

THE ONE FRUIT OR THE MANY FRUITS OF THE MASS

It would be difficult to point out an area of theology which has received less satisfactory treatment since the thirteenth century and which has progressed more slowly even in modern times than that concerned with the theology of the Mass. While notable advances have been made in this century, beginning with the work of O. Casel, O.S.B., M. de la Taille, S.J., L. Billot, S.J. and A. Vonier, O.S.B., still much remains to be done in order to establish a more general consensus on a number of important issues.

In this paper we are concerned with the topic of the value and fruits of the sacrifice of the Mass which is of considerable moment from a practical standpoint. It has, as is evident, far reaching consequences with respect to the whole system of Mass stipends.

Our study will be divided into two parts. First of all an outline of the history of theological opinion regarding the value and fruits of the Mass will be presented.¹ This will enable us to sift out what points have been commonly accepted and why theologians have reached agreement on them. Secondly we will consider briefly the radically different approach of K. Rahner, S.J.² and attempt to offer an appraisal of it.

I

1. *Eighth to the Thirteenth Century*

The history of theological opinion concerning the value and fruits of the Mass is intimately associated with the history of the system of Mass stipends. It was precisely the practice of giving a gift in advance to obligate a priest to celebrate Mass exclusively for the intention of the donor which occasioned theological reflection on

¹ For the critical period from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, our survey is dependent, in great measure, on the study of E. Iserloh, "Der Wert der Messe in der Diskussion der Theologen vom Mittelalter bis zum 16. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 83 (1961) 44-79.

² "Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 71 (1949) 257-317.

this aspect of the Mass at a time when, otherwise, the theology of the Mass was scarcely treated even in tracts on the Eucharist.

It would be hazardous to attempt to state exactly when the Mass stipend, properly so-called, became a normal part of the daily life of the Church.³ The custom of giving alms in order to receive a special remembrance in a private Mass must have been fairly well known and yet not too common in the middle of the eighth century. The *Regula Canonicorum* of St. Chrodegang, Bishop of Metz (743-766), by approving the practice, indicates that it was in existence for some time and yet novel enough to require ecclesiastical approbation. In the first version of the *Regula* it is stated that a priest can accept alms for his Mass and should do what was asked of him.⁴ The gift was understood as a free will offering given to the priest with the request that he remember the special intention of the donor. But there is no indication in this source that the priest could not accept more than one gift with a view to remembering other special intentions in the same Mass.

However, in the drastic revision of the *Regula* which took place about A.D. 900, it is determined further that the priest should not take too many offerings. He should rather turn them over to the society of priests in order that the intentions of the offerers might be more quickly and easily fulfilled.⁵ The fact that the priest could give the offerings to others allows us to conclude that the one who ordered the Mass was probably not present at the Mass.⁶ But also this addition to chapter 43 seems to indicate that the priest is presumed to offer the Mass exclusively for the benefit of the donor of the gift.

In any case, from all the evidence at hand, it seems quite likely

³ As yet no satisfactory history of the development of Mass stipends has been written. The best available for documentary material is: K. J. Merk, *Abriss einer liturgiegeschichtlichen Darstellung des Messstipendium* (Stuttgart, 1928). cf. J. A. Jungmann, S. J., *The Mass of the Roman Rite 2* (New York 1955) 24, n. 132.

⁴ C. 32 (PL 89, 1116); c. 43 (PL 89, 1076).

⁵ B. Pelt, *La Règle de saint Chrodegang. Études sur la Cathédrale de Metz 4: La Liturgie 1* (Metz, 1937) 7. Cf. O. Nussbaum, *Kloster, Priestermonch und Privatmesse. Theophaneia: Beiträge zur Religions- und Kirchengeschichte des Altertums* (Bonn, 1961) 169, n. 83.

⁶ Nussbaum, *ibid.*

that during the tenth and eleventh centuries the practice of offering private Mass exclusively for the benefit of a single donor became a well established custom. In connection with this practice two lines of thought, which bear on our topic, can be traced from the ninth to the thirteenth century.

During this period there appears to have been a widely held view that one receives more blessings from the Mass for his intention if the number of special remembrances is limited. No theological justification is offered for this opinion and it is worthy of note that there is no insistence either on the part of theologians or ecclesiastical authorities on an obligation of the priest to offer exclusively for the donor of a gift. Rather, as we shall see, just the opposite is true.

Paralleling this development, there was a growing conviction that the celebration of the Mass, as such, for the intention of the donor, is what matters. This prompted a spirit of indifference regarding the importance of the devout assistance of the donor at the Mass he had requested. As the function of devotion in calling forth the blessings of the Mass was placed in the background, more and more the Mass began to be looked on as a good work which assures blessings for the intention of the founder independently of his devotion and that of the priest. Of decisive importance was the intention of the priest in remembering the request of the donor of the alms.

At the turn of the thirteenth century the full implications of this popular conviction were formulated. From this time forward we find statements which indicate belief that the celebration of the Mass, as such, brings blessings to men and that certain fruits of the Mass, which are applied by the priest's intention, are somehow limited both extensively and intensively, and allotted to each in proportion to the number for whom the Mass is especially offered.

In the same era, from the ninth to the thirteenth century, we can also uncover a definite reaction against the tendency to make the Mass a private affair and the clear affirmation that the Mass, as sacrifice of Christ, is of infinite value and, therefore, able to fulfill the special requests of all. With this view is involved the persuasion, more implicit than explicit, that the blessings derived from the Mass are limited only by the devotion of the offerers and the capacity of

those for whom the Mass is offered. However, advocates of this position make no formal distinction between blessings which arise from the Mass as such (*ex opere operato*) and from the devotion of the offerers (*ex opere operantis*). Hence it remains uncertain whether the blessings which come from the Mass are conceived by them as being measured exclusively by the devotion of the offerers.

The Roman Synod of 853, held under Pope Leo IV, legislated against the practice of priests accepting the offerings of a few and refusing those of others. This legislation indicates the existence of a popular idea that one profits more if fewer offerers are involved in the Mass. The Synod reasons that the omnipotent and merciful Redeemer will receive the offerings of all and break the bonds of sin everywhere.⁷ Likewise Pope Alexander II (d.1072) criticizes the practice of multiplying Masses for money or flattery. He says that one Mass suffices since Christ died and redeemed the whole world. While the Pope does not forbid the practice of priests taking alms for the celebration of Mass for the intention of a donor, he does criticize a practice which gives the impression that one Mass is not sufficient to fulfill the requests of a number of donors; or, to put it another way, he rejects the practice which gives the impression that one gains more fruit if the Mass is exclusively directed to his intention.⁸ Finally, Peter Damien (d.1073) alludes to the practice of offering Mass exclusively for one person. He ridicules this custom which gives the impression that Christ, who died for the salvation of the world, is now being offered exclusively for the benefit of an individual and the financial profit of a priest.⁹

From these three sources, as well as the implications of the still existing offertory processions, we can draw the conclusion that between the ninth and the eleventh centuries there was a strong conviction among churchmen that the Mass is able to embrace the intentions of all without prejudice to anyone. None of these sources reject the practice of offering gifts for special intentions at Mass, whether offered privately or publicly. However, they do criticize abuses as-

⁷ Cn. 17 (Mansi 14, 1005).

⁸ *Decretum Gratiani*, c. 53, D. 1. de cons.; ed. A. Friedberg (Leipsig, 1879) 1308.

⁹ *Opusc.* 26, *Contra inscitiam et incuriam clericorum*, c. 2 (PL 145, 501).

sociated with the practice: the multiplication of Masses and the celebration of Masses by the priest in order to gain money or popularity. They also reject the underlying premise of the practice of offering Mass exclusively for an individual donor, namely, that the fruits of the Mass are somehow limited before application and, consequently, one receives more benefit if the Mass is directed solely to his intention.

These sources do not make clear, as we have said, whether special fruits arise from the Mass as such (*ex opere operato*), independently of the devotion of the earthly church, and which can be applied by the priest. All we can say with certainty is that they envision no problem in the multiplicity of special intentions because Christ will honor them all. It is true that Pope Alexander II, in the document to which we have referred, stresses the importance of celebrating worthily and so highlights the importance of the devotion of the priest in calling forth the fruits of the Mass. Odo, Abbot of Cluny (d. 942), touches on this topic when, after criticizing the multiplication of Masses, he remarks that devotion is bound to infrequency, not frequency of celebration.¹⁰ He gives the impression that, in his mind, the actual fruits of the Mass derive exclusively from the devotion of the offerers.

