

Priesthood and Sacrifice in «City of God»

The whole of that redeemed city, that is, the congregation or communion of saints, is offered as a universal sacrifice to God through the High Priest who «taking the form of a servant», offered Himself in His passion for us that we might be the body of so glorious a Head. For it was this «form of a servant» which He offered, it was this form that He was victim, since it is in «the form of a servant» that He is Mediator, Priest and Sacrifice.

City of God, X, 6 *).

Augustine is one of those rare individuals who has something to say to mankind, and not just to the men of his own age. In a time when the christian understanding of priesthood and the priesthood of Christ is so much discussed, very often some help in the understanding of christian doctrines can be found in the analysis of the great men of christian tradition. This study does not seek to solve the question of priesthood by appealing to the doctrine of Augustine. It does, however, hope to contribute to the discussion by presenting some of the ideas of the Bishop of Hippo as found in *The City of God* that might contribute to a further understanding of priesthood today.

To read the *City of God* is not an easy task. Augustine composed his masterpiece over a period of fourteen years using the rhetorical conventions of his own period of history. As a result, to modern standards it is full of lengthy digressions which cause difficulty to the contemporary reader. Augustine writes detailed accounts of ancient history, of biblical events, of Greek and Roman mythology. In spite of these digressions, however, he continues to weave the same theme : «salvation and the means to it : the worship of the true God»¹⁾.

*) All quotations from the *City of God* will be taken from : *Fathers of the Church*. New York, Fathers of the Church, Inc.

¹⁾ John O'MEARA, *Charter of Christendom : the Significance of the City of God*. New York, Macmillan, 1961, p. 13.

The quotation placed at the heading of this paper exemplifies this theme, and it is hoped that the various elements contained in it will become clearer upon analysis. The congregation of the blessed offer the universal sacrifice to God alone, through Christ the mediator and priest, whose body we are. Such is the basic theme of the entire work, and through it Augustine says much of interest to the modern christian.

At times it appears hard to find this theme but if one would study the literary structure of the work ²⁾, watch as his thought moves from Rome into Greek philosophy, into the history of time and eternity in the Bible ³⁾, notice the centrality of Christ and his sacrifice ⁴⁾, study the role of the followers of Christ in these same passages, then it is somewhat easy to understand how one author can say : « The *City of God* was the personal vision of Saint Augustine on the work of salvation, the characteristic way in which the doctor of Hippo conceived what the Greeks call by the beautiful name of *oikonomia* » ⁵⁾.

But if the theme of the *City of God* is salvation, this must be considered under two aspects : the historical and the eschatological ⁶⁾. Certainly the City of God can be understood completely only in its finality, for while the return of man to God is realized in Christ, his followers have yet to achieve this. The City will be consummated when all the elect, assembled with Christ, will be offered to the Father, forming the true kingdom of God ⁷⁾. Salvation has begun in Christ; it will be perfected only in heaven; and while we wait as pilgrims, we offer with our priest true worship to the one true God. « The community of saints is offered as a universal sacrifice to God through the High priest ... » (X, 6).

The purpose of this paper then is to examine the worship of the whole Christ as seen in the *City of God*. As worship it involves priesthood

²⁾ J. C. GUY, *Unité et structure logique de la Cité de Dieu*. Paris, 1961.

³⁾ O'MEARA, pp. 20-112.

⁴⁾ Books and chapters : VII, 32; IX, 15 : X, 6,20; XI, 2; XVII, 15-18; XVIII, 46, 51-54; XXII.

⁵⁾ Jacques PINTARD, *Le sacerdoce selon saint Augustine*. Paris, Mame, 1959, p. 140. « La Cité de Dieu a été la vision personnelle de saint Augustin sur l'œuvre de salut, la façon caractéristique pour le docteur d'Hippone de concevoir ce que les Grecs appelaient du beau nom d'*oikonomia* ».

⁶⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁷⁾ J. LECUYER, *Le sacrifice selon s. Augustin*, in *Augustinus Magister* II, pp. 905-914.

and sacrifice. As worship in the City of God now, it involves the present and future; time and eternity; the historical and the eschatological.

The question posed is : in what sense is the sacrifice of the whole Christ eternal and in what sense does Christ as Head of the people of God remain forever priest and victim?

Augustine's doctrine on sacrifice and priesthood is presented first, followed by his doctrine on the activity of Christ's members. In the conclusion it is hoped that the four elements : priesthood and sacrifice, the historical and the eschatological, will be seen in their proper perspective.

