist that the gift will be accepted only from those whose hearts are contrite and whose consciences are pure.<sup>57</sup> Without using technical language they will prepare the ground for St. Augustine's classical definition of a "visible sacrifice as the symbol (*sacramentum*) of an invisible sacrifice. . . . God does not want the sacrifice of a sheep that is slain, but the sacrifice of a heart that is contrite."<sup>58</sup> And even in the sacrifice of the Mass, where the gift offered is of infinite value, God will have regard for the dispositions of those who offer.

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dwelleth not in temples made by hands; neither is He served with men's hands, as though He needed anything" (Acts 17:25, 26).

<sup>55</sup> *Legatio pro christianis*, 13 (PG VI, 916).

<sup>56</sup> *Apologia*, I, cited by De la Taille (*op. cit.*, p. 227).

<sup>57</sup> In assigning the principles for a solution to the difficulties raised by the Fathers, De la Taille concludes: "Quarto, tandem, spectato eo a quo offertur, maxime Patres vitae probitatem adorationemque in spiritu et veritate extulere: in qua consistit invisibile sacrificium, cujus nisi signum sit sacrificium visibile, non est acceptabile" (*op. cit.*, p. 229). The Anglican, Darwell Stone, gives an excellent summary of the teaching of the Antenicene Fathers on the objective character of the Eucharistic sacrifice, even though the subjective element in that sacrifice is stressed: "The belief that the Eucharist is a sacrifice is found everywhere. This belief is coupled with strong repudiations of carnal sacrifices; and is saved from being Judaic by the recognition of the elements as Christ's body and blood, of the union of the action of the Church on earth with that of Christ in heaven, and of the spiritual character of that whole priestly life and service and action of the community as the body of Christ which is a distinguishing mark of the Christian system" (*A History of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*, London, 1909, I, 54).

<sup>58</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, 10, V (PL XLI, 282).

This emphasis on the subjective element, or better, the formal element in the Eucharistic sacrifice is found in the *Didache*, the earliest extra-canonical document that we have on the Eucharist. In it we find not only that the Eucharist is the sacrifice of all Christians but that the dispositions of those gathered for its celebration profoundly influence the acceptability of the sacrifice itself.

On the Lord's Day, after you have come together, break bread and offer thanks but only after you have confessed your sins, that your sacrifice may be pure. And let no one who is at odds with his brother assemble with you until he is reconciled, lest your sacrifice be tainted. For it has been said by the Lord: 'In every place and time there is offered to me a clean oblation. . . .'<sup>59</sup>

In this passage there can be no question of a blemish in the gift that is offered. There can, however, be a blemish in the offering of the gift. Hence, the need of contrition and fraternal charity in those who make the gift their own and offer it to God the Father. We can, if we wish, regard these internal dispositions of those who offer as constituting a spiritual or mystical sacrifice, but to oppose them to the sacrifice of the Eucharist as an objective sacrifice would be to forget what the formal element of the latter is. The sacrifice of the faithful is involved in the sacrifice foretold by Malachy, and to divorce that sacrifice from the sacrifice of the Mass would prejudice the meaning of the Eucharistic sacrifice itself.

This same intimate relationship between the dispositions of those offering and the Eucharistic gift which is offered is clearly taught in the passage from St. Justin Martyr, already quoted.<sup>60</sup> There it is not only stated that the sacrifice of all believers is the sacrifice foretold by Malachy, commanded by Christ, and celebrated in the Eucharist of the bread and cup, but it is at least implied that those who offer this sacrifice must be clothed in clean garments, in order that it may be that pure sacrifice foretold by Malachy.

From these passages we can perhaps understand why the early apologists take such pains to emphasise the subjective element in all sacrifice. However, they do so not to question the objective validity of the Eucharistic sacrifice but to insist that even the most precious gift, always acceptable to God, will not be received as our

<sup>59</sup> *Didache*, c. 14 (*Fl. Pat.*, I, 32).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 580 f.

gift unless we in some way identify ourselves with the Victim offered. Thus St. Irenaeus will throw some light on the teaching of his contemporaries when he states: "A man is not sanctified by sacrifices, for God has no need of sacrifice; rather the sacrifice is sanctified by the conscience of the one offering. When a man's conscience is pure, then will God deign to accept his sacrifice as from a friend."<sup>61</sup>

### *The Synthesis of Augustine*

While it is true that the subjective sacrifice of Christians may easily be related to the sacrifice of the Mass, the mode of that relationship is not made explicit until we come to the great synthesis proposed by St. Augustine. His master principle is enunciated in his definition of a sacrifice as "the visible sacrament, that is, a sacred sign, of an invisible sacrifice."<sup>62</sup> Hence St. Augustine's main preoccupation will be to determine the symbolism of the Eucharistic sacrifice—in other words, to determine the formal element of that sacrifice.