Walafrid Strabo (d. 845) has a good deal to say about the function of devotion of the offerers at Mass. His observations occur in the course of a discussion concerning those who attend Mass only to take part in the offertory procession and then leave immediately afterwards. He says that such people attend more to the number of offerings than to the power of the sacrament. He adds that it is more reasonable to offer at the Mass which one attends so that one may be able to present with the gift, the devotion required for the reception of the gift. He notes the error of some who think that they are not able to make a full remembrance for those for whom they offer unless they give individual gifts, or think that they cannot immolate at the same time for the living and the dead. This opinion is judged erroneous since Christ died for all and there is one bread and blood which is offered by the universal church. Strabo agrees

¹⁰ *Collationum libri tres*, 2, n. 28 (PL 133, 572).

that one can offer for individuals by way of individual gifts in order to foster devotion but not for the reason that the eucharist is not a universal remedy.¹¹ A little later he goes on to say that through the Mass, prayer is made for those especially and *quasi nominatim* who offer and communicate. But others remaining there and joining in the faith and devotion of these participants also receive benefits from the Mass.¹²

These statements are typical of the writers of this period. The importance of devotion in calling forth the fruits of the Mass is affirmed. But the further question is not raised: whether the Mass, simply because it is celebrated, produces fruits which can be applied by the priest to a special intention and which is limited only by the subjective dispositions of the recipients.

At the outset of the twelfth century there occurs one important document which sheds some light on the general line of thought we have been pursuing. It is the canon *Non mediocriter*. This canon, as it appears in the collection of canons entitled *Polycarpus*, stresses the importance of prayer made with devotion.¹³ The assertion is made that the saying of five psalms piously is better than reciting the whole psalter with anxiety of heart. Then this remark is added: "*Cum igitur pro centum animabus psalmus vel missa dicitur, nihil minus, quam si pro uno quolibet ipsorum diceretur, accipitur.*"¹⁴

This somewhat ambiguous statement, which does not appear in the *Regula monachorum ex scriptis Hieronymi collecta*¹⁵ whence the canon originates, makes no clear distinction between prayers and Masses. It merely states that the effect does not come from the number of prayers or Masses and that the correct attitude should not be impaired by a multitude of prayers and Masses. Still the pericope suggests that the value of the Mass is not limited in itself and that the measure of blessings received from the celebration of the liturgy depends on the devotion of the offerers and those for whom the

¹¹ *De rebus ecclesiasticis*, c. 22 (PL 114, 948).

¹² *Ibid.* (PL 114, 951).

¹³ This work underwent two editions, the first between 1104-1106, and the second about 1120, or at the latest 1123. Cf. Iserloh, *op. cit.*, 46, n. 6.

¹⁴ *Decretum Gratiani*, c. 24, D. 5, de cons.; ed. Friedberg I, 1418.

¹⁵ C. 14, *De contemplatione, oratione et lectione* (PL 30, 357).

sacrifice is offered. Hence one Mass could bring as much fruit to each if offered for many, as it brings to one person if offered for him alone.

This viewpoint received support throughout the twelfth century. For while the custom grew more widespread of giving gifts beforehand for the celebration of Mass,¹⁶ this did not necessarily prejudice the rights of others to make offerings at the same Mass. The latter could take part in the offertory processions or give private gifts before Mass in order to secure a special remembrance at the same Mass.¹⁷

2. Thirteenth Century

In this century a definite change takes place in the attitude of theologians and ecclesiastical legislation on the questions we have been discussing. We do not find any significant opposition against the tendency to make the Mass a private affair. The endeavor to obtain certain rights over the graces expected from the Mass by means of a gift given to the celebrant beforehand was approved by ecclesiastical authorities everywhere. Moreover theologians provide an explanation of the implications of this practice. By the second half of the thirteenth century, it is generally taught that there is a grace, limited extensively and intensively, derived from the Mass as such (*ex opere operato*) and which the priest applies by his intention to a particular person or persons and which is shared according to the capacity of the recipients.

The giving of a gift to the priest, therefore, is not considered to serve the function of the offertory processions of the early Church: to symbolize the co-offering of the faithful with the priest at Mass. Rather it is given to obtain certain rights over the fruits of the Mass. To avoid the charge of simony, the donation was explained as a contribution to the support of the priest, or as an alms, or as a reward for the time and effort of the priest. St. Thomas explains the donation

¹⁶ This custom has not yet won general approval. The Council of York (1195) prohibits a priest from entering into a contract for the celebration of Masses at an established price. He is advised, rather, to take what is offered at the Mass (Decr. 3 [Mansi 22, 653]).

¹⁷ Jungmann, *op. cit.*, 24.

as a contribution to the livelihood of the priest.¹⁸ This opinion became quite popular and led to the designation of the gift as *stipendium* (from wages of a soldier) which alluded to the justification of the gift as a contribution to the support of the priest. John Duns Scotus also insists that the priest cannot accept money as payment for a Mass. At one point he argues that the priest sells the labor and others buy it because it is fitting that one receive a livelihood from his labor.¹⁹ However in *Quaestio* 20 of the *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* the stipend is interpreted in the context of gratuitous donations. Scotus says that a priest can be held to say Mass from a free promise or from a strict obligation. In the latter case the obligation does not come from a legal convention or spiritual exchange. This would be simoniacal. Nor does the priest exchange money for physical labor. Rather the person gives the alms with the petition of prayer and the priest who receives it is obligated to fulfill the petition of the donor.²⁰

The connection between the stipend and the grace expected was expressed with the terms *comparare Missam* or *comparatio Missae*.²¹ In the Latin of the day *comparatio* meant cost and so the concept of the "cost of a Mass" could and did arise. But the Church consistently defended herself against the charge that she allowed the "buying of Masses." Magister Konrad Hager, for example, was made to swear before the bishop of Würzburg, in A.D. 1342, that "*comparatio Missae ex sui natura est oblatio*" and not "*emptio Missae*."²²

The Church was able to escape the charge of simony with the explanations of theologians which, however unsatisfactory,²³ were to

¹⁸ *S.T.* II,II, q. 100, a. 2 ad 2; IV *Sent.* d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 3, sol.1; ed. Parma 1858, 7, 913.

¹⁹ IV *Sent.* d. 5, q. 2, n. 7; *Opera omnia* 16 (Paris, 1894) 517.

²⁰ *Opera omnia* 26 (Paris, 1895) 324.

²¹ Merk, *op. cit.*, for documentation since the thirteenth century. Cf. Jungmann, *op. cit.*, 24-25, n. 34.

²² Merk, *ibid.*, 98ff; Jungmann, *ibid.*

²³ Cf. the following studies for criticism of the traditional justification of Mass stipends: K. Mörsdorf, "Erwägungen zum Begriff und zur Rechtfertigung des Messstipendiums," *Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Festschrift für M. Schmaus* (Munich, 1957) 103-122; J.A. Jungmann, "Mass Intentions and Mass Stipends," *Unto the Altar: The Practice of Catholic Worship*, ed. A. Kirchengaessner (New York, 1963) 23-31. Also there are some useful remarks

secure the continuation of the system of Mass stipends and the common acceptance of what had come to be the governing doctrinal opinion behind that system: the assumption that there are fruits derived from the Mass *ex opere operato* which are limited both intensively and extensively and applied by the priest to a particular person.

The origin of this common theological opinion is not difficult to explain. To trace its development we must go back to the end of the twelfth century, the period when theologians began to reflect on the significance of the practice of securing special consideration in the Mass through a gift. About this time these questions began to arise:

(1) What does it mean to secure a special inclusion in a Mass through a gift?

(2) Can a priest, if he accepts a gift to offer for the intention of one, also include the requests of others in the same Mass?

(3) Does one receive less fruit because the Mass is offered for the special intention of another as well?

