

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

In the Light of Scripture

by

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE EUCHARIST (I)

Transubstantiation

FROM *What Catholics Believe*, p. 37, we quote the Roman Catholic Doctrine of the Eucharist:

The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, together with His Soul and Divinity, under the appearance of bread and wine. The Matter of this Sacrament is wheaten bread and wine of the grape. The form is: "This is My Body," said over the bread; and "This is My Blood of the new and eternal covenant, the mystery of faith, which shall be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins," said over the wine. The change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ takes place by the power of God when the words of consecration ordained by Christ at the Last Supper are pronounced by the priest at Holy Mass. This change is called Transubstantiation; that is, a change—not in figure or appearance, but in reality. Our Lord at the Last Supper said, "This is My Body . . . This is My Blood." What looked like bread and wine were by His word no longer what they appeared to be, but were His Precious Body and Blood. After the consecration the bread and wine are gone, and on the altar in their stead is Himself, Body and Blood, and Soul and Divinity, not perceived by our senses, but hidden under the appearances of the bread and wine which remain after the substance has been taken away.

Rome claims —

1. That the Lord promised this sacrament (John 6: 48-58).
2. That afterward He established it (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14, 15; cf. I Corinthians 11:24, 25).
3. That Paul bore witness to it. In point of fact, it was not until 380 that the doctrine of transubstantiation first appeared, and then the ideas concerning it were vague and at variance with each other. The word transubstantiation was not in common use until 830, and even after that the doctrine was still under debate. It was promulgated by Innocent III in 1215 and made an article of faith in 1551 by the Council of Trent, which pronounced a curse upon all who rejected or doubted it.

Since Rome claims to base her doctrine upon the Holy Scriptures, however, let us examine the passages she cites.

1. John 6:48-58 is claimed as a prophecy of the Holy Eucharist:

I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

In this passage there are eight references to eating, and a fivefold repetition of the word flesh, all from the lips of our Lord, but we utterly deny that it is a prophecy of the Roman Catholic Eucharist.

Against this passage let us set the words of the Lord found in the earlier verses of this chapter, forming part of the same controversy between Himself and the Jews who were trying to make Him repeat the first miracle of the loaves and fishes so that they might get another free meal.

This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. . . . He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. . . . Ye also have seen me, and believe not . . . Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out . . . This is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life . . . No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him . . . Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. . . . He that believeth on me hath everlasting life (John 6:29, 35-37, 40, 44, 45, 47).

In these passages we have the words believe or come used nine times. The result of eating the flesh and drinking the blood was eternal life. The result of believing and coming in these verses is also eternal life. Eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man, therefore, are synonyms for coming to Him and believing in Him.

The Jews in their spiritual darkness did not understand this and were stumbled, and asked among themselves, “**How can this man give us his flesh to eat?**” If taken literally, they certainly had reason on their side, for to have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood would have been sheer cannibalism.

Some of our Lord’s disciples also were stumbled by His words, and said, “**This is a hard saying, who can hear it?**” But the Lord gave His explanation to those who were willing to receive it, even as He did with His parables in Matthew 13, for He said to them:

It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63).

Peter’s words, spoken on behalf of the other apostles as well as himself, showed that they had truly interpreted our Lord’s meaning as coming to Christ and believing on Him, for he said:

Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God (John 6:68, 69).

What did our Lord mean when He said, “**As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me**”? (John 6:57). How did He “**live by the Father**”? Not by literal eating, of course, but by faith in Him and His Word.

2. Now let us examine the passages Rome cites concerning the actual institution of Holy Communion or the Eucharist.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:26-29).

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many (Mark 14:22-24).

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you (Luke 22:19, 20).

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, where he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

The first things we need to note perhaps in these passages is that the words “**blessed**” and “**given thanks**” are used interchangeably, and that the Greek word for blessed is *euloges* (to praise). The giving of thanks and the blessing or praise were addressed to God. Rome claims that the bread and wine are blessed, and by that blessing changed into something different—body and blood. But the language employed will not allow of this. It was thanksgiving and praise given to God—just as our Lord, when feeding the multitude, gave thanks for the loaves and fishes.

The next thing calling for attention are the words our Lord used after the thanksgiving: “**This is my body . . . this is my blood of the new testament.**”

Could He have meant His actual body and blood were there in His hands, when He Himself was in their midst, in the very same body that He had indwelt while with them through the years they had followed Him? It is incredible! Many times in Holy Scripture we find the same grammatical construction as our Lord used on this occasion, where the verb to be is used in the sense of to represent, and can have no other meaning:

- **The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years** (Genesis 41:26).
- **Judah is a lion's whelp . . . Issachar is a strong ass** (Genesis 49:9, 14).
- **The ten horns . . . are ten kings** (Daniel 7:24).

- **The Lord God is a sun and shield** (Psalm 84:11).
- **Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path** (Psalm 119:105).
- **The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom** (Matthew 13:38).
- **Their throat is an open sepulchre** (Romans 3:13).
- **I am the door** (John 10:9).
- **I am the true vine** (John 15:1).

We frequently use the same figure of speech today. Looking at the plan of a house, we say, "This is the dining room, and this is the kitchen." Or looking at a photograph, we say, "This is so-and-so." In doing so, we speak just as our Lord spoke when He took the bread and the wine. Indeed, He did not speak of the wine, but the cup when He said, "**This is my blood of the New Testament.**"

Yet another thing calling for attention is that our Lord still called the wine "**the fruit of the vine**" after He had given thanks, saying, "**I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of God,**" showing that its substance had not been changed. Paul did the same, calling the elements bread and wine, "**For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come**" (I Corinthians 11:26).

Rome claims transubstantiation as the greatest of all miracles. All evidence from the Word of God, and from practical experience, demonstrates that it is not a miracle at all, but a complete falsehood. When on earth our Lord wrought many miracles, but they all carried their own evidence. The blind saw, the lame walked, the dead were restored to active life, the bread was multiplied with thousands of witnesses to the fact. Our Lord's resurrection was a mighty miracle, so mighty that even those who knew Him best at first doubted. How did the Lord dispel their doubts? "**Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have**" (Luke 24:39). To doubting Thomas He said, "**Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing**" (John 20:27).

Our Lord told His disciples to exercise their ordinary critical faculties to prove the reality of His resurrection. Not so the Roman Church with regard to the Eucharist. Though the bread and wine after being blessed by the priests have not changed their appearance, shape, taste, smell, weight, or color, and every quality apprehended by the senses is exactly as it was before, a Catholic must reject the evidence of all his senses or be accursed. What they apprehend with their senses are what the Roman Church calls "accidents." There were no "accidents" when our Lord turned the water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee:

When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now (John 2:9, 10).

The Roman Catholic Church speaks about the real presence of the Lord in the sacramental elements. From the Apostle Paul we find on the contrary that it is rather the real absence of the Lord of which we are reminded:

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come (I Corinthians 11: 26).

A keepsake is of no value as long as a friend is with us, but it comes into use when He has gone away. And so it is with the Lord, and this remembrance feast.

Forty days after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus ascended far above all heavens (Ephesians 4:10). In the sense of His divine presence, He is as near to us today as ever He was to His disciples of old. His glorified body which He wore on earth He still wears in Heaven at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3). There He sits as our Great High Priest, ever living to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:21).

The glorified human body of the Lord Jesus is not in the Eucharist. It is at the Father's right hand, where He appears in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24).

~ end of chapter 18 ~

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