According to St. Augustine, the symbolism of the Eucharistic sacrifice is twofold: it is the sign of Christ as Priest offering Himself as Victim, and it is the sign or sacrament of the Mystical Body of Christ offering itself in union with Christ. "Thus is He Priest, Himself offering, Himself also that which is offered. Of this thing He willed that the sacrifice of the Church should be the daily sacrament."<sup>63</sup> The symbolism, however, extends not only to Christ, the Head, but also to His members, the Mystical Body. For Augustine immediately adds: "and the Church, since she is the body of the Head Himself, learns to offer herself through Him."<sup>64</sup> That the Eucharist is also a sign of the Church's offering of herself is brought out in an earlier passage in which the subjective sacrifice of Christians is first stressed and then related to the sacrifice of the Mass as the reality behind the symbol:

And so the Apostle exhorted us that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, our reasonable service; and that we be not conformed to this world but reformed in the newness of our mind, to prove what is the will of God, that which is good and well pleasing and complete, which whole sacrifice we ourselves are. . . . This is the sacrifice of Christians: 'the many one body in

<sup>61</sup> *Adv. haeres.*, IV, 18 (PG VII, 1026).

<sup>62</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, 10, V (PL XLI, 282).

<sup>63</sup> *Op. cit.*, 10, XX (PL XLI, 293).

<sup>64</sup> *Loc. cit.*



Christ!' Which also the Church celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, familiar to the faithful, where it is shown to her that in this thing which she offers she herself is offered.<sup>65</sup>

Christians, then, in presenting their bodies as a living sacrifice may be said to offer a spiritual or mystical sacrifice, but St. Augustine is more in conformity with the earlier tradition when he sees in the Church's oblation of herself that invisible sacrifice of which the Eucharistic sacrifice is the symbol or *sacramentum*: "We ourselves, that is, His city, and His most splendid and best sacrifice, of which we celebrate the mystery in our oblations which are known to the faithful."<sup>66</sup>

To sum up our investigation thus far, we can say that the sacrifice of the Mass is a spiritual sacrifice in the sense that it is opposed to the carnal sacrifices of the Old Law. It is spiritual, too, in the sense that the realities that underlie the external rite are spiritual or heavenly. We appear to offer bread and wine, but actually we offer the Body and Blood of Christ, and in that offering is symbolised the offering of the whole Church. We can, if we wish, refer to the Church's oblation of herself as a mystical sacrifice, but to call it a metaphorical sacrifice, as though it were unrelated to the Eucharist which is its symbol, would be to introduce a dichotomy unknown to the tradition already seen.

During the period under discussion, the Eucharistic sacrifice is referred to as the sacrifice of the Church, the sacrifice of Christians. However, a clear distinction is made between those who offer the sacrifice and those who celebrate the rite. Although the whole Church offers, it is only the priest in orders who is the minister of the rite in which that offering is made. Since, however, this distinction was questioned only by Tertullian in his Montanist days,<sup>67</sup> the emphasis is not so much on the exclusive prerogatives of God's duly ordained priests as it is on the priestly dignity of Christians and the obligations that this dignity entails. And it is this emphasis which will continue until the Scholastic period when the need for further clarification and the exigencies of controversy with Neo-Montanists and Protestants will tend to obscure rather than enhance the reality of the layman's

<sup>65</sup> *Op. cit.*, 10, VI (PL XLI, 284).

<sup>66</sup> *Op. cit.*, 19, XXIII (PL XLI, 655).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 574.

sacrificial function. In the period of transition, however, there is one author who may be regarded as summing up the tradition of the past.

St. Peter Damian (1007–72), in his teaching on the role that the laity has to play in the sacrifice of the Mass, will find a faithful echo in the teaching of our present Pontiff, Pius XII. But before that echo is heard, what Damian regards “as clearer than light” will become not a little obscured in the great periods of speculation and controversy that will soon ensue. In a work that has the curious title *Liber qui appellatur Dominus Vobiscum*, Damian appeals to the prayers of the Mass to justify the priestly function of the laity:

In the very celebration of Mass, to the words, *Memento, Domine famularum famularumque tuarum*, is added, *pro quibus tibi offerimus vel qui tibi offerunt hoc sacrificium laudis*. In these words it is clearly shown that the sacrifice of praise is offered by all the faithful, not only by the men but also by the women, although it is seen to be specially offered by one priest; for what he holds in his hands in offering it to God, the multitude of the faithful commend with the intent devotion of their minds. The same thing is declared in this prayer: *Hanc igitur oblationem servitutis nostrae sed et cunctae familiae tuae, quaesumus Domine, ut placatus accipias*. In these words, it is clearer than light itself that the sacrifice which by the priest is placed upon the holy altars, is offered generally by the whole family of God.<sup>68</sup>

### *The Scholastic Period*

We have seen that St. Thomas rendered a signal service to the development of the theology of the layman’s priestly dignity by stressing the sacerdotal significance of the characters of baptism and confirmation.<sup>69</sup> And yet, when St. Thomas comes to the question of the part that the laity has to play in the sacrifice of the Mass, the passive quality of the baptismal character comes to the fore, and the layman’s priestly function, whatever may be said of his dignity, is explained in a metaphorical sense. Thus, in his reference to the classical text of St. Peter, St. Thomas writes: “A devout layman is united to Christ by spiritual union through faith and charity, but not by sacramental power; consequently he has a spiritual priesthood for offering spiritual sacrifices of which it is said . . . ‘A holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.’”<sup>70</sup> Again, in his *Commentary on the Book of Sentences*,

<sup>68</sup> *Liber qui appellatur Dominus Vobiscum*, 8 (PL CXLV, 237).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 588 f.