The actual discussion of these questions takes place in the context of a commentary on the canon *Non mediocriter*, attributed to St. Jerome, as it appears in the *Decretum Gratiani*²⁴ and in the context of the question proposed by Peter Lombard in IV Sent. d. 45, c. 4.

We have already discussed the contents of the canon *Non mediocriter* which serves as the starting point for the discussion of the value and fruits of the Mass in the writings of the canonists from Huguccio (d.1210) onward. In IV Sent. d. 45, c. 4, P. Lombard asks the question: Whether the soul of a poor man is helped by the common suffrages and the additional prayers and alms offered for him. He gives no definitive solution but allows two opinions: (1) The rich man is helped no more than the poor man for whom only the common suffrages are made; (2) The rich man is released more quickly from suffering but not more fully.

While P. Lombard does not discuss the Mass in particular, the commentators on the *Sentences* and the authors of the *Summae*

on this topic in M. Kaiser, "Manifestation des Öffentlich-Rechtlichen Characters der Eucharistie in der Applicatio pro Populo," *Pro Mundi Vita. Festschrift zum Eucharistischen Weltkongress 1960* (Munich, 1960) 238-255.

²⁴ C. 24, D. 5, de cons.; ed. Friedberg I, 1418.

Theologiae of the following two centuries treat of the value and fruits of the Mass in this context. Because of the context of the discussion, *De novissimis*, it is not surprising that the theology of the Mass is not introduced to any significant extent.

Turning to the commentaries of the canonists on the canon *Non mediocriter*, we find, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, a concern to interpret it in such a way that it does not run counter to the implications of the Mass stipend properly so-called.²⁵ Huguccio, in his *Summa*, the most important work of the School of Bologna, rejects the interpretation which would have the canon say that one Mass offered for each individual could have the same effect as one Mass offered for 100. He prefers to interpret the canon as teaching that a Mass offered for 100 undesignated persons has the same effect (*ex opere operato*) for each individual as if the 100 persons were especially named.²⁶ The *Glossa ordinaria* (1215) gives three interpretations of the canon. One simply affirms the text and says it is so because the Holy Spirit is not bestowed in parts. The second explanation states that the canon refers to the celebrant. For him the Mass has the same value whether offered for one or 100. The third interpretation sees the question much like Huguccio: One Mass offered for 100 with devotion is of the same value (*ex opere operato*) as when one attempts with anxiety to think of each individual.²⁷

These references will serve to indicate the trend in canonical thinking at the beginning of the thirteenth century. No attempt is made to solve the problem of the meaning of *Non mediocriter* from a theology of the Mass. The practice of the Church in the matter of Mass stipends is the decisive factor in settling the interpretation.

In the discussion of the value and fruits of the Mass undertaken by theologians in the thirteenth century, we find the same two lines of thought that existed from the ninth to the thirteenth century. Only now the formulation becomes more explicit in the context of a commentary on IV Sent. d. 45, c. 4 and *Non mediocriter*.

The most influential defender of the less popular viewpoint is

²⁵ Iserloh, *op. cit.*, 48-50.

²⁶ Vat. lat. 2280 fol. 370ra; cf. Iserloh, *op. cit.*, 49.

²⁷ *Decretum Gratiani . . . una cum glossis*; ed. Venice 1584, c. 124 D.5, col. 2673.

Praepositinus of Cremona (d.1210). In his *Summa Theologiae*, under the theme *De novissimis*, he proposes the question of P. Lombard to which we have referred.²⁸ Having presented the two solutions of P. Lombard, he adds a third, the source of which is not known,²⁹ but which he clearly favors and which afterwards is cited by theologians as his own. This opinion holds that the special prayer made for the rich man helps the poor man also and sometimes more, just as a candle gives illumination according to the power of the eye to use it. Praepositinus adds that this is probably what St. Jerome had in mind in the statement concerning the Mass found in *Non mediocriter*.

While Praepositinus does not consider the value of the Mass itself, as distinguished from prayer and other good works, he does seem to recognize it as a salvific activity which stands on its own, just as the lighted candle. It can be referred to a definite person. But this does not limit the extent of its fruitfulness. Rather it reaches out to all the special and common sharers and extends blessings according to the capacity of each. It is extensively infinite in its effects and limited only by the capacity of the recipients.

This view of the efficacy of the Mass was accepted by Guido of Orcelles (d. 1225/33) in his *Summa de sacramentis* which shows dependence on Praepositinus. According to him, the *sacramentum altaris*, which is the true light of the world, helps the poor man of the same merit as much as the rich man for whom it was especially offered. He defends this view with the statement that the sacraments are a general remedy and thus efficacious for the whole world.³⁰ However the opinion of Praepositinus was commonly rejected both in the matter of suffrages in general and the Mass in particular.³¹

²⁸ D. E. Pilarczyk, *Praepositini Cancellarii De Sacramentis et De Novissimis* [*Summae Theologiae Pars Quarta*]. *Collegio Urbanae Textus et Documenta*, n. 7 (Rome, 1964) 117-119. Cf. same author and title, *Euntes Docete* 18 (1965) 237-238; A. M. Landgraf, *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik* 4, 2 (Regensburg, 1956) 327-328.

²⁹ Pilarczyk, *op. cit.*, *Euntes Docete*, 238.

³⁰ Landgraf, *op. cit.*, 328-329.

³¹ Many authors do not clearly distinguish between the Mass and other prayers and good works. They distinguish between *suffragia specialia* and *generalia* and commonly hold that the poor man is helped only by the *suffragia generalia*. Cf. Landgraf, *Ibid.*, 321-350.

The author of the *Commentary on the Sentences* found in *Cod. Paris. Nat. lat.* 16407 takes issue with the third solution of Praepositinus. He argues that suffrages are regulated by the charity and intention of the offerers. Since the offerers possess greater charity for the soul for whom they offer, the suffrages help that soul more. Concerning St. Jerome's statement on the Mass in *Non mediocriter*, the author has this to say: The efficacy of the offering of the Mass depends on the charity and devotion of the celebrant and the one who arranges for the Mass. Since the charity will be greater when directed to one, it will help one more than 100. Since the devotion has a satisfactory value, it will serve as recompense for the punishment due to one more completely when it is applied to that individual exclusively.³²

In this work the value of the Mass is limited by reason of the devotion of the offerers and thus the fruits of the Mass are limited and applied by the intention of the offerers to be shared according to the number of those for whom the Mass is offered. Both St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure also find difficulty with the opinion of Praepositinus. However they solve the question differently from the author of *Cod.* 16407.

St. Thomas (d.1274) discusses suffrages in detail in IV Sent. d. 45, q. 2, a. 4 (*Supplementum* q. 71, a. 12). Here he states that, by way of satisfaction, suffrages are efficacious only for the one for whom they are applied. Moreover the satisfactory value is limited in itself. It is allotted according to divine justice among those for whom the suffrages are made.³³ This is said of suffrages in general. However the difficulty arises that the Eucharist, since it contains the whole Christ, is of unlimited efficacy. St. Thomas answers that while the power of Christ which is contained in the sacrament is unlimited, yet the effect to which the sacrament is ordered is limited. Here St. Thomas holds that the satisfactory value of the Mass, derived *ex opere operato*, is limited before application to men. The limitation is not conditioned first by the limited faith and devotion of the offerers and those for whom it is offered.³⁴

³² Landgraf, *Ibid.*, 333.

³³ IV Sent. d. 45, q. 2, a. 4, qc. 3, sol. 2; ed. Parma 1858, 7, 1129.

³⁴ *Ibid.*; Suppl. q. 71, a. 14, ad 2.

In the *Summa Theologiae*, however, St. Thomas appears to advocate another opinion. He states that in itself the Mass is sufficient to satisfy for all punishment. Nevertheless it operates in a limited fashion in behalf of those for whom it is offered or for those who offer according to the quantity of their devotion.³⁵ Since the actual effects of the Mass are always finite, the effects are multiplied with the repetition of the offering.³⁶

From this explanation, it follows that St. Thomas could have concluded that two Masses are not necessarily more valuable than one and hence could have embraced the literal meaning of *Non mediocriter*. However he does not pursue the question further.

