

Why I Became A Protestant

by

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CHAPTER SIX

WORSHIP IN LATIN

If the Catholic Church were infallibly the Church of Jesus Christ, it would not order absurd things. It does order them, so it is not the Church of Christ.

We shall enumerate the most important regulations in this chapter.

The Catholic Church says that “the holy Mass is the authentic reproduction of the sacrifice of the cross, where Jesus Christ is sacrificed on the altar table in bloodless fashion, just as He did it for all of us with shedding of blood on the top of Calvary.”

It says that it is “the authentic reproduction of the Last Supper of the Lord, where He changed the bread and the wine into His body and His blood.”

So it is not a simple memorial. It is the most important act of Catholic worship.

Well then, even admitting that it were really the very sacrifice of the cross and of the Supper, an absurd contradiction would be apparent.

This reproduction of the sacrifice of the cross, according to the Catholic Church, cannot be celebrated in any other language but Latin.

It is so essential for the Catholics to celebrate it in Latin that it is preferable, according to them, not to celebrate it in the common tongue.

This is the fact. Everybody knows that neither the Last Supper nor the Lord’s Passion was done in Latin.

It is well known that the faithful who participate and for whom the religious act is carried out, don’t understand Latin. It is well known that the Mass can be assisted, in representation of the people, by a boy who does not know how to pronounce Latin words correctly and who says arrant nonsense when he does it and does not understand what he is saying.

If it were said in his native tongue he would say it correctly; he would understand it, and he could be more attentive and devout.

In spite of all this, the Catholic Church prefers that the Holy Supper and the Passion of the Lord should not be reproduced, rather than have it done in the language of the country, or in that which Jesus Christ used or the Apostles wrote.

Enormous inversion of values! Substance sacrificed to form. End changed to means and means changed to end. And all this to the most serious detriment of souls!

Many priests understand the Breviary only with difficulty. They get from it hardly any profit at all. If it were said in their language they would understand it; they would have devotion and would acquire a fund of solid Catholic doctrine.

In spite of these reasons, the priest who recites prayers in the common tongue commits mortal sin, according to what the Catholic Church says.

We ask: “Is there anyone who can believe that if one says to God, ‘*Miserere mei Deus secundum magnam misericordiam tuam,*’ God hears him and is satisfied; but if he says, ‘Have mercy on me, Lord, according to thy great mercy,’ God not only does not listen to him but is gravely offended, so that He condemns the daring priest to eternal punishment?”

Again the end changed to a means and the means to an end, and with most serious harm to souls.

Does not this recall the Pharisaic spirit?

When a sacrament is administered to the faithful, they do not understand anything of what is said to them. A language is spoken to them which they do not understand.

The Catholic Church is aware of this fact: yet it prefers that the worshippers should not understand the language and lose their devotion, rather than that they understand it and derive spiritual profit from the magnificent sense of the religious acts and administration of the sacraments, if it is to be in a different language from Latin.

It hurts one who knows the Catholic liturgy to consider what the faithful are losing with this prescription. How the faithful would rejoice, if they understood what was said to them!

Again the means as an end and the end as a means.

It is right, praiseworthy, and useful that the Church should have its own international language, since it crosses many frontiers; and that when the Pope or the united Church issues moral or dogmatic rules, it should do it in its own language, since it has not inherited the gift of tongues which was granted to the Apostles. But note what the Catholic Church does in cases when it is interested in having its faithful people observe the rules it sets forth. The encyclical, or Apostolic Constitution, or Bull, is sent in Latin throughout the world. Then in each nation it is translated into the language of the country so that everyone can understand it.

And here we ask, “And is not the Catholic Church interested in having its faithful profit as much as possible from the religious acts which are performed in the church, and from the administration of its sacraments?”

If it does not interest the Catholic Church, it does greatly interest the Apostles, the infallible teachers of gospel truth.

Let us hear Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians:

“And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air . . .

“Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church . . .

“I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue” (I Corinthians 14:7-10; 11, 12, 18, 19).

To all this they answer, “The Church permits everything to be translated.”

“Words, words, words,” we should reply, as Shakespeare did.

It is very sad that in a matter of such transcendence people should play with words and with sophistries of such tragic consequences for the true religion of peoples.

Surely it is permitted to translate everything. But this is not what we need. What we need is that at the time of the celebration and administration or in the saying of the priestly Breviary it can be done in a language understandable to the one who performs it and to the one who hears.