<sup>70</sup> *Sum. Theol.* III, q. 82, a. 1.

Thomas stresses the metaphorical, or what he calls the mystical, character of the lay priesthood: "Every good man is said to be a priest mystically, in the sense that he offers himself as a living holocaust in a mystical sacrifice to God."<sup>71</sup>

And yet, St. Thomas would not deny that the sacrifice of the Mass is in some sense the offering of the whole Church. This seeming antinomy is resolved for him by a distinction between the substance of the Mass which is the consecration, and the prayers of the Mass which belong rather to its integrity. In the consecration the priest acts as the minister and in the person of Christ; in the prayers of the Mass, he acts in the person of the Church: "The priest in reciting the prayers of the Mass speaks instead of the Church in whose unity he remains; but in consecrating the sacrament he speaks in the person of Christ whose place he holds by the power of his orders."<sup>72</sup> Now while it is true that the priest alone has the power to consecrate, St. Thomas would seem to imply that not only the consecration but the oblation that is identified with the consecration is the personal office of the priest, and in no sense the office of the whole Church. Thus, after stating that certain words are recited by the choir, he continues:

There are other words which the priest alone recites, namely, such as belong to his personal office 'that he may offer up gifts for the people' (Heb. V, 1). Some of these he says aloud, such as are common to priest and people alike, for instance, the common prayers; other words, however, belong to the priest alone, such as the oblation and consecration; consequently the prayers that are said in connection with these have to be said by the priest in secret.<sup>73</sup>

From these passages it would appear that St. Thomas would not admit that the sacrifice of the Mass is the sacrifice of the whole Church, unless by sacrifice is meant those accidental prayers that surround the essential rite. Whether this refinement on the traditional teaching that the whole Church offers the Eucharistic sacrifice is peculiar to St. Thomas we are not prepared to say. It would not appear to be the teaching of his contemporary at Paris, William, the bishop of that city. For William states quite emphatically: "The priest at the altar acts as the minister and the agent of another's business, namely of

<sup>71</sup> *In IV Sent.*, 13, q. 5.

<sup>72</sup> *Op. cit.*, q. 83, a. 4, ad 6.

<sup>73</sup> *Sum. Theol.*, III, q. 82, a. 7, ad 3.

the Church itself. Not only does he act in the person of the Church but he assumes her very voice and words."<sup>74</sup>

Nor is the teaching of St. Thomas easily brought into line with the statement of St. Peter Damian where it is said to be "clearer than the light itself" that the "sacrifice which is placed by the priest on the sacred altars is offered generally by the whole family of God."<sup>75</sup> For here, surely, the sacrifice is not something accidental or peripheral to the Mass, but is its very substance. It must be admitted however that this refinement of St. Thomas will greatly influence post-Tridentine theologians and commentators who are anxious to give to the layman's priesthood an interpretation that is metaphorical.

Before entering this period we shall cite at some length another voice which appears to be more in conformity with the earlier tradition. Gabriel Biel, who may be regarded as the last of the early Scholastics, and an ardent disciple of Scotus, refers to the priest at the altar as the agent or procurator of the Church and assigns to the whole Church the role of principal offerer of the sacrifice. In the light of this teaching Biel is able to justify the efficacy of a Mass said by a bad priest:

For although the priest may be bad, and although he may not possess in himself those qualities which would make his sacrifice pleasing to God and accepted by Him for the granting of spiritual favors, yet because in this oblation which officially devolves upon him he is the agent of the Church beloved by God, God has regard for the Church as the principal offerer, despite the malice of the agent offering. And if by some impossible turn of events, there would be no one in the militant Church acceptable to God, the impetration of this sacrifice viewed as an offering, would win nothing from God.<sup>76</sup>

It might be noted here that Biel does not deny that the value of the Mass is to be measured by the excellence of the gift offered. In speaking, however, of the impetratory value of any given Mass, Biel is one with his master, Scotus, who held that the fruits of the Mass will vary according to the dispositions of those who offer.<sup>77</sup> And in

<sup>74</sup> *De sacramento ordinis*, c. 5, p. 538; cited by De la Taille, *Mysterium Fidei*, p. 328.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 599.

<sup>76</sup> Cited by De la Taille, *op. cit.* p. 330, note 2.