St. Bonaventure, in his commentary on IV Sent. d. 45, c. 4, after rejecting the opinion of Praepositinus of suffrages in general, takes up the question of the Mass. He offers the objection that the sacrifice of the Cross is of infinite value, offered for all, and hence benefits all according to their merits. Therefore this must also hold for the Mass, the *oblatio memorialis* of the Cross. He answers that while the sacrifice of the Cross and the Mass are the same, nevertheless a distinction must be made between the way that the sacrifice of Christ operates on the Cross and in the Mass. On the Cross the value of the sacrifice flowed forth in fullness; in the Mass it has a determined effect. Because of this the first offering cannot be repeated, while the second can be celebrated continuously.³⁷ He adds that the canon *Non mediocriter* refers to the merit of the celebrating priest not to the needs of him for whom the Mass is offered.³⁸ Thus St. Bonaventure teaches that the Mass in itself has a limited efficacy as distinguished from the Cross, and the limitation does not arise first from the limited faith and devotion of the recipients of the blessings.

This view is also proposed by Richard of Middleton, O.F.M. (1249-1302/08)³⁹ and is undoubtedly the common view of the second half of the thirteenth century. The Council of Lambeth

³⁵ *S.T.* III, q. 79, a. 5; a. 7, ad 2.

³⁶ *S.T.* III, q. 79, a. 7, ad 3.

³⁷ *IV Sent.* d. 45, a. 2, q. 3; ed. Quaracchi 4 (Florence, 1889) 947.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *IV Sent.* d. 45, a. 2, q. 3; ed. Brescia 1591, 598-599.

(1281) accepts it without hesitation. In chapter II of the Acts of the Council, it is asserted that the celebrant should not think that celebrating one Mass, he is able to satisfy for two for whom he promised especially and "*in solidum celebrare.*" The canon *Non mediocriter* is introduced and solved along the lines of the third solution of the *Glossa ordinaria*, that is, the canon refers to those Masses celebrated "*anxiato corde.*" In other words, *ex opere operato* the same fruits come from a Mass whether it is said for one or 100 and this fruit does not depend on the devotion of the offerers. The Council then goes on to say that no Catholic should believe that one Mass, devoutly celebrated, benefits by intention 1000 for whom it is said as much as if 1000 Masses were said for these with similar devotion. The Council reasons that although the sacrifice, which is Christ, is of infinite power, nevertheless it does not operate the full plenitude of its immensity in the Mass. Otherwise it would never be necessary to offer more than one Mass for a particular soul. It operates rather by a certain distribution of its fullness which is infallibly given.⁴⁰

Up to this point we have not seen, except for the brief remarks of St. Thomas in the *Summa*, any serious attempt on the part of theologians to solve the problem of the value and fruits of the Mass from a theology of the Mass. It is the practice of the Church in the matter of Mass stipends which decides the theological opinion that the value of the Mass is limited *in actu primo* and that the finite fruits coming from the Mass *ex opere operato* can be applied by the priest. There is, apparently, an assumption that a positive ordination of the divine will limits the special fruits accruing to the person in behalf of whom the application is made by the priest.

A new approach to the question of the value and fruits of the Mass is taken by John Duns Scotus (d.1308). In his exposition, for the first time, the theology of the Mass plays a major role. His treatment of the topic is found in *Quaestio* 20 of the *Quodlibetales*.⁴¹ According to Scotus, Christ is not the proximate offerer of the Mass. If he were the Mass would have the same value as the sacrifice of the

⁴⁰ Hardouin, *Acta Conciliorum* 7 (Paris, 1714) 862; Mansi 24, 406-407.

⁴¹ *Opera omnia* 26, 298-331.

Cross. The proximate offerer is the Church Militant in union with the priest and assisting congregation. As proof that the whole Church, that is, the holy members of the Church who unite themselves intentionally with the Masses being celebrated throughout the world, actually offers each Mass, Scotus remarks that otherwise the Mass of a sinful priest would be worthless. Since this would be *inconueniens*, the conclusion is drawn that the holy members of the universal Church must offer each Mass and consequently call forth new blessings from each Mass.⁴²

But what does the Church offer? As Scotus views it, the Church presents Christ, victim of the Cross, before the Father in order to plead the merits of his Passion for the welfare of the world. What determines the measure of acceptability? To this question, Scotus responds that the corporate holiness of the Church determines the measure of acceptability of each Mass. It is the condition which limits the measure in which the Church receives the benefits of Christ's sacrificial merits for distribution through the Mass. The Church's action does not merit the salutary effects of the sacrifice, however, for only Christ's merits can avail for salutary effects.

Since the corporate holiness of the Church is always finite, the fruits of the Mass are limited by the actual holiness of the Church which exists at any particular moment of history. But, Scotus insists, there are always fruits derived from each Mass because the Church is always holy, that is, always possesses holy members intentionally united with the Masses of the world.

Regarding the distribution of the finite fruits of each Mass, Scotus offers the following reflections. In the Mass the Church prays for herself (*generalissime*), for the priest (*specialissime*) and for the particular intention for which the Mass is celebrated (*specialiter*). Hence independently of the fruits arising from the personal merits of the priest, there are always threefold fruits derived from each Mass.⁴³ It is understood that these fruits are not given automati-

⁴² *Ibid.*, 298.

⁴³ Cf. Amalar of Metz, *De ecclesiasticis officiis* 3, c. 23 (PL 105, 1138), where he says that the Mass is offered for (1) the universal Church, (2) for the special intention of those who present gifts, (3) for the priest. However he does not develop this in terms of the "offering Church," but appears to be concerned with the activity of those present at the Mass.

cally, but rather received according to the capacity of those to whom they are applied. In the case of the *fructus specialis*, when it is not determined by the Church (as in the case where the pastor is directed to offer Mass for his flock), the priest as representative of the Church determines to whom the fruit will be given. If this limited fruit is applied to a number of persons, it is divided among them.

This presentation of Scotus' explanation makes it clear how the question of the value and fruits of the Mass leads to the question of the theology of the Mass and how, in its turn, the theology of the Mass ultimately determines the theory of the value and fruits of the Mass.

3. Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the conclusions reached by Scotus were commonly accepted: (1) Only a limited fruit is available from each Mass; (2) This fruit is infallibly produced independently of the dispositions of the priest and assisting congregation; (3) The priest can apply certain fruits of the Mass to an individual or to a number of persons.⁴⁴ However the theologians of this period do not generally introduce Scotus' teaching on the theology of the Mass to explain their conclusions. Gabriel Biel (d. 1495) is a notable exception. He repeats the teaching of Scotus and expands it. It is his explanation which dominates the theological thinking of the sixteenth century.⁴⁵ Authoritative for the conception of the limited value and fruits of the Mass in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is, above all, the practice of the Church which

⁴⁴ In the period extending from 1300-1600, E. Iserloh was able to cite only one author who presented a viewpoint essentially at variance with the commonly accepted position. This is Michael Aiguani, a Carmelite of Bologna (d. 1400). He is sympathetic with the theory of Praepositinus and the canon *Non mediocriter*. In his view the prayer of Christ in the Eucharist is made for all men. Hence the effects extend to all men, even to those not especially remembered at the Mass. Each one receives fruits according to his capacity. A Mass offered for 1000 benefits each as much as if it were offered for each alone. Aiguani explicitly states that this is to be understood of the effect *ex opere operato* and not of the effect *ex opere operantis*. Cf. Iserloh, *op. cit.*, 68-70.