The Doctrine of Sacrifice

God created man as body/subject, as spirit incarnate and in man's history there has always been an interplay of the two elements. Man has experienced himself involved with a mystery beyond himself; has felt drawn to this mystery and so has expressed his hope of communication, of even a union with this mystery, by means of symbolic actions, especially sacrifice ⁸⁾.

The Hebrews knew this same longing and sought communion with Yahweh through their priestly sacrifices. But perhaps more than other people, the Hebrews were conscious that Yahweh demanded an interior sacrifice, the sacrifice of a heart open to him (*Psalm 50*). When the external sacrifice took place it was always considered as a sign of the interior. When this latter was missing, the prophets announced the doom of Israel. Yahweh demanded both elements if Israel was to enter communion with him ⁹⁾.

The New Testament continues this same thought. The breaking of the bread becomes the means of union with Christ and through him, union with the Father. As in the Old Testament, the new covenant demands first the spiritual offering, the interior oblation of the christian which finds concrete manifestation in the offering of the sacrifice of Christ ¹⁰⁾.

⁸⁾ Brother DAVID, *The Biblical View of the Cosmos, — Cosmic Piety*. New York; Kenedy, 1965.

⁹⁾ Yves CONGAR, *Lay People in the Church*. Westminster, Md., Newman, 1957, p. 114.

¹⁰⁾ Augustine GEORGE, « Sacerdoce », — *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*. Paris, Du Cerf, 1962, 965-966.

In the thought of the author of first Peter (1 *Peter* 2:4-5, 9-10) and especially in the thought of Paul (*Eph.* 2:18, 22; *Phil.* 3:3; *Rom.* 6:13; 12:1) the christian faith demands a praising and worshipping community whose offering of a good life is joined to the offering of Christ. « In the New Testament what God wanted of man was himself, a spiritual, rational holy worship, that he might render to him as a son, as one sharing in his intimate life »¹¹).

Augustine in his understanding of sacrifice continues this tradition¹²).

1. The end of sacrifice : union with God. « The true sacrifice is every work which unites us in a holy communion with God, that is, in every work that is aimed at that final Good in which alone we can be truly blessed » (X, 6).

2. The interior sacrifice : « A visible sacrifice, therefore is a sacrament or sacred sign of an invisible sacrifice ... what is meant is that God does not desire the sacrifice of a slaughtered animal, but rather the sacrifice of a contrite heart » (X, 5).

3. The sacrifice of Christians in Christ : « Such is the sacrifice of Christians : 'We many are one body in Christ'. This is the Sacrifice, as the faithful understand, which the Church continues to celebrate in the sacrament of the altar, in which it is clear to the Church that she herself is offered in the very offering she makes to God » (X, 6).

Augustine calls sacrifice what St. Paul calls sacrifice in the twelfth chapter of *Romans* : « a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance, the worship offered by mind and heart ». Which is : « The consecration of all of life to God, body and soul, by means of the discernment and accomplishment of the will of God »¹³).

Augustine follows a long tradition in his understanding of sacrifice, but does so in his own way. He makes the notion of « true » sacrifice the foundation of his doctrine. For this reason, the study of « true » sacrifice as well as visible and invisible sacrifice will be necessary.

¹¹) CONGAR, p. 117.

¹²) There appears some controversy on the understanding of the word « true » in relationship to sacrifice, i.e. whether this refers only to the visible sacrifice or only to the invisible [Cf. G. De Broglie, « La notion augustinienne du sacrifice « invisible » et « vrai », — *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 48 (1960), pp. 135-165] I see no difficulty if viewed in the context of Christian history. The true sacrifice of the heart is the important element but this must be externalized. Moreover, since Christ offered his sacrifice (sign of his interior love) the sacrifice of the christian must be externalized in that sacramental action which signifies the offering of Christ.

¹³) Ghislain LAFONT, *Le sacrifice de la Cité de Dieu : commentaire au De Civitate Dei*, Livre X, ch. 1-7, — *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 53 (1965), p. 203.

True Sacrifice

There always remains some danger when a man's thought is dissected. This is certainly true in regard to the doctrine of Augustine on sacrifice. What appears here must be viewed in relationship to what will be presented in regard to visible and invisible sacrifice.