<sup>77</sup> To the question: "Cui merito correspondet bonum reddendum virtute sacrificii?" Scotus had replied: "Dici potest quod non correspondet praecise bono contento in Eucharistia: illud enim bonum aequale est, quando conservatur in pyxide, et tamen tunc non

this view both master and disciple show a definite kinship with the earlier apologetes who had stressed the subjective or formal element in all sacrifice.<sup>78</sup>

### *The Council of Trent*

In the light of Luther's "anathema to him who distinguishes the priest from the simple Christian,"<sup>79</sup> it is not surprising that the Fathers gathered at Trent should stress the peculiar dignity and exclusive prerogatives of the priest in orders. Thus, in its session on the sacrament of Orders, the Council strongly censures "anyone who should assert that all Christians without distinction are priests of the New Testament, or that they are all *inter se* endowed with an equal spiritual power. . . ."<sup>80</sup> Again, in the first canon of the same session it defines clearly the power of the ordained priests as one "of consecrating and offering the true Body and Blood of the Lord and of forgiving and retaining sins."<sup>81</sup> Finally, in its session on the sacrifice of the Mass, the Council defined that by the words, "Do this in commemoration of Me," Christ instituted his Apostles priests, and ordained that they and other priests should offer His own Body and Blood.<sup>82</sup>

From the teaching of Trent, then, it is clear that there is a definite sense in which the priest not only consecrates alone, but alone offers.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, the Council was careful to safeguard other truths which, if denied, would imply that the offering of the priest is a personal sacrifice and not the sacrifice of the whole Church. Thus, in the chapters dealing with the sacrifice of the Mass,<sup>84</sup> the priest not only is the

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aequivalet Ecclesiae, sicut quando offertur in Missa. . . . Ultra ergo bonum contentum in Eucharistia requiritur oblatio Eucharistiae. Ista non est accepta nisi sit offerentis accepti. . . . Ex his patet quod sicut Eucharistia non praecise ratione rei contentae plene acceptatur, sed oportet quod sit oblata, sic nec plene acceptatur oblata, nisi ratione bonae voluntatis alicujus offerentis" (*Quodlib.*, XX). Consult on this question De la Taille, *op. cit.*, p. 323, who cites this and other passages from the theologians of this period.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *supra*, pp. 594 ff.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 594 ff.

<sup>80</sup> *Conc. Trid.*, Sess. XXIII, cap. IV (translations taken from *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, by H. J. Schroeder, O. P., Herder Book Co., St. Louis, 1941).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, can. 1.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, Sess. XXII, cap. 1.

<sup>83</sup> As we shall see later, the priest alone immediately posits the act of oblation since this act is identified with the consecration. And in this sense the *Codex Juris Canonici* can assert: "Potestatem offerendi Missae sacrificium habent soli sacerdotes" (can. 802).

<sup>84</sup> *Conc. Trid.*, Sess. XXII.

“minister of Christ” (c. 2), but acts as the “public minister of the Church” (c. 6). And in the very opening chapter we are taught that Christ “has instituted a new Pasch, namely Himself, to be immolated under visible signs by the Church, through the priests.”

### *Post-Tridentine Theologians*

The Fathers at Trent did not take up *ex professo* the question of the priesthood of the laity, nor did they attempt an interpretation of the texts of Scripture which refer to the royal priesthood and the function of that priesthood. This task was left for the theologians and commentators of the period. As already noted,<sup>86</sup> theologians and commentators were practically unanimous in interpreting the royal priesthood in a metaphorical sense. True, their reasons were polemic rather than strictly exegetical. But they were also theological. Basically, the problem was to reconcile two seemingly contradictory truths. First, the Mass is the sacrifice of the whole Church; secondly, the essence of the Mass consists in the consecration, which is the sole prerogative of the priest in orders. The problem is perhaps stated by no one more clearly than by Suarez, and his solution will be found to differ little from the view advanced by St. Thomas.

In his treatise *De Sacramentis* Suarez deals directly with the part that the congregation and the whole Church have to play in the sacrifice of the Mass, insisting at the very outset that it is “the common Catholic teaching that the faithful can be offerers in the Holy Sacrifice.”<sup>86</sup> This statement is confirmed by citations from the Fathers, from the words of the Mass, from the Old Testament, and from reason. Among his authorities, he also cites St. Thomas, although he is careful to note that St. Thomas “is speaking more expressly of prayers than of the substance of the sacrifice.”<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, when Suarez comes to determine the sense in which the faithful offer, his conclusion is a faithful interpretation of St. Thomas:

In the Mass we can distinguish the substance of the sacrifice from the other prayers and ceremonies; for though the whole of that ministry is performed by the priest as the duly constituted public minister between God and men, nevertheless he performs it in varying ways; for in the parts which have their origin in institu-

<sup>86</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 575.

<sup>86</sup> *De Sacramentis*, Disp. 77, sect. 3.

