

TRADITION VERSUS THE IDEA OF THE CATHOLIC MASS AS SACRIFICE

The Mass is the Roman Catholic rite in which bread and wine are believed to be turned into the body and blood of Jesus Christ on the altar by the priest. Jesus during his last supper said over bread, "Take and eat. This is my body given up for you." And over wine, "Take and drink. This is my blood shed for the pardon of sins. Do this in memory of me." The priest re-enacts this during Mass thus causing the alleged transformation of bread and wine into Jesus who is presumed to be God in human flesh.

The Mass however is considered to be principally a sacrifice. The death of Jesus for sinners so that they might be forgiven is supposedly made present at Mass when the bread first and then the wine are changed. It is made present for the priest and the congregation to offer it to God. Christians are paying for their salvation with the blood of Jesus. They are paying for it by his murder and agony. It is striking how fanatical and extreme and barbaric and evil this doctrine is.

The doctrine really comes from tradition rather than the Bible.

The Jewish leaders followed both tradition and the Old Testament scriptures. The Catholic Mass comes from Catholic tradition for there is no evidence that priests have the power to offer the sacrifice of the Mass from the Bible. In Matthew 23:2,3 Jesus tells the people to obey the scribes and the Pharisees and all they teach but not to copy them. Jesus then here was encouraging their tradition as well for that was a part of their religious practice and they were strict about it. But in Matthew 15 he said that they taught the ideas of men as doctrines from God and if they contradict the word of God with their tradition they prefer their tradition instead and condemned this as evil. How can these two assertions be made to fit together?

Two answers are possible.

Jesus meant that you obey the scribes and Pharisees even when they teach false doctrine for it is safer to listen to them than not to for now and this is expediency and not an indication that tradition is good or safe.

Jesus meant that you obey the scribes and the Pharisees but not their traditions.

Neither answer allows us to make tradition equal to the Bible.

The scribes and Pharisees were only adhering to traditions they didn't make themselves. There was every reason why they thought the traditions must be the word of God too for just because something is tradition doesn't mean its wrong. Then the Catholic can't argue, "When Jesus condemned tradition he condemned them for making things up as they went along not tradition like our Catholic tradition that has been handed down from previous generations for the Church can't be blamed for making them up now even if it has done."

Most of the traditions were not inventions but reasoned from the Old Testament. Jesus was not condemning the Jewish traditions because he thought they were wrong. They couldn't have been all wrong. What he was against was making human reasoning and interpretation equal to the authority of the Old Testament scriptures. The Roman Catholic Church certainly teaches that its own tradition is equal to the Bible, Old and New Testaments both. And it claims that much of this tradition is just what was practiced from the start of the Church and was not reasoned or developed from embryonic and undeveloped doctrines in the Bible. If Jesus condemned traditions created as deductions from scripture how much more would he condemn traditions from the constant practice of the Church? And the Church knows fine well that that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin and her assumption into Heaven and prayers to saints to name a few cannot even be traced to the first few generations after the apostles never mind the apostles themselves even though the Church claims that God stopped revealing his word with the death of the last apostle. The Church doesn't give new revelations but claims it only clarifies existing revelation.

Some say it was different for the Catholic Church to have and follow tradition and declare it equal to the Bible for unlike the Jews Catholicism is blessed with infallibility and Christ promised to look after his Church forever. But Catholicism doesn't use its infallibility much. It was only used three times in the twentieth century when Pius XI declared contraception wrong, Pius XII said that Mary was assumed into Heaven and John Paul II declared that the Church had no authority to ordain women. Most Catholic tradition is still out there circulating around there circulating around without the full stamp of infallibility.

The prime source of Tradition, St Aurelius Augustine, said the Eucharist was a sacrifice but he never mentioned it being the

sacrifice of the cross. His silence is loud. "28. 'While we consider it no longer a duty to offer sacrifices, we recognise sacrifices as part of the mysteries of Revelation, by which the things prophesied were foreshadowed. For they were our examples, and in many and various ways they pointed to the one sacrifice which we now commemorate. Now that this sacrifice has been revealed, and has been offered in due time, sacrifice is no longer binding as an act of worship, while it retains its symbolic authority. . . Before the coming of Christ, the flesh and blood of this sacrifice were fore-shadowed in the animals slain; in the passion of Christ the types were fulfilled by the true sacrifice; after the ascension of Christ, this sacrifice is commemorated in the sacrament.' Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. IV, St. Augustin: *The Writings Against the Manicheans and Against the Donatists, Reply to Faustus the Manichean* 6.5, 20.21 (New York: Longmans, Green, 1909), pp. 169, 262.

29. 'For, as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ. This is the sacrifice of Christians: we being many, are one body in Christ. And this also is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, known to the faithful, in which she teaches that she herself is offered in the offering she makes to God. . . . For we ourselves, who are His own city, are His most noble and worthy sacrifice, and it is this mystery we celebrate in our sacrifices, which are well known to the faithful. . . . For through the prophets the oracles of God declared that the sacrifices which the Jews offered as a shadow of that which was to be would cease, and that the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun, would offer one sacrifice.' Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. II, p. 230-31. St. Augustin: *The City of God and On Christian Doctrine, The City of God* Book 10, ch. 6; Book 19, ch. 23 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), pp. 184, 418.