**Christ’s blood will purify our consciences from useless rituals, so that we may serve the living God.**

(Hebrews 9.14)

Weddings – most brides want them perfect, but they rarely are – the best man forgotten the rings, the bride came in slippers, the wedding car broke down going to the church...

Last week I talked about the perfection we seek but cannot find, except in Christ, the perfect High Priest.

And that we rely on him rather than ourselves. This week we take it a stage further.

In Greek Platonic philosophy the perfect (ideal) was in heaven, earthly things are imperfect copies.

This is why the earthly sacrifices do not work too well, and High Priests need to repeat their sacrifices.

But with Jesus we have a heavenly (=perfect) High Priest whose sacrifice need not be repeated.

This questions the sacrificial system. The standard Christian response is that sacrifices are unnecessary.

All rituals are unnecessary, but that does not mean they are all useless.

Here are some typical rituals: daily Bible reading, saying grace before meals, kneeling to pray, standing for the offering, the Lord’s Prayer, communion.

Each could be useless, but each need not be. What makes a ritual useless?

It’s not that ‘this ritual’ is good & ‘that ritual’ is bad, but treating the ritual as mechanical/unthinking with no passion or subsequent action, is bad for us.

So believing prayer works just because we have prayed is no better than ritual magic, or a lucky rabbit’s foot.

Daily Bible reading done as a chore/duty may build up resentment towards the Bible.

Repeating the Lords Prayer without thought does a disservice to a great prayer.

Receiving bread and wine is no cure-all.

But a prayer that energises us to action, a Bible reading that brings us closer to God, communion that liberates is what we seek. TEXT.

These are rituals that ‘work’ as they free us (purify our consciences) to serve the living God.

And that is our ultimate aim, is it not?