In the definition of sacrifice most frequently quoted on the authority of Augustine : « The true sacrifice is in every work which unites us in a holy communion with God, that is, in every work that is aimed at that final Good in which alone we can be truly blessed ... » (X, 6), the emphasis is usually placed on the first section. In the mind of Augustine, however, the second section seems to be the pre-requisite of the first. In another section of the *City of God* Augustine says : « For our goal (or as the philosophers in their endless disputes have termed it, our end or good) is nothing else than union with Him whose spiritual embrace, if I may so speak, can alone fecundate the intellectual soul and fill it with true virtue » (X, 3). And further : « For to love one's self is nothing but to wish to be happy, and the standard is union with God », (X, 3). The conclusion of these ideas is the quotation taken from the tenth book, chapter six. Every work that is directed to man's final good, in which he alone will find true happiness, is the true sacrifice. As man's end is union with God, then anything that leads man to attain this end is a sacrifice¹⁴). The question then arises, what are these works? In the same chapter Augustine expands on his notion of true sacrifice and since this involves the invisible sacrifice as well, it merits complete quotation :

For this reason, a man himself who is consecrated in the name of God and vowed to God is a sacrifice, inasmuch as he dies to the world that he may live for God. For this is a part of that mercy which each one has on himself, according to the text : « Have pity on thy own soul, pleasing God ».

Our body too is a sacrifice when, for God's sake, we chasten it, as we ought by temperance, that is when we do not yield our members as « instruments of iniquity unto sin » but as means of holiness to God ...

¹⁴) Augustine treats this finality of man on a more philosophical level in the eighth book and he himself refers the reader to this book in this particular chapter. The emphasis is on the supreme good of man as rational and is well summarized in the eighth chapter of the eighth book.

If then the body which is less than the soul and which the soul uses as a servant or a tool, is a sacrifice when it is used well and rightly for the service of God, how much more so is the soul when it offers itself to God so that, aflame in the fire of divine love, and with the dross of worldly desire melted away, it is remolded into the unchangeable form of God and becomes beautiful in his sight by reason of the bounty of beauty which He has bestowed upon it ...

Since therefore, true sacrifices are works of mercy done to ourselves or our neighbor and directed to God, and since works of mercy are performed that we may be freed from misery and thereby, be happy, and since happiness is only to be found in that Good of which it is said : « But it is good for me to adhere to my God, it follows that the whole of that redeemed city ... is offered as a universal sacrifice to God ... (X, 6)

The man consecrated to God is a sacrifice, the body and soul may be considered as a sacrifice when used well and rightly. In all of these the end of man must be remembered so that the emphasis remains on union with God. This is accomplished, according to Augustine, by works of mercy done to ourselves and to our neighbor, but always then directed toward God. The christian becomes the true sacrifice as he lives less for himself, disciplines his body, and uses all he is, well, in the service of God. The true sacrifice is the sacrifice directed to man's final end, union with God. This last element involves the offering of man himself which is the next element in the understanding of Augustine's doctrine of sacrifice.

Visible and Invisible Sacrifice

As we have already said, Augustine follows a long tradition when he extols the spiritual sacrifice. Lafont remarks : « The sacrifice due to God is fundamentally spiritual and it must be formulated in terms of charity and mercy » ¹⁵).

Augustine roots sacrifice in the desire to live a good life ; he seeks first the « sacrifice of a contrite heart » (X, 5). God could command sacrifices in the old law only because they were « symbols of the efforts we make to attain union with God and to assist our neighbor to the same end » (X, 5). Or as mentioned in the quotation cited above,

¹⁵) LAFONT, p. 194 : « Que ce sacrifice dû à Dieu est fondamentalement spirituel et qu'il faut le formuler en termes de charité et de miséricorde ».

mercy founds sacrifice and particularly the mercy extended to the neighbor. God looks at the person who is offering; looks into the heart to find humility and sorrow; looks to see that the visible is the expression of the invisible.

A visible sacrifice, therefore, is a sacrament or sacred sign of an invisible sacrifice. That is why the penitent in the psalms... who asks God to have mercy on his sins exclaims «For if thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would indeed have given it : with burnt offerings thou wilt not be delighted. A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humbled heart, o God, thou wilt not despise».