⁴⁵ *Gabrielis Biel Canonis Misse Expositio, pars prima, lectiones* 26-27; ed. H. A. Obermann and W. T. Courtenay (Wiesbaden, 1963) 240-273.

allows Mass to be offered for an individual and often forbids the acceptance of more than one stipend for a single Mass.⁴⁶

4. Sixteenth Century

At the beginning of the sixteenth century a new direction was given to the discussion of the value and fruits of the Mass by Cardinal Cajetan (d. 1534), the most renowned theologian of the day. In the second chapter of his work *De celebratione Missae*, which bears the date of December 1, 1510, Cajetan treats of the question: *Utrum sacerdos celebrans pro pluribus, satisfaciat pro singulis.*⁴⁷

He calls the common teaching of the two previous centuries, which argues that a certain limited fruit comes from the Mass on the grounds of the *opus operatum* "*communis error multorum.*"⁴⁸ According to Cajetan, the sacrificial offering of the Cross is present in the Mass.⁴⁹ Hence one should distinguish between the fruits of the Mass arising "*ex parte operis operantis et ex parte operis operati.*" The *opus operatum* is further distinguished "*secundum seipsum absolute, et secundum seipsum applicatum huic.*" The *opus operatum absolute* is defined as "*immolatio Jesu Christi, ita quod res oblata est Jesus Christus.*"⁵⁰ From this standpoint the Mass possesses unlimited value just as the Passion of Christ itself. However just as the sacrifice of the Cross, the Mass possesses unlimited value only *quoad sufficientiam* and according to the manner of a universal and unlimited cause.⁵¹ As applied to men, the Mass produces effects according to the measure of the devotion of those who offer or those for whom the Mass is offered.⁵² In his exposition, Cajetan also stresses

⁴⁶ Iserloh, *op. cit.*, 58-70.

⁴⁷ *Opuscula omnia* 2; ed. Lyons 1581, 147-149. Cf. N. M. Hamer, O.P., "Die Messopferspekulation von Kardinal Cajetan und Ruard Tapper," *Divus Thomas* (Freiburg) 21 (1943) 187-188; Iserloh, *op. cit.*, 71-74.

⁴⁸ *Op. cit.*, 147. Cf. F. Clark, S.J., *Eucharistic Sacrifice and Reformation* (London, 1960) 365-379. for a good summary of Cajetan's understanding of the term "common error of many" and the misunderstanding of Cajetan's criticism by B. J. Kidd, *The Late Mediaeval Doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice* (London, 1898).

⁴⁹ This conception is clearer in Cajetan's later tracts against Luther and Zwingli. Cf. Hamer, *op. cit.*, 189-197; Iserloh, *op. cit.*, 74-76.

⁵⁰ *Op. cit.*, 147.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

the importance of the devotion of the offerers in calling forth the fruits of the Mass. *Ex parte operis operantis* the Mass produces fruits, in the measure of the devotion of the offerers, which can be applied to a special intention.⁵³

In Cajetan's analysis the priest, by his intention, designates those for whom the Mass is to be offered in a general and special way. The devotion of those for whom the Mass is offered will measure the blessings they receive from the application. Thus independently of the devotion of those who offer, the Mass affords blessings *ex opere operato* to those to whom it is applied. However authoritative for the quantity of the fruits of the Mass is also the devotion of those who procure or co-operate in the offering of the Mass. In accord with the intensity of their devotion more fruits will come to those for whom the Mass is offered. But since the fruits of the Mass arising from this source are limited before application, being measured by the limited faith and devotion of the offerers, less will come to the individual if the Mass is offered for many in a special way than if it is offered only for an individual.⁵⁴

With this explanation Cajetan thinks that he has been able to harmonize the infinite value of the Mass, the limited effect and the practice of the Church. As offering of Christ, the Mass is of unlimited value. The limitation comes from the limited devotion of the offerers and those for whom the Mass is offered. The practice of the Church of encouraging frequent offerings for individuals is reasonable since the fruits arising from the devotion of the offerers is limited and benefits more one than many.

Despite his authority, Cajetan's theory was not commonly accepted during the sixteenth century. Kaspar Schatzgeyer, the Franciscan Provincial at Strasburg and one of the ablest of the first generation of the counter-Reformation apologists (d.1527), favored the theology of the Mass expressed by Cajetan but he does not develop this teaching relative to the fruits of the Mass.⁵⁵ The same may be said of Cardinal Hosius, the papal legate at the twenty-second session of the Council of Trent (1562), who presided over

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Iserloh, *op. cit.*, 77; Clark, *op. cit.*, 265-266.

the Council's deliberations on the subject of the Mass and was responsible for the drafting of the decree on the Mass.⁵⁶ Melchior Cano, O.P. (d.1560) also inclined to Cajetan's position and rejected the Scotistic teaching.⁵⁷

On the other hand, Johannes Eck and the majority of the pre-Tridentine theologians who debated the question with the Reformers accepted the Scotus-Biel position.⁵⁸ Dominic de Soto, O.P. sums up the basic source of opposition to Cajetan, namely, that his teaching is contrary to the implication of the practice of the Church and hardly conducive to incite the faithful to give alms for the celebration of Mass.⁵⁹

5. Seventeenth Century to Modern Times

While defining that the Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice, the Council of Trent did not choose between the explanation of Scotus and Cajetan.⁶⁰ However the continuing debate with the Reformers forced theologians to concentrate on, and emphasize more, the activity of Christ in the Mass. Contrary to the usual approach before the Council of Trent, the activity of the Church was placed in the background.⁶¹

With the increasing stress on the personal intervention of Christ in every Mass, the opinion of Cajetan gained the field on the basic issue whether the Mass *in actu primo* and *quoad sufficientiam*, that is, before the application to individual needs, is of infinite value. Nevertheless, from the seventeenth century to modern times, most theologians who held with Cajetan on this point felt compelled to return to what he had described as the "common error of many" on the question of the *fructus specialis* which comes to those for whom

⁵⁶ Clark, *Ibid.*, 266-267.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 376.

⁵⁸ Iserloh, *op. cit.*, 77-79; *Die Eucharistie in der Darstellung des Joh. Eck* (Munster, 1950) 191-195.

⁵⁹ *De Iustitia et Iure* 9, 2, 2; ed. Lyons 1582, 279. Cf. IV *Sent.* d. 45, q. 2, a. 4; ed. Salamanca 1580, 486-487.

⁶⁰ DS 1753.

⁶¹ F. X. Arnold, "Vorgeschichte und Einfluss des Trienter Messopferdekrets auf die Behandlung des Eucharistischen Geheimnisses in der Glaubensverkündigung der Neuzeit," *Die Messe in der Glaubensverkündigung*, ed. F. X. Arnold and B. Fischer (2nd ed.; Freiburg, 1953) 114-161.

the Mass is especially offered. Generally it has been explained that this fruit is both intensively and extensively limited *in actu primo* and is shared by those to whom the priest applies it. To explain how the objective measure of the efficacy of the Mass is limited before actual application, and independently of the dispositions of the subjects of application, appeal was made, following Suarez,⁶² to the positive will of Christ. This theory was thought to be required because of the Church's practice regarding Mass stipends.

In recent years, however, the appeal to the positive will of Christ has been almost universally rejected, and rightly so, since there is no sound theological basis for postulating this limitation. Apart from those who still hold the essential position of Scotus, which limits the fruits of the Mass because the Church is the proximate offerer and not Christ,⁶³ theologians generally maintain that the limitation comes from the capacity of those for whom the Mass is offered. Accordingly, there is also a more general consensus that the practice of the Church in the matter of limiting Mass stipends does not have doctrinal implications which would run contrary to this theory but is a safeguard against abuses.

Conclusion

This summary of the history of theological opinion regarding the value and fruits of the Mass, which has carried us up to the twentieth century, allows us to uncover the following points on which theologians have consistently agreed despite their differences on a number of aspects of the problem:

(1) Fruits flow from the Mass independently of the dispositions of those present (at least by way of stipend donation) and participating in a particular Mass.

(2) The source of these fruits is either the act of Christ and also the act of the holy members of the Church who intentionally unite themselves with the Masses of the world, or simply the act of the holy Church.

⁶² *In tertiam partem*, disp. 79, sect. 12, n. 7; *Omnia opera* 21 (Paris, 1861) 762.

⁶³ This theory was revived by M. de la Taille, S.J., and still has a number of supporters (*Mysterium Fidei* [3rd ed.; Rome, 1931] *Elucidationes* 25-28.).

(3) There are three distinct fruits which flow from the Mass independently of the devotion of those present and participating in a particular Mass. These fruits are generally termed *fructus specialissimus*, *specialis (medius)* and *generalis*. The first comes to the priest as celebrant, the second comes to the person to whom the priest applies it and the third comes to the Church at large.⁶⁴

II

In the new approach to the problem of the value and fruits of the Mass proposed by K. Rahner, the three points of agreement of theologians listed in the conclusion of the previous section are declared to be without sufficient theological basis.⁶⁵ He takes the following stand:

(1) New fruits do not come from the Mass by reason of the action of Christ independently of the devotion of those who actually offer the Mass in a true sense.