<sup>87</sup> *Loc. cit.*

tion by Christ Himself, that is, in the substance of the sacrifice, *per se* the priest bears the person of Christ, from whom he has his power, whose person he represents, and whose minister he is; whence, under this aspect, the church is not related to the priest as the principal offerer to the ministerial offerer, but rather as the people to a public minister given them by God.<sup>88</sup>

The reasons that prompt Suarez to distinguish the substance of the sacrifice, in which the priest acts as the minister and in the person of Christ from the other prayers and ceremonies where he more properly acts in the name of the Church, are worth citing at some length, since the problems raised by Suarez should be answered before this paper is brought to a close.

The basic problem is to explain "just how and in virtue of what action or coactivity, the faithful may be called offerers of this sacrifice." And Suarez continues:

For to offer seems to mean nothing else than to effect the oblation, . . . hence, for anyone to be said to offer the sacrifice it is necessary that he concur in some way to effect the oblation; and it does not seem possible to attribute such concurrence to the laity or to non-priests. Therefore, they cannot truly be said to be offerers.<sup>89</sup>

That such concurrence on the part of the laity seems impossible Suarez proceeds to prove from the concept of the Eucharist as an external oblation in which the priest alone posits an external action:

Oblation can be understood in two ways—as an interior offering made through the interior devotion of the faithful, and as an external oblation, in which, properly speaking, the visible sacrifice consists. Consequently, the faithful are at times called offerers merely because of their interior devotion, as Peter Damian intimated, when he asserted that what the priest offers is offered by all, since what he holds in his hands and offers to God, the multitude of the faithful also commend to God by their attention and devotion. But this type of concurrence does not seem sufficient. For visible sacrifice consists in external actions. . . . Hence an action which is merely internal does not suffice.<sup>89a</sup>

Suarez, in a final attempt to justify the role of the whole Church offering, explores the possibility of some external concurrence on the part of the laity, but is met by an even more serious difficulty:

We must, then, postulate some sort of external concurrence; but this is very difficult to explain, since the priest alone is the proper principle of that action, as is evident not only from Hebrews V, 'that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins,'

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, Disp. 78, sect. 2.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, Disp. 77, sect. 3.

<sup>89a</sup> *Loc. cit.*

but also from the fact that the faithful in no way concur in the consecration, the priest performing that action alone. And yet the act of sacrifice consists in the consecration. This difficulty is heightened by the fact that at times we attribute the name offerers to those who posit no action whatever, either internal or external connected with the sacrifice; for the whole Church and all the faithful are said to offer at every single sacrifice, even though it is obvious that not all posit an action, even an interior one, for every single sacrifice.<sup>90</sup>

It is, then, the basic difficulty of reconciling the offering of the whole Church with the strictly liturgical oblation which the priest in orders alone posits, that forces Suarez—and, it would appear, somewhat reluctantly—to distinguish, as did St. Thomas,<sup>91</sup> the substance of the Mass from the accompanying prayers and ceremonies. In the substance of the sacrifice the priest acts more properly as the minister and in the person of Christ. In the accompanying prayers and ceremonies he acts as the minister and in the person of the Church.

#### *The Modern Period*

Thanks to the liturgical revival and to a reawakened interest in the doctrine of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, the subject of the laity's participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice has been opened to renewed study. One result has been the gradual rejection of that strange dichotomy which tended to separate the priest in the central act of Christian worship from the Church whose organ and representative he is. Perhaps no single author has been more responsible for a return to the earlier tradition than Maurice de la Taille, S.J., and a brief summary of his teaching on the relation of the Eucharistic sacrifice to the whole Church offering and offered will help to solve some of the problems that compelled theologians of an earlier period to exclude the laity's participation in the substance of the Mass.

Without mentioning St. Thomas or Suarez as holding views at variance with his own, De la Taille devotes a chapter of his *Mysterium Fidei* to a thesis which underscores the pre-eminent role of the whole Church in the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Under the general heading, "De Ecclesia ut Offerente," the following thesis is proposed: "The Church holds the principal place in offering as does the devotion of the Church in determining the value of the sacrifice."<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>91</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 600.

<sup>92</sup> *Mysterium Fidei*, (Paris, 1921), Elucidatio XXVI, p. 326.



By way of preface, De la Taille notes that he is not excluding Christ, who is pre-eminently the principal offerer, by virtue of the oblation He once made, that has never been withdrawn. Rather, the Church holds the principal place among those who make the sacrifice of Christ their own and offer it anew to God the Father. He also notes that when he shall speak of the priest as the minister of the Church he is not denying that he is also the minister of Christ. However, his ministerial office is different with regard to Christ and the Church. As the minister of Christ, the priest acts as Christ's instrument and with the power that is derived from Christ. As the minister of the Church, he acts as the agent (*procurator*) of the Church who supplicates and offers.<sup>93</sup>

With these points clarified, the author states that the sacrifice of the Mass is "never the private sacrifice of the priest but the public sacrifice of the Church whose legitimate minister he is."<sup>94</sup> Thus far De la Taille has merely paid tribute to what Suarez had called "the common Catholic teaching that the faithful can be offerers in the Holy Sacrifice."<sup>95</sup> However, De la Taille sees much more in that common teaching, and although he does not mention Suarez by name proceeds at once to answer the difficulties which forced Suarez, and it would appear St. Thomas, to deny that the Church "truly" offers the Eucharistic sacrifice.