Notice that the Prophet in saying that God does not want sacrifice, shows that God does want it. What is meant is that God does not desire the sacrifice of a slaughtered animal, but rather the sacrifice of a contrite heart. (X, 5)

In this same chapter Augustine meditates on his knowledge of scripture, reflects on the words of Psalm 49 and 50 and with emphasis on the sacrifice of the heart, returns to the Old Testament to recall the prophet Micah with his offering of mercy and the Epistle to the Hebrews with its sacrifice of charity. He concludes that all the sacrifices are referred to the love of God and the love of the neighbor :

All the divine precepts, therefore, which refer, under different forms, to sacrifices either in the service of the tabernacle or the temple, are to be understood in the light of symbolism, to refer to the Love of God and neighbor. (X, 5)

Man himself is the best sacrifice :

When raised to him, our heart becomes His altar... we burn the sweetest incense in His sight when we are aflame with holy piety and love. As the best gifts we consecrate and surrender to Him our very selves which he has given us. (X, 3)

The entire city is the «best and most worthy sacrifice» (XIX, 23) for as members of this holy city they offer themselves expressing their love of God and their love of neighbor : «For on these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets», (X, 5). Augustine concludes that it is the interior and spiritual sacrifice that is the true sacrifice which truly unites man to God in a holy union.

Even in his own age, some critics wanted Augustine to remain here on the spiritual level. As seen in chapter 19, Augustine knows human nature too well and moves from the interior to the manifestation of the interior :

There are some who think that, though these visible sacrifices may be suitable for other gods, for the God who is invisible, greater and better, only invisible, greater and better sacrifices, such as the offering of a pure mind and upright will, are appropriate. Such people are evidently ignorant of the fact that these visible sacrifices are mere symbols of invisible sacrifice ... (X, 19)

The interior seeks expression on the plane of the exterior and is so demanded by man's nature. Augustine views the sacrifices of the old law as commanded by God to be the sacrament of the invisible sacrifice : « sacrifices either in the service of the tabernacle or temple are to be understood in the light of symbolism to refer to the love of God and neighbor » (X, 5).

In regard to christianity, the visible sacrifice is still the sign of the invisible sacrifice, the act of charity or a life animated by charity :

When, therefore, the Apostle had exhorted us to present our bodies as a sacrifice, living, holy pleasing to God — our spiritual service — and not to be conformed to this world but be transformed in the newness of our minds, that we might discern what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, he went on to remind us that it is we ourselves who constitute the whole sacrifice. (X, 6)

Lafont expresses well the content of these chapters :

Augustine does not rest on the interior intention of charity; he shows in chapter 6 how that actualizes and concretizes itself among men (a new indication that his conception of the christian sacrifice is not purely « interior ») first on the level of each christian, in his body and soul, *homo Dei consecratus*, and then on the collective level of the City of God, united by their mutual love : *tota redempta civitas*. This sacrifice of the City of God — Augustine shows us — is offered by the one high priest, Jesus Christ, and is celebrated in the liturgy of the church¹⁶).

¹⁶) LAFONT, p. 194. « Mais Augustin n'en reste pas à cette intention intérieure de charité : il montre au chapitre VI comment celle-ci s'actualise et se concrétise parmi les hommes (nouvel indice que sa conception du sacrifice chrétien n'est pas purement « intérieure ») : au niveau d'abord de chaque chrétien, en son corps et en son âme, *homo Dei nomine consecratus* au niveau collectif ensuite de la Cité de Dieu, unie par les liens mutuels de l'amour : *tota redempta civitas*. Ce sacrifice de la Cité de Dieu, Augustin nous le montre offert par le Prêtre unique, Jésus-Christ, et célébré dans la liturgie de l'Église ».

The Sacrifice of the Angels

The City of God in the thought of Augustine is not limited to the earthly realm. He also considers the angels :

Since my present intention is to say something about the origin of the holy City, I must first deal with the holy angels who form such a large, and indeed, the most blessed part of that city, since they have never departed from it. (XI, 9)

Augustine places the angels in the total perspective of the City of God, but it is difficult to judge their precise relationship in regard to sacrifice. Throughout the eleventh chapter of the *City of God* and also in the beginning of the following book, he speaks extensively of the angels, but rarely in relationship to sacrifice :

And they who share this common good are in a holy communion both with Him to whom they adhere and one with another, and they form a single community, one City of God, which is also His living sacrifice and His living temple ¹⁷. (XII, 9)

In other places of the work Augustine equates the finality of the angels with the finality of men, i.e., to adhere to the living God. The line immediately preceding the above quotation states : « Nor is it the good only of men, but first and foremost that of angels which is referred to in the words : 'It is good for me to adhere to my God' ». (XII, 9) ¹⁸. Thus it can be stated that the angels also offer a sacrifice as members of the holy city and by this they too adhere to God in a holy communion. The whole city, angels and men, offer themselves and by this offering achieve their beatitude. Such notions will have import in the full appreciation of the notion of sacrifice and especially in regard to the question of the eternal sacrifice.