(2) New fruits do not come from the Mass by reason of the activity of the holy members of the Church who intentionally unite themselves with the Masses of the world.

(3) The devotion of those actually involved in the offering of a particular Mass measures the effect which the offering has on them and the amount of blessings which will be extended to those for whom they offer.

1. Activity of Christ in the Mass

The first statement appears to be irrefutable. The sacramental re-presentation of the sacrifice of the Cross in the Mass does not

⁶⁴ The distinction between the threefold fruits of the Mass was neglected after Scotus during the greater part of the next two centuries. Revived by G. Biel, it has been consistently maintained since the sixteenth century by all schools of theology.

⁶⁵ *Op. cit.* For summaries of Rahner's position, cf. the following: K. Rahner, "Dogmatische Bemerkungen Über die Fragen der Konzelebration," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 6 (1955) 83-89; K. Rahner, "Multiplication of Masses," *Orate Fratres* 24 (1950) 553-562 (Trans. of article from *Herder Korrespondenz* [March, 1950] 276-279); D. B. Burrell, C.S.C., "Many Masses and One Sacrifice," *Yearbook of Liturgical Studies* (Notre Dame, 1962) 103-117. Also cf. the remarks of K. Rahner in "Thesen Über das Gebet 'im Namen der Kirche,'" *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 83 (1961) 307-324.

immediately bring new blessings to the Church except in the sense that it is, in itself, an actual grace for particular men. It leads men in a visible way to desire to participate in the sacrificial offering of Christ and is the occasion for God to afford actual graces so that men may offer acceptable sacrificial prayer in union with Christ. The fairly common opinion of the past that the sacrifice of the Mass produces fruits because of the activity of Christ, independently of those who somehow actually participate in the liturgical offering, has simply misunderstood the nature of what has been termed the *ex opere operato* effect of the Mass and the essentially relative character of the sacrifice of the Mass with respect of the sacrifice of the Cross.

2. *Activity of the Holy Church in the Mass*

The second statement also seems to be a valid one. We can say that the holy members of the Church are united intentionally with the offering of Masses throughout the world. We can say that each Mass is a true sign of the existential bond which never ceases to exist between the prayer of Christ and that of the Holy Church. But it is difficult to imagine in what sense the holy Church, as such, can be described as the immediate subject of the offering of each Mass. And since it is only to the actual devotion of the immediate subject of the offering that new fruits can be ascribed, the assertion that new fruits arise from each Mass through the activity of the "offering Church" remains extremely dubious.

There is, to be sure, a long standing tradition against this position. However it does not seem to me to have sufficient dogmatic value to settle the question. At the risk of over-simplification, we can summarize the history of the concept of the "offering Church" as follows:

(1) There is no solid evidence that the concept of the "offering Church" was envisioned during the first six centuries of the Christian era. In the second century, St. Irenaeus writes that the Eucharist is offered by the Church through Jesus Christ,⁶⁶ and that it is acceptable because the Church has a pure conscience.⁶⁷ But it seems

⁶⁶ *Adversus haereses* 4, 17, 6; ed. W. W. Harvey 2 (Cambridge, 1857) 200.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4, 18, 4; Harvey 2, 203.

obvious that he is referring to the offering made by a congregation which is inadequately identified with the whole Church. Since this community is presumed to be living in harmony with the whole Church, has the sentiments of those who are in Christ, it offers acceptable sacrifice. St. Cyprian, in his Epistle 63 and elsewhere, offers some profound reflections on the relationship of the Eucharist to the Church.⁶⁸ However he gives no indication that the active participants include all the holy members of the Church. St. Augustine has a good deal to say about the Eucharist as sacrifice of the Church.⁶⁹ Nevertheless the actual offering of the Eucharist by the *corpus Christi sacerdotis* seems only to be related to the act of the community which is inadequately identified with the whole Church.

(2) From his study of the early medieval writers from Isidore of Seville (d. 636) to Remigius of Auxerre (d.ca.908), which includes Spanish, Anglo-Saxon and Frankish sources, R.P. Schulte, O.S.B., has drawn the conclusion that the celebration of Mass was understood as an act in which the universal Church was engaged.⁷⁰ However, as he himself admits, the doctrine was not consciously emphasized. As a result, the precise implications of the activity of the whole Church in the Mass is not clarified. Certainly Schulte's assertion that these writers understood the Church as "*quasi persona*," standing between Christ and the individual believer,⁷¹ would be difficult to justify from the sources which he uses. Perhaps the most we can say is that the writers of this period, in the Western Church, understood that the actual offering of the Eucharist is primarily the act of the priest and assisting congregation. Only through them is the whole Church envisioned as playing the role of offerer in some vague sense.

(3) In the eleventh and twelfth centuries we find some references to the concept of the Body of Christ acting through its official members. Because of the organic unity of all the baptized faithful

⁶⁸ A. Demoustier, S.J., "L'Ontologie de l'Eglise selon saint Cyprien," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 52 (1964) 554-587.

⁶⁹ J. Ratzinger, "Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche," *Münchener Theologische Studien* 2, 7 (Munich, 1954) 209-211, 235.

⁷⁰ "Die Messe als Opfer der Kirche," *Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen* 35 (Munster, 1959).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 73, n. 380.

with the priest, the act of the priest is attributed to the whole Body, and the activity of the whole Body is considered to be present in the liturgical celebration.⁷² However, as in the previous period, the concept of the "offering Church" and its implications for the value and fruits of the Mass are not developed.

(4) It was not until the close of the thirteenth century that the relationship between the "offering Church" and the value and fruits of the Mass was explicitly treated. This was done, as we have already seen, by Scotus. His contention that the holy Church is immediate subject of the offering of the Mass has been accepted without reflection even by those theologians who do not hold his theology of the Mass and the reasons which he gives for "proof" of the "offering Church."

(5) The theme of the "offering Church" was hardly mentioned during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But with the revival of Scotus' theology of the Mass, due in great measure to G. Biel, stress was placed on the activity of the whole Church in the offering of each Mass both in scholarly publications and in popular catechisms during the first half of the sixteenth century.

(6) After the Council of Trent, the role of the Church in the offering of Mass was placed in the background. The Reformers were denying that the Mass is a true sacrifice because this opinion seemed to militate against the all-sufficiency of the sacrifice of the Cross. Catholic theologians allowed themselves to become involved on the terrain of the adversaries and became totally absorbed with the question: How is the Mass the sacrifice of Christ? Little or no attention was paid to the truth that the Mass is also the sacrifice of the Church.⁷³ This situation continued down through the nineteenth century.

(7) In our own day a renewed interest in the concept of the Mass as sacrifice of the Church has been experienced. This is due to several factors. Liturgical studies have stressed the communal character of all liturgical activity. The new theological penetration of the

⁷² P. Damien, *Liber Dominus vobiscum*, cc. 7-8 (PL 145, 236-237); Odo of Cambri (d.1113), *Expositio in canonem Missae*, dist. 2, *Memento, Domine*. . . (PL 160, 1057).

⁷³ Arnold, *op. cit.*

concept *Corpus Mysticum* has emphasized the relationship of the Eucharist to the Church. The new realization of the priesthood of all the faithful has brought into focus the role of the laity in the offering of the Mass. The encyclical letters *Mediator Dei*, *Mystici Corporis* and the constitutions of Vatican II on the Sacred Liturgy and the Church have all called attention to the role of the Church in the offering of the Mass.

Particularly in the last three decades a number of theologians have discussed the "offering Church." But as yet there does not exist a comprehensive historico-dogmatic presentation of the topic. Theologians remain divided in their opinion whether all the holy members of the Church can be considered to be immediate subjects of the offering of each Mass.⁷⁴

It is not possible for us to enter into a discussion of the numerous attempts to show why the Church, as such, can or cannot be said to offer each Mass as immediate subject of the offering. However, in my estimation, those who answer in the affirmative have not been able to prove their thesis on speculative grounds and their appeal to statements of the magisterium can be seriously questioned.