The basic difficulty as proposed by De la Taille reads as follows:

On the one hand, the priest does not consecrate as the vicar of the Church but as the vicar of God; on the other hand, the consecration and the oblation are not two actions, but one: actually, the consecration is oblation and the oblation consecrative. . . . From these two premises, therefore, it would appear that the following conclusion should be drawn: the priest in no way offers as the vicar of the Church, nor, for that matter, does the Church in any way offer through the ministry of the priest.<sup>96</sup>

He replies to this difficulty by showing that, while the two acts, consecration and oblation, are identified, their formalities remain distinct, so much so that "God could have ordained, if He wished, that the consecration would not be oblation nor the oblation consecra-

<sup>93</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 327.

<sup>94</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 603.

<sup>96</sup> *Myst. Fidei.*, p. 327.

tive."<sup>97</sup> This is clear from the quite distinct relationships that the two aspects of the consecratory oblation imply:

For by consecration, the bread is changed by God into the Body of Christ; by oblation, the Body of Christ is presented to God by men. Hence, the priest consecrates in the name and power of the omnipotent God; he makes the oblation, however, in his own name and in the name of all the faithful. He consecrates as the instrument of God; he offers, however, as the agent (*procurator*) of the Church.<sup>98</sup>

De la Taille feels that the view here proposed is actually the all but unanimous teaching of the *veteres*, and after citing among others the striking passage from St. Peter Damian, associates his teaching with the royal priesthood proclaimed by St. Peter and the Apocalypse.<sup>99</sup>

One difficulty, however, remains. Granted that the Church really offers the Eucharistic sacrifice, how does the Church actually concur in the offering made by the priest? Suarez, it will be recalled, did not believe that an internal concurrence sufficed nor could he see how the Church concurred externally in the priest's oblation.

The following citation from Innocent III affords De la Taille the occasion to establish the principles of a solution to Suarez' difficulty: "Not only do the priests offer, but all the faithful. For that which is brought to completion in a special manner by the priest's ministry is performed universally by the *votum* of the faithful."<sup>100</sup> We shall allow De la Taille to explain the term "votum":

Do not, however, believe that by *votum* is meant merely the internal oblation common to the faithful; for in this case the notion of a strict sacrifice would not be verified even inchoatively. Actually, the oblation is external in two ways. First and foremost, each one of the faithful, by virtue of the public initiation which is made in baptism, is ordained to offer sacrifice through the ministry of the priest; and furthermore, each priest, by reason of his sacerdotal ordination, is deputed to offer sacrifice on the part of all the faithful. Secondly (the oblation is external), by virtue of the liturgical formulas wherein the common character of the oblation is expressed. In this office and function (of the priest) each one of the faithful internally concurs by the aforesaid (*votum*) which is perfected through charity and remains imperfect where faith is uninformed by charity. The desire, or internal consent, however, has no efficacy, unless it also includes of itself a public profession of the Christian religion. . . . It is in accord with such a desire or intention that the faithful are really constituted the offerers of every sacrifice.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327 f.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328.

<sup>99</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>100</sup> Cited by De la Taille, *op. cit.*, p. 329.   <sup>101</sup> *Loc. cit.*

De la Taille, therefore, recognises a clear distinction between what might be called an affective and an effective oblation. The catechumen may concur internally with the oblation made by the priest and thus affectively offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, but his offering does not become effective until he is united externally to the priest's oblation by the bond of baptism and the external profession of faith. And, if we may add a gloss of our own, the teaching of De la Taille is actually a commentary on the opening words of the Canon of the Mass where the priest offers "together with thy servant, N., our Pope, and N., our Bishop, and all who are orthodox in belief and profess the Catholic and apostolic faith."

While this external concurrence through baptism and the profession of the same faith is necessary for one to be constituted an offerer of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the strict sense, it is not the sole element. A sacrifice is after all a sign or symbol of the oblation of oneself. Hence, to the oblation which is effective must be united an oblation which is affective. This truth, which is so rich in ascetical value for both priest and laity, is developed by De la Taille to prove the second member of his thesis: the devotion of the Church holds the principal place in determining the value of the Mass. It is also used by De la Taille, and it will be advanced by us, as another proof that the whole Church actually offers the substance of the sacrifice.