The Doctrine of Priesthood

Augustine's doctrine on priesthood is closely connected to his notion of sacrifice. Moreover, as his doctrine of sacrifice was not formulated without a conscious reference to history (especially the history of the Jews) so his doctrine of priesthood is rooted in that same history.

¹⁷ Cf. X, 7; 31.

¹⁸ Cf. XI, 13; XII, 1.

He knows that men have always been anxious to offer the ritual of sacrifice : « those earliest men offered sacrifice to God ... » (XV, 16). He also knows that the doctrine of sacrifice has always been intimately connected with the doctrine of priesthood : « If there is no sacrifice, there is no priest » (*En. in Ps.* 130, 4). As the end of sacrifice is to unite man in a holy society with God, so the office which continues and offers this sacrifice has the same finality. The priest realizes by his activity that goal toward which all sacrifice is directed ¹⁹).

More fundamental to the notion of sacrifice in the priesthood, is the examination of the purpose which underlies both notions : sanctification in unity. To live in a holy society with God demands a purification which is actually accomplished in the offering of sacrifice. « The sanctification of man, the work of the priest, is then a transformation which frees us from sin and its consequences » ²⁰). The priest in the thought of Augustine, sanctifies by prayer and expiation, but especially by sacrifice.

The Priesthood of Christ

Thus far we have reviewed the understanding of sacrifice in history and in particular in scripture where it is regarded as man's expression of hope for communion with God. Augustine, we saw, continued this tradition with the emphasis on the interior sacrifice. For the Bishop of Hippo only that is the true sacrifice which enables man to enter into a holy society with God and since this seeks outward expression, the invisible sacrifice of the heart connotes the visible sacrifice in ritual. Together with his concept of sacrifice, Augustine joins his understanding of priesthood : he who stands between God and man and offers the sacrifice that will achieve the end of all sacrifice. There is one sacrifice as there is one priest : Jesus Christ.

Christ Jesus, Himself man, is the true mediator for, inasmuch as He took the « form of a slave », He became the Mediator between God and men. In His character as God, He receives sacrifices ... yet He chose, in His character as a slave, to be Himself the sacrifice rather than to receive it ... Thus it is that He is both the Priest who offers and the Oblation that is offered. (X, 20)

¹⁹) Cf. LECUYER, p. 906.

²⁰) PINTARD, p. 152.

Augustine sees only one true sacrifice in the full sense of the word, and that is the sacrifice of Christ so that there is no union with God possible unless through this sacrifice ²¹).

When Augustine treats of the one true sacrifice of the one true priest, he considers the activity of Christ on earth and in heaven. In both instances, sanctification is the unifying element. In the same line of thought he judges all other earthly sacrifices : they are illuminated in the light of the sacrifice of Christ :

The old law commanded that the victims of the sacrifices should be animals that were clean and without any blemish and thus able to symbolize people of sinless holiness, a condition realized in fact only by Christ. (XX, 26)

Moreover, the sacrifices of the Old Law were destined to cease, for they were mere symbols of the true sacrifice which all races would offer from sunrise to sunset :

It was through the Hebrew prophets themselves that the divine revelations were given that the symbolic sacrifices of the Jews would one day cease, and that thereafter all races would offer one sacrifice from sunrise to sunset ... (XIX, 23)

As we saw earlier, these sacrifices could be prescribed in the thought of Augustine, only because they were visible sacrifices, as manifestations of the invisible sacrifice which was realized perfectly in Christ ²²). They were sanctioned by God but they were not the true sacrifice since they were unable to effect what is demanded : the holy union with God. Men offered their sacrifices conscious of their sins : « For it was not in justice, but in sin that they offered their victims » (XX, 26). Christ alone was without sin : « Christ alone was found as one without sin » (XX, 26).

This does not mean, however, that Augustine evacuates all value from these sacrifices. As preparatory for the sacrifice of Christ, their value does not cease; they maintain a continuity in the history of man's religious efforts. In one section of the *City of God* Augustine examines the sacrifice of Cain (Gen. 4,4) and comments on the word « discernere ». The place, the time, the victim, the object or even those present who eat of the sacrifice can cause the sacrifice to be displeasing : « One does not rightly distinguish when one does not properly dis-

²¹) Cf. LECUYER, p. 192.