In the encyclical letter *Mystici Corporis*, the priest is said to be representative of the whole Church in the celebration of the Eucharist.⁷⁵ In *Mediator Dei* we read that the priest offers sacrifice "in the name of all His members . . . hence the whole Church can rightly be said to offer up the victim through Christ."⁷⁶ *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* states that public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Christ: Head and members, and that every liturgical celebration is action of Christ the Priest and the Church.⁷⁷ In the recent encyclical letter *Mysterium Fidei*, the Mass is described as act of Christ and the Church,⁷⁸ and the Church is said to offer the sacrifice of the Mass.⁷⁹ Nevertheless these statements of the magisterium are not sufficiently clear on the point at issue.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ For bibliography, cf. Schulte, *op. cit.*, 3-7.

⁷⁵ AAS 35 (1943) 232.

⁷⁶ AAS 39 (1947) 556.

⁷⁷ AAS 56 (1964) 101.

⁷⁸ AAS 57 (1965) 761-762.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 763.

⁸⁰ In an allocution of Nov. 2, 1954, Pius XII referred to the importance of

We can say that the Eucharist is Christ's legacy to the Church and that the celebrating community under the bishop or priest is inadequately identified with the whole Church. Hence from this viewpoint the Eucharist can be said to be the sacrifice of the Church. Moreover what takes place by the action of a member of the Church, acting as member, is done by the Church and for the Church. Again, those present at Mass are dependent on the holiness of the entire Church. It is the prayer of the holy Church which supports those actually engaged in the liturgical celebration: graces are offered through her intercession so that the congregation may offer in a worthy manner. The prayer of the whole Church is also applied to the intention of the offerers of a particular Mass, but according to the measure of their devout intercession through the prayer of the Church. Finally, as we have already said, the Mass is a true sign of the existential bond which never ceases to exist between the prayer of Christ and that of the holy Church.⁸¹

"establishing the nature of the act of hearing and celebrating Mass, from which other fruits of the sacrifice flow" (AAS 46 [1954] 669). D.B. Burrell, C.S.C., interprets this passage to mean that "some fruits flow from the nature of the act itself, that the Mass immediately, and not entirely through the dispositions of its offerers, realizes at least some of its fruits" (*Op. cit.*, 114). To explain how this can be, the author rallies to the thesis of G. de Broglie, S.J. (Cf. "Du rôle de l'Eglise dans le sacrifice eucharistique," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 70 (1948) 449-460; "La Messe, oblation collectivée de la communauté," *Gregorianum* 30 (1949) 534-561), namely, that by its very nature the action of Christ in the Mass is never independent of that of his Mystical Body and hence every valid Mass is fruitful for the world at least by reason of the devotion of the holy members of the Church who unite themselves intentionally with the Mass of the world (*Op. cit.*, 115-117). Thus Pius XII is seen to favor, at least implicitly, the concept of the "offering Church."—This interpretation reads too much into the text. The context of the allocution indicates that the Pope is speaking about the importance of maintaining the distinction between the nature of the act of celebrating and hearing Mass and, consequently, the truth that one Mass at which many priests assist is not the same as one at which many priests celebrate. While the Pope does not say that all the fruits of the Mass are a function of the devotion of those actually present at Mass, neither does he say that some of the fruits arise from the Mass independently of that devotion. He leaves the question open. (For an interpretation of this document, cf. K. Rahner, "Die vielen Messen als die vielen Opfer Christi," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 77 (1955) 94-101.)

⁸¹ B. Schultze, S.J., "Eucharistie und Kirche in der russischen Theologie," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 77 (1955) 279-280: Some useful remarks on the supporters of the Eucharistic celebration (Christ, bishop and priest, community, whole Church).

All this is true. But what does it mean for the actual fruits which arise from a particular Mass? The fact that the faithful, participating in the priesthood of Christ by the baptismal character, can by their habitual intention associate themselves with the Masses of the world, does not imply that new fruits arise from the Mass because of this intentional union. New fruits arise only by reason of the actual devotion of those who are present at the Mass. The intercession of the Church remains the same for all Masses, prescinding from the actual devotion of those celebrating a particular Mass. Hence no new fruits arise from the prayer of the Church as such independently of the devotion of the actual offerers of a particular Mass.

3. Activity of Those Present at Mass

The third statement of Rahner's position follows as a logical conclusion from the two previous ones. There remains only the devotion of those involved in the offering of a particular Mass, increased under the impetus of actual graces in the course of the liturgical action, to measure the actual effect of the offering. The devotion of those actually participating in the Mass is not the cause of the graces given through the Mass: The graces are given in view of the sacrifice of Christ. But the graces given are measured by the intensity with which men unite themselves in the liturgy with the one acceptable sacrifice made for all men.

From what we have been saying, it follows that there does not exist a *fructus specialissimus*, *specialis (medius)* or *generalis* which comes from the celebration of the Mass independently of the devotion of those who actually offer a particular Mass. There is a *fructus generalis* which comes to the whole Church by reason of the devout prayer of the participants of the Mass. One can speak also of a *fructus specialissimus* which comes to the priest. But this is to be understood only in the sense that he receives those special graces which are consistent with his state of life. However it is the personal devotion of the priest which calls forth these graces for himself. Hence by the very fact that a priest celebrates Mass, he does not necessarily receive more grace than if he attended Mass. Devotion, certainly, is linked to the mode of participation in the Mass. It can increase by different modes of participation. But equal devotion, no

matter what the mode of participation, will mean equal fruits. It should be granted that special actual graces will be given to the celebrant to perform his function worthily. Nevertheless he will always receive from the celebration of the Mass only those blessings which are proportional to his cooperation with these actual graces. Finally one can speak of a *fructus specialis* which comes to those for whom the Mass is offered. But this fruit is called forth exclusively by the devotion of the participants of the Mass.

If no *fructus specialis* exists independently of the devotion of the priest and assisting congregation, we can conclude that the Mass stipend only makes sense if it is a form of participation in the Mass. The priest's intention is required to assign the sacrificial gift to a particular Mass. But the priest does not apply by his intention a *fructus specialis* which is given *ex opere operato* or *ex opere operantis Ecclesiae*. The gift is thus the expression of the donor's devotion with reference to a particular Mass and the fruits received by the person for whom the donor arranges the Mass will be measured by the devotion of the donor, the priest and others who actually pray for the intention of the donor.

If the donor of the stipend is present at the Mass, he will normally experience an increase in devotion and so will call forth more fruits from the Mass for the one for whom he offers it. If the donor is not present, the devotion attached to his action of giving a gift for the Mass will bring fruits to the person for whom the offering was made. But the fruits coming to the person are not increased by the simple fact that the gift is assigned to a particular Mass.

Summary and Conclusion

In the period from the ninth to the thirteenth century, which coincides with the development of the private Mass, the system of Mass stipends became established. The opposition on the part of some churchmen against the tendency to make the Mass a private affair was only sporadic and generally aimed at the suppression of abuses connected with the practice. The movement could not be stopped. During the thirteenth century, it was commonly held by theologians that the fruits arising from each Mass are limited before application to men, and not primarily because of the limited faith

and devotion of the offerers or those for whom the Mass is offered. At first this limitation was not explained from the theology of the Mass but as a logical consequence of the approved custom of requesting by means of a gift that Masses be said exclusively and often for an individual.

Scotus attempted to explain the limitation of the fruits of the Mass from the theology of the Mass which takes for granted that the holy members of the Church are the immediate subject of the offering and that Christ is not the proximate offerer of each Mass.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the conclusions reached by previous theologians were accepted without reflection. During this period when, strictly speaking, there did not exist a theology of the Mass, no explanation of the limitation of the fruits of the Mass is forthcoming. The Mass is generally considered to produce fruits, limited in extent, *ex opere operato*, which can be applied to individuals.

With the revival of Scotus' explanation of the value and fruits of the Mass by G. Biel and the exposition of Cardinal Cajetan, the theology of the Mass is again introduced into the discussion. Scotus' view of the "offering Church" is accepted by all without exception and without reflection. The followers of Cajetan also accept the opinion that fruits come forth from the Mass *ex opere operato*, by reason of the activity of Christ, and that, from this standpoint, they are limited in application only by the dispositions of men. This presumed *ex opere operato* effect was likewise accepted without serious theological analysis.