Distinguishing the *res et sacramentum*, which in the Eucharist is the Body of Christ, from the *res tantum*, which is Christ's Mystical Body, De la Taille draws the following argument, which is reminiscent of the earlier synthesis of St. Augustine:

Every visible sacrifice is the portrayal of an invisible sacrifice. Thus the oblation of the Body of Christ is the sign of that invisible oblation of the members of Christ who are still resident on earth, namely the Church militant . . . For just as the ecclesiastical body is the reality (*res*) signified by the Eucharist as a sacrament, so the oblation of this same body is the reality signified by the Eucharist as a sacrifice. Hence it belongs to the whole Church to offer the whole Church. Therefore, there will be no sacrifice unless it is made in the name of and on the part of the whole Church.<sup>102</sup>

#### *Two Recent Encyclicals*

The most authoritative confirmation of De la Taille's general synthesis on the role of the whole Church in the offering of the Mass is

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329 f.

to be found in the Encyclicals *Miserentissimus Redemptor* of Pius XI and *Mystici Corporis* of Pius XII. Actually, however, it is the voice of the earliest tradition that is echoed in the teaching of the two pontiffs.

We have seen that Pius XI did not hesitate to relate the apostolic function of the laity to the royal priesthood proclaimed by St. Peter.<sup>103</sup> In the Encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor* it is the sacrificial function of that same priesthood that is stressed. True, the emphasis is on the Christian's immolation and oblation of himself, but that oblation is to be made one with the sacrifice of the Mass. In fact, the subjective oblation is so intimately related with the objective offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice that the sanctity of the latter is regarded as dependent on the fervor and devotion of the former.

Wherefore, with this most august sacrifice of the Eucharist the ministers and the rest of the faithful ought to unite the immolation of themselves, that they may present themselves 'as living victims, holy and pleasing to the Lord.' For in all truth, as St. Cyprian does not hesitate to assert, 'the Lord's sacrifice is not celebrated with fitting holiness (*legitima sanctitate*) unless our sacrifice and oblation correspond to His passion.'<sup>104</sup>

The layman's obligation of uniting himself with Christ as Victim in the sacrifice of the Mass is derived from the priesthood of Christ in which the layman, as well as the priest, is privileged to share. In a striking parallel between the ministerial priesthood and the lay priesthood this truth is forcibly brought home:

Those whom our High Priest uses as His ministers to offer to God a clean oblation in every place from the rising of the sun even to the going down, are indeed partakers of that sacred priesthood in that office of offering satisfaction and sacrifice. But not only they: the whole body of Christians, rightly called by the Prince of the Apostles 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,' must offer sacrifice for sin both for themselves and for the whole human race, much in the same way as every priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that pertain to God.<sup>105</sup>

There is, then, a close analogy between the ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of the whole Christian people. Christians are separated from the rest of mankind, just as the ordained priest is

<sup>103</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 593 f.

<sup>104</sup> *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, AAS, XX (1928), 171.

<sup>105</sup> *Loc. cit.*

separated from the faithful. Both enjoy a priestly separation and both are privileged to exercise a priestly function that is sacrificial. The analogy will be extrinsic and the priesthood of the laity a metaphor if the separation does not imply a real consecration and if the sacrifice offered by Christians is something other than the sacrifice of the Mass. We have already seen that the layman is separated from the rest of mankind and consecrated in a special manner to liturgical worship by the sacrament of baptism and that his priestly dignity is ontologically founded in the characters of baptism and confirmation.<sup>106</sup>

On the further question, whether or not the layman actually offers the sacrifice of the Mass, Pius XI does not commit himself.<sup>107</sup> True, the layman is exhorted to unite himself with Christ as Victim in the Eucharistic sacrifice; what is more, the value of the Mass is made dependent upon the fervor and devotion of this personal self-oblation. But Pius XI does not expressly state that the layman actually offers the Eucharist. However, what is left unsaid by Pius XI is expressed with clarity and eloquence by Pius XII in the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*; and in citing the passage we shall bring our historical survey to a close.

Through the Eucharistic sacrifice Christ our Lord wished to give special evidence to the faithful of our union among ourselves and with our divine Head, marvellous as it is beyond all praise. For here the sacred ministers act in the person not only of our Savior but of the whole Mystical Body and of everyone of the faithful. In this act of sacrifice through the hands of the priest, whose word alone has brought the Immaculate Lamb to be present on the altar, the faithful themselves with one desire and one prayer offer It to the Eternal Father—the most acceptable Victim of praise and propitiation for the Church's universal needs.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 581 f.

<sup>107</sup> Abbé Lionel Audet ascribes to the present Encyclical this text: "Le devoir de la réparation s'impose . . . parce que tous les fidèles sont *prêtres* en Jésus-Christ et avec lui, donc aussi hosties comme lui; et le sacrifice de la Messe qui continue et applique le sacrifice du Calvaire doit être leur sacrifice, non seulement en ce sens qu'ils en profitent et qu'ils l'offrent, mais aussi en ce sens qu'ils y sont eux-mêmes victimes et matières d'oblation" (*Notre participation au sacerdoce du Christ*, p. 55). The citation, while faithful to the ideas expressed by Pius XI, is not to be found in the Encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, although it is quite likely that it is taken from some other of the Pope's writings.

<sup>108</sup> *Mystici Corporis*, AAS, XXXV (1943), 232-33.