²²) Cf. X, 5.

criminate in the matter of place or time or victim or subject or object of the sacrifice or of those among whom what is offered up is distributed » (XV, 7). At any one particular time some or even many of these aspects may be present but only with Christ will all the aspects of the true sacrifice that is pleasing to God be achieved. All of the sacrifices of the old law were preparatory for the sacrifice in Christ and in him all that was good and true in the sacrifices which preceded him was summed up and perfected.

Perhaps the most important continuity and perfection of the sacrifice of Christ, however, lies in the relationship between the interior and the exterior sacrifice. In the same chapter as mentioned above, the sacrifice of Cain is rejected, according to Augustine, because « while he gave to God some possession that was his, he kept himself for himself » (XV, 7). The sacrifice of Christ accomplished the end of all sacrifices in as much as it was not a weak sign but a powerful sign of an interior offering in charity ; it was the complete gift of himself to the Father. He loved and so took the form of a slave and became the offering. As Augustine mentioned so often, what God demanded was the sacrifice of a heart inflamed with love (X, 3). Christ offered such a sacrifice in his life and consummated this offering on the cross. « He preferred to be in the form of sacrifice, than to receive it ... through this he is priest, the one who offers and himself the offering » (X, 10).

To understand how this forms the heart of priesthood, the purpose of priesthood and sacrifice must be recalled. When man gives himself perfectly to God with a fervent love, he is sanctified, brought into union with God and reaches his perfection and beatitude. « Our end is to adhere to God » (X, 3). Certainly what fundamentally enabled Christ to reconcile man to God was the incarnation ; he was God in man. What inclined Christ to do this, however, as man, was perfect charity. If Christ did not love his Father and his brothers with a most perfect human love, nothing would have urged him to reconcile the two at such a personal cost ²³). Charity, the basis of all religion, forms the fundamental element of priesthood. The full and perfect priesthood of the Son of God in man becoming the one who offers and the offering, manifested this same love. We are led from the cross to what the cross signified, knowing that in this unique sacrifice of

²³) Cf. Guy de BROGLIE, *Une thèse sur le sacerdoce de la Vierge. — Marianum* 15(1953), pp. 354-378.

the one mediator priest, man has returned to the holy society, so long in the plan of God.

But while Augustine speaks of the once and for all sacrifice of Christ, he knows that his activity has not now ceased. The one sacrifice is prolonged in time because humanity is composed of distinct and successive men and because each man is under time, caught in history, and unable to realize this perfect society with God through one action ²⁴). The sanctification of men continues now that Christ has preceded his followers into the Holy of Holies to make intercession for them before the Father. « Jesus Christ, in as much as he is man, intercedes for us with the Father » (*Tract. in Joannem* 102, 4) ²⁵). As prayer is an active characteristic of priesthood, Christ the priest prays for us. Various commentators of Augustine seek to explain Augustine's thought on « intercession ». Lecuyer remarks : « Because the presence of our Head with the Father is the pledge of our salvation, what he offers are the first fruits of redeemed humanity and it is through him who sits at the right hand of the Father and who intercedes for us, that we receive the grace that saves us and leads us to God » ²⁶). In this same regard, the remark by Quinot in interpreting « interpellare » is interesting : « For Saint Augustine 'interpellare' is taken spontaneously in relationship with the eucharistic sacrifice as the sacrament of the prayer of Christ in heaven for the members of his body » ²⁷). Augustine sees Christ standing forever before the Father as the oblation of Calvary while we on earth continue to join him in offering ourselves to the Father in the Eucharist. As we offer we know that he will lead us to the fulfillment of our desires when the end of sacrifice and of human aspirations will be accomplished in the holy society with God. Augustine sees Christ as the mediator and priest *now*.

²⁴) Cf. Yves de MONTCHEUIL, *Mélanges Théologiques*. Paris, Aubier, 1946, p. 51.

²⁵) Cf. *De Trinitate* I, CX, 20. Also : B. QUINOT, *L'influence de l'épître aux Hébreux dans la notion augustinienne du vrai sacrifice*, — *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 8 (1962), pp. 160-168.

²⁶) LECUYER, pp. 908-909. « Car la présence de notre chef auprès du Père est la gage de notre salut, ce qu'il offre ce sont les prémices de toute l'humanité rachetée » et c'est par celui qui siège à la droite du Père et qui intercède en notre faveur que nous recevons la grâce qui nous sauve et qui nous conduit à Dieu ».