From the seventeenth century to modern times, the view of Cajetan was often modified by the introduction of the theory that the *fructus specialis* is limited by reason of the positive ordination of Christ's will.

In our own day, the concept of the limitation of the *fructus specialis* by a positive ordination of Christ has been rejected as without sufficient theological foundation. The opinion that fruits come from the Mass *ex opere operato*, independently of the devotion of the offerers, as well as the concept of the "offering Church" are also being challenged by many who are following in the footsteps of K. Rahner. His elaboration has pointed out the lack of serious

theological reflection on the limits of the activity of Christ and the holy Church in the offering of a particular Mass.

The explanation of the value and fruits of the Mass proposed by K. Rahner seems to be acceptable on all points. It is consistent with the constant belief of the Church from earliest times that the Mass offered with devotion brings benefits to the whole Church, to those participating in the cultic offering and to those for whom a special remembrance is made. It takes into account the essentially relative character of the sacrifice of the Mass with respect to the Cross. It takes into account the importance of the re-presentation of the sacrifice of the Cross in the Mass. It emphasizes the importance of the subjective acts of men placed within the scope of the liturgical action. It gives due consideration to the role of the Church's prayer with respect to particular Masses. It does all these things in a way which is able to harmonize the Church's practice regarding Mass stipends with an acceptable theology of the Mass.

One of the main sources of hesitation on the part of theologians to accept this position, apart from the concept of the "offering Church" which we have already dealt with, derives from three documents of the magisterium which indicate approval of the common teaching of theologians on the threefold fruits of the Mass.⁸²

For the existence of a *fructus specialissimus*, appeal is made to the condemnation by Pope Alexander VII, in the bull *Ex omnibus afflictionibus*, of the opinion that a priest can apply to a person for a stipend part of the *fructus specialissimus* which accrues to him as celebrant.⁸³ This condemnation, however, is concerned directly with

⁸² Cf. J. Brinktrine, "Zur Lehre von der sogenannten Messopferfrüchten," *Theologie und Glaube* 41 (1951) 260-265; *Die Lehre von der heiligen Sakramenten der Katholischen Kirche I* (Paderborn, 1961) 380-385. This author, in challenging the conclusions of Rahner, refers to DS 2028 and 2630 as proof that the Church presupposes the existence of the *fructus specialissimus* and *ministerialis*, understood in the traditional sense. This is also the case with the majority of text books. However M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* 4, 1 (5th ed.; Munich, 1957) 424, excludes the *fructus specialissimus* from his catalog of the fruits of the Mass. Cf. C. Kenny, O.P., "Mass Stipends: Doctrinal Problems," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 66 (1966) 306-311, where the author concludes that the encyclical letter *Cum semper oblatas* and the constitution *Auctorem Fidei* are not sufficient grounds for rejecting the theory of the function of Mass stipends being proposed by liturgists and theologians such as K. Rahner.

⁸³ DS 2028.

the practice of accepting two stipends for one Mass which is contrary to the directives of Pope Urban VIII expressed in the constitution *Cum saepe* of 1625.⁸⁴ The Pope does not, in fact, make a decision regarding the existence of the *fructus specialissimus*. It seems clear that he accepts the common teaching of the day that a priest receives a special fruit precisely because he celebrates a Mass and that he also accepted the common teaching, first formulated by Scotus, that a priest cannot apply this fruit to anyone else. Nevertheless this implicit acceptance of the common teaching of theologians is not sufficient grounds to settle the doctrinal question.

For the existence of a *fructus specialis*, as traditionally understood, reference is made to the encyclical letter *Cum semper oblatas* (August 19, 1744) of Benedict XIV and the constitution *Auctorem Fidei* (August 28, 1794) of Pius VI.

In *Cum semper oblatas*, Benedict XIV takes for granted the existence of a "*fructus medius*" which exists independently of the devotion of the priest and which he can apply to the people of the parish.⁸⁵ As a private theologian, he approved this teaching and calls the doctrine of the threefold fruits of the Mass the common teaching of theologians and says "*ipsa etiam recepit Ecclesia.*"⁸⁶

Moreover it seems clear enough that Pius VI, in *Auctorem Fidei*, not only accepts this common teaching of theologians on the *fructus specialis* but even defends it against the view of the Synod of Pistoia.⁸⁷ K. Rahner has pointed out that the Pope does not indicate *why* a special fruit comes to the individual because the Mass is applied to him by the priest, but only that the intention of the priest is required for the person to gain a special blessing. Hence the text could be interpreted to favor his position that the Mass intention is one of the ways of participation in the liturgical action.⁸⁸ However it seems that Pius VI has only the common teaching of the day in mind when he refers to the *terminus technicus* "*fructus specialis.*"

⁸⁴ This document is contained in the constitution *Nuper* (December 23, 1697) of Innocent XII; *Codicis Iuris Canonici Fontes cura Emi. Card. Gasparri editi* I (Rome, 1923) n. 260, 509ff.

⁸⁵ *Codicis Iuris Canonici Fontes* I, n. 345, 825.

⁸⁶ *De sacrosancta Missae sacrificio* 3, c. 8; *Omnia opera* 8 (Venice, 1767) 129.

⁸⁷ DS 2630.

⁸⁸ "Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer," *op. cit.*, 286.

Also, his reference to *Cum semper oblatas* gives further assurance that he is talking about the *fructus specialis* as traditionally understood.

However this magisterial approval of what was the common teaching of theologians of the eighteenth century is not sufficient to settle the question of the existence of a *fructus specialis* derived from the Mass independently of the devotion of the offerers. Both these documents manifest a prudent acceptance of the common teaching of the day but not with a solemnity which would place it outside the realm of criticism.

EDWARD J. KILMARTIN, S.J.
Weston College
Weston, Mass.

Digest of the Discussion:

The first point considered in the discussion was the term *fruits of the Mass*. It was objected that such a manner of speaking seemed to be an unjustified reification. The term, it was explained, must be kept since it is the one found in all the authors and it simply means the effects of the Mass, namely, actual graces. This is not the principal problem in the present discussion. What this problem is, all agreed, is a critical examination of the theological argument given to justify the practice of Mass stipends; that is, that there is a fruit (effect) of the Mass which is independent of the devotion of either the celebrating priest or the faithful assisting at the Mass, and that it is this effect that is applied by the celebrant for the intention of the donor of the stipend.

There was little disagreement concerning the main contention of the paper, that this theory of the effects of the Mass was without solid theological foundation. At the same time, no one suggested that the custom of offering and accepting Mass stipends was illegitimate, only that it should be understood correctly. If it be conceded that any particular Mass has impetratory effects from the devotion of those concerned (celebrant and faithful present), then the Mass

stipend should be viewed as analogous to, or a substitute for the Offertory procession of the early centuries. The donor of the stipend signifies his special participation and devotion, and if this be authentic, thereby calls down more abundant graces for his particular intention. A practical pastoral consequence is that whenever possible the donor of the stipend should be actually present and participate in the Mass offered for his intention.

The discussion then turned to the question of so-called private Masses and their relation to the whole Church. It was remarked that the phrase: "The whole Church offers the Mass" is ambiguous and unfelicitous. Rather should it be said: "The Mass is the offering of the whole Church." What is meant is that the Church as the Body of Christ participates in the grace of Christ which has a priestly orientation. Any Mass is a visible expression of this priestly grace and so a priest when he says Mass, even privately, though he and he alone is acting at that moment, acts for the whole Church. The whole Church is involved, even in private Masses, not because there is some mysterious action of "the Church" over and above the action of the celebrant (and participants, if there be any); but rather because in celebrating Mass the priest acts not as a private individual but in virtue of his role in the Church. The Mass, in a word, always implies the community as the Body of Christ. A practical suggestion for a right perspective would be a reminder that the "private Mass" is an "exception" to be permitted only in the context of a community celebration and not vice-versa.

Recorded by: JOSEPH R. NEARON, S.S.S.
Blessed Sacrament Seminary
Cleveland, Ohio