*Conclusion*

Centuries before the coming of Christ, God promised through the prophet Isaias a new covenant which would be absolute and everlasting, and fulfilled in a people who would be called "priests of the Lord" and "ministers of our God." The fulfillment of that promise was first proclaimed by St. Peter and realised in those who, through Christ, had become "a chosen generation, a holy nation, a royal priesthood." The Fathers of the Church, commenting on the text of fulfillment, found the type of this new priesthood not in the individual Israelite nor in the Jews as a people, but in the hierarchical priesthood of Aaron. Aaron's anointing, like the anointing of all kings and priests in the Old Law, was the type and the figure of the Christian's anointing by the Holy Spirit in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. And the teaching of the Fathers prepared the way for the teaching of St. Thomas and of theologians generally that the character of baptism and confirmation, as well as that of orders, are varied participations in the priestly character of Christ, from whom all priesthood on earth, whether hierarchical or lay, is ultimately derived.

Thus, if we restrict ourselves to the layman's priestly dignity, we must affirm that it is as real as the priesthood of Christ in which he shares, and as real as the character which is its ontological foundation. In a very real sense, the layman is separated from other men and consecrated to the service of God. The lay-priesthood is not a metaphor. However, the term "priesthood," as applied to the laity, is analogous with a twofold analogy. It is analogous to the priesthood of Christ, the primary analogue, in whose priesthood the layman shares, and it is analogous to the hierarchical priesthood, the secondary analogue, on whose priesthood the layman's priesthood depends. This latter refinement is clear from a consideration of the layman's priestly function.

The function of a priest is twofold: to communicate to men God's truth and God's life, and to offer to God man's gift through sacrifice. In this twofold mediation, manward and Godward, the layman has an active part. Through the apostolate of Catholic Action, he will proclaim by word and example the perfections of Him who has called

him out of darkness into His marvellous light, and thus acquit himself of his office as mediator of God's truth. However, the truth that he is privileged to bring to men is not a revelation made personally to him; rather it is the truth that has been entrusted by Christ to His Apostles and their successors in the magisterium. Hence, his apostolate will be subject to the directives of the hierarchy. Secondly, by prayer and good works, the layman will dispose others for the reception of God's life, and in two sacraments he will be privileged to become the very channel of that life to others. However, since the distribution of God's grace bears an intimate relation to the sacrifice of Calvary continued in the sacrifice of the Mass, it is in the Mass that we find the layman's priestly function fully realised; just as in that same function of offering sacrifice, we see his essential dependence not only on Christ but on the priest in orders. For while it is true that each one of the faithful truly offers the Mass, yet without the duly ordained priest the priesthood of the faithful would be meaningless; for it is the priest alone who consecrates. To cite the words of Pius XII, it is "his word alone that has brought the Immaculate Lamb to be present on the altar." And even in the oblation of the Victim, which belongs to the whole Church, it is only the priest in orders who immediately posits the liturgical act. In the words of the same Pontiff, the faithful offer "through the hands of the priest."

Nevertheless, though mediate and dependent upon the priesthood of orders, the layman's priestly dignity and function are real, and in him is verified the proper concept of priesthood. Throughout this paper we have purposely avoided defining the term priesthood. We felt that such a definition should be arrived at inductively rather than formulated as a starting point for discussion. In conformity, however, with what we have seen of the reality of the layman's dignity and function, we would suggest that the formal concept of priesthood should be wide enough to include all who actually share in the priesthood of Christ. Restricting ourselves, then, to the concept of priesthood in the present economy, and stressing its essential element, which is to offer sacrifice, we would say that a priest is one who has been consecrated by God to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice. This definition will be verified principally of Christ, who is the Priest par excellence of our sacrifice; secondarily of the priest in orders, who, through the

power of consecration alone makes possible that sacrifice; and thirdly of the lay priest, who, through the anointing of baptism and the profession of the Catholic faith, concurs, although mediately, in its external oblation.

Now when we say that the formal or proper concept of priesthood is verified in the layman, it does not follow that it will be proper at all times to refer to the layman as priest without qualification. For here there is a question of usage and propriety. In the early Church the Apostles and the immediate successors of the Apostles were apparently not called priests,<sup>109</sup> even though they above all others continued in all its fulness the priestly ministry of Christ. Again, when the term "priest" was applied to the hierarchy it was reserved for a time to the bishop, although the simple presbyter actually celebrated the Eucharist and administered the sacrament of penance—functions which are surely sacerdotal. Today, however, and at least from the time of St. Augustine, only the duly ordained are "properly called priests in the Church of God."<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, the layman should be made conscious at all times of his priestly dignity, and where the context and propriety warrant, we should rejoice to see verified of him the prophecy made by Isaias: "But you shall be called the priests of the Lord" (Isai. 61:6).

<sup>109</sup> Cf. J. A. Jungmann, S. J., *Liturgical Worship* (Pustet, 1941), p. 32.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 583.