²⁷) QUINOT, p. 141. « Pour S. Augustin 'interpellare' est mis spontanément en relation avec le sacrifice eucharistique comme sacrement de la prière du Christ au ciel pour les membres de son corps ».

The Activity of His Members

To the principal actions of the priest in heaven, there are analogous actions here on earth. Augustine unites the activity of the Head to the activity of the members. As Christ offers himself eternally, so his members offer themselves here on earth. When Augustine speaks of the offering of the members of Christ (« We ourselves who form this City are His best and most worthy sacrifice », XIX, 23) he follows the long tradition that the Lord wishes the offering of man himself and this has not changed with the coming of Christ. As we saw, when Augustine speaks of the sacrifice of Cain he interpretes the meaning of the passage in such a way that he believes the sacrifice was rejected because Cain did not offer himself ²⁸). He applies the same notion to the sacrifice of christians today.

If charity is the heart of all religion and of all sacrifice, then, Augustine contends, what is demanded of the christian is a sacrifice motivated by the love of God but manifested in the love of others : « Those are true sacrifices which are works of mercy done to ourselves or our neighbor and directed to God » (X, 6). The christian accepts the same demands of the Jew and of any other religious person. God wishes the offering of self, the interior sacrifice animated by charity, essentially involved in works of mercy in favor of others. With this activity the christian is joined to the activity of Christ his Head, who continues to offer himself to the Father. To this notion Augustine joins the celebration of the Eucharist. As priests, joined to the unique priest, they offer the Eucharist as their visible sacrifice : « For just as we call all of them Christs by reason of their mystical chrism, we call them all priests insomuch as they are members of the One Priest ». (XX, 10) « We many, are one body in Christ. This is the Sacrifice, as the faithful understand, which the Church continues to celebrate in the sacrament of the altar » (X, 6). We have reached the pinnacle of Augustine's thought on priesthood and sacrifice. The Eucharist signifies and contains the offering of Christ; the Eucharist takes place as the sacrament of the true sacrifice which for Augustine brings man to God and to beatitude, into that holy society with God.

²⁸) Cf. XV, 7; X, 3.

The eternal Sacrifice of the whole Christ

Throughout this paper two elements have remained foremost : the meaning of true sacrifice and the position of the invisible sacrifice in the thought of Augustine. True sacrifice unites man to God in a holy society; the invisible sacrifice forms the heart of sacrifice and signifies the offering of man himself. Further it was seen that these notions are not limited to christianity nor even to Judaism, but Augustine sees them involved in man's nature as a person called to union with his God. God has called man to communion continuously and man has made efforts to accomplish this communion. With Christ alone the true sacrifice became reality and in him the invisible sacrifice reached perfection in the total offering of himself.

Augustine sees christians involved in the sacrifice of themselves in union with that sacrifice of Christ since it is only through his activity that union with God becomes real. In the beginning of this paper the question was posed in what sense Augustine considered the sacrifice of Christ and the christian as eternal. The response should be evident : the *true* sacrifice which unites man to God must remain if man is truly united to God. Even now the sacrifice of christians is directed to that day when the City of God will be completed, when Christ will hand over his kingdom to the Father, when God will be all in all, when man will adhere to the divinity in a holy society. If man's goal in life, the source of his happiness, is to adhere to the living God and this is the same end of sacrifice, then the true sacrifice remains forever as man is truly joined to God.

The same can be seen in regard to the invisible sacrifice, the offering of self. To offer oneself is not a « once in a lifetime affair ». Such a sacrifice involves all of man for all of time since it is by means of this that the union of God is personally accepted. At this time it may help to recall what Augustine says of the sacrifice of the angels. Men and angels offer the same sacrifice and by this offering attain their fulfillment and become God's living temple²⁹). As the angels who « have never departed » (XI, 9) offer themselves in sacrifice, so when the kingdom is complete, men and angels will offer themselves forever, remaining in God's holy society.

²⁹) Cf. Treatment on the sacrifice of the angels above.

In regard to the visible sacrifice, Augustine has little to say on its permanency. As mentioned by Quinot «interpellare» seems bound up with the eucharistic celebration and surely this will cease ³⁰). Lamirande treats the question of the heavenly sacrifice ³¹) and speaks of a more perfect interiorisation of Christ's influence on his members and a passing of external mediation and signs. The notion of more perfect interiorisation of the mediation of Christ, may well be another explanation of the role of the true and invisible sacrifice as presented in this paper. In regard to the second point, perhaps Lamirande says too much and too little in regard to the thought of Augustine. The Bishop of Hippo remains silent on this point and in this regard Lamirande may say too much. On the other hand the thought of Augustine on the relationship between the visible and invisible sacrifice and the resurrection of the body as the fulfillment of the christian man, encourages the thought that Augustine would have held for some visible manifestation of this eternal true and invisible sacrifice. Augustine, however, remains silent. The true and invisible sacrifice remains. Let it rest there.

The eternal Priesthood of Christ

Augustine teaches that Christ is mediator and priest because he took the form of a slave and offered himself in sacrifice ³²). What was said of the permanency of the true and invisible sacrifice in regard to angels and men applies equally, if not in a more superior mode, to Christ. The love by which he offered himself is an eternal love.

In the *City of God*, however, Augustine makes only veiled references to the permanency of the priesthood of Christ : « The Lord has sworn and he will not repent ... thou art a priest forever according

³⁰) Cf. Also, AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate* I, 21 when he implies that the Eucharist will cease.

³¹) « Que deviendra alors, dans le Jérusalem eschatologique, le sacrifice céleste ? Saint Augustin ne rejette pas l'influence du Christ lui-même agent par lequel les élus adhéreront à lui. Sur le mode de cette influence il se montre pourtant encore une fois d'une discrétion qui nous déçoit. On ne se tromperait guère, en tous cas, à parler d'une intériorisation toujours plus parfaite de cette influence et, partant, d'un dépassement des médiations externes et des images, pour ne retenir que la réalité de la vie en Dieu dans le Christ ». E. LAMIRANDE, *L'église céleste selon s. Augustin*. Paris, 1963, p. 259.

³²) Cf. Treatment on priesthood of Christ, especially, X, 20.

to the order of Melchisedech. Now given the fact that the priesthood and sacrifice according to Aaron are nowhere to be found, and that priests every-where today are offering, under Christ the priest, the sacrifice which Melchisedech symbolically offered ... who can fail to recognize the identity of the personage the psalm addresses » (XVII, 17). In another work, however, Augustine explicitly mentions the eternal aspect of Christ's priesthood : « The priesthood of Aaron is not in any temple, while the priesthood of Christ remains forever in heaven » (*Adv. Judaeos*, IX, 13). Why Augustine does not speak more of the eternity of the priesthood of Christ is problematic ? It seems that his understanding of true and invisible sacrifice as well as his appreciation of Christ as mediator with the influence of the epistle to Hebrews ³³), demand an eternal priesthood.

In regard to the victimhood of Christ, what was said of the invisible sacrifice should be recalled here. Christ offers himself to the Father in love ; he stands before the Father in an eternal state of offering.

In summary, the true and invisible sacrifice of Christ and his members remain in heaven in as much as together they form the one holy society with the Father. Augustine keeps to himself his thoughts on the visible sacrifice. As Christ is mediator and priest as man, his influence on the heavenly city will remain and in this sense his priesthood is eternal.

In the beginning of this study Augustine was presented as one who can say something to modern man. Exactly what does he say ?

Contemporary ecumenical theology treats the question of sacrifice especially in regard to the Eucharist. The Augustinian notion of true and invisible sacrifice may well be the better foundation for discussions that cross church lines, than the medieval notion of sacrifice.

Contemporary theology also emphasizes the incarnational aspect of the work of Christ. The notion of Augustine on sacrifice as any work which unites us with God, or any work directed to our final end, combines the incarnational aspect so prominent today with the eschatological aspect of christianity. Both viewpoints must be maintained and are maintained in Augustine.

³³) Quinot's study on the influence of the Epistle to the Hebrews on Augustine merits consideration. He claims that this Epistle is the basis for the relationship of the terms : mediator, priest and sacrifice and offers convincing arguments, p. 166.

The renewal of the place of liturgy in the life of the christian, also finds some support in the doctrine of Augustine. There can be no sacrifice which is not the expresseion of the love of God and love of neighbor. The Eucharist as celebrated on Sunday can not be separated from the practical love of man in daily life. Otherwise there can be no true sacrifice. Such a notion must be the foundation for the presentation of the liturgical dimension of the total christian life.

Augustine has much to offer the modern christian. His teaching on sacrifice and priesthood, the historical and the eschatological, combine to present an integrated picture that can continue to offer an understanding of the mystery that is Christ. The *City of God* is not easy reading, but when the price is paid, it offers many dividends.

Seminary of Our Lady of Angels

John F. O'GRADY, C.M.

Albany, New York, 12201.