Let us imagine what it means to a man that at the time of the celebration he must look for the translation of all that the priest is saying in another tongue; to follow it even though the priest may be going faster, to read even though there may be little light, as is the case in most Catholic churches; to have to read, even though he who attends the liturgical act be tired as to his vision or as to his mind, or know little about reading. Besides, to have the translation of the whole Catholic liturgy is not always within reach of all pocketbooks, especially if the family is numerous, considering the high prices of missals and other liturgical books.

Is it not putting too many difficulties in the way of a matter which is obligatory for salvation, according to the Catholic Church?

Note that Jesus Christ always used the language of those who heard Him. He gave the Apostles the gift of tongues so that each listener would hear them in his own tongue.

How different the procedure of Jesus Christ from that of those who say they are His Church!

EUCCHARISTIC FASTING

Jesus Christ gave the Eucharist to the Apostles immediately after supper.

Yet when the Catholic wishes to take communion he must have fasted since midnight.

If someone, through need of health, takes a little tablet, or if through forgetfulness he drinks a little water, he is no longer worthy of receiving the body of the Lord.

On the other hand, the one who has murmured, or has become impatient, or stolen five hundred pesetas (about 6 cents each), can take communion, because Catholic morality says that this is only a venial sin.

So, according to the Catholic Church, the one who has committed a deliberate venial sin is more worthy of receiving the Lord than the one who has performed an act which isn't even a fault.

Can anyone believe that where a little water or an insignificant pill has entered, Jesus Christ cannot?

Did He not say, "What comes forth from your heart is what contaminates, not what enters through the mouth"?

It is said that if one asks permission of Rome, in case of need, a dispensation from fasting is always granted.

Again the word lacking in meaning and the hypocritical sophistry!

We ask, how can one who has a heart ailment appeal to Rome when he feels his heart is wrought up, and he knows that it will calm down if he takes a sedative every few hours; or one who has worked hard the day before, or one who has eaten little, and feels faint and knows that with a few crackers or an egg he can hold out until the hour of Communion, when it takes at least two weeks to get a dispensation from Rome?

Besides, we ask, what permission does one need to follow and imitate Jesus Christ? Did not He say, "**I am the way**"?

Well, we have all been called to follow Him, and no one can stop us.

The Gospel says explicitly, "**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**" (Mark 14:22).

If for Him there was no objection at all to this bread's being mixed with the other food of the Paschal supper, why does the Catholic Church have any? Can it be more scrupulous or wiser than our Lord?

CONFESSION

On leaving the Catholic Church this question occurs to one, "Outside of the Catholic Church who will pardon my sins?"

The Catholic Church imposes auricular confession as obligatory to obtain pardon from sins.

The whole foundation of this Catholic dogma is in the text from John, "**Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained**" (20:23).

In this case, as in that of the keys of the kingdom, it is proper to ask, "To whom did Jesus Christ say this?"

In the matter of the keys, it was to *a single apostle*, Peter; and the Catholic Church without reason or any foundation at all extends it *to many*.

In this case, the promise is made to many who are gathered together with the apostles. The Evangelist Luke tells us that the disciples from Emmaus found the eleven gathered together, and *them that were with them* (24:33).

And John, narrating the event, says literally, "**When the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews** (note that he doesn't say "the Apostles," or "the eleven"), **came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you**" (20:22, 23).

Therefore it was not an exclusive privilege granted to the Apostolic College so that they might pass it on to their successors.

"But how can it be," the Catholic will say, "that Jesus Christ gave to all the disciples, even to those who were not Apostles, the priestly power of forgiving sins?"

Of course one cannot conceive of such a privilege, granted in such a way, as the Catholic Church interprets it. But this doesn't seem to be the interpretation that the Apostles and disciples themselves gave to such words from the Lord.

In fact, we possess plenty of apostolic letters; and what does this holy, inspired and infallible literature tell us about the pardon of sins? Does it teach us that the Apostles or the disciples of the Lord, or other ministers ordained by them, should hear sacramental confessions and give absolution in the Roman Catholic way?

In not a single passage of the New Testament is it recommended that we confess sins to an Apostle, presbyter, or bishop; nor do we have an example of it in the Acts of the Apostles.

On the contrary, to a sinner like Simon the sorcerer they said, **“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee”** (Acts 8:22). They do not recommend to him to make a good confession.

Could Peter have forgotten his own power of pardoning?

And John says, **“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins”** (I John 2:1, 2).

He doesn't say, “If anyone sins, let him not despair. Let him come to us, for we have received power from the Lord to pardon your sins.”

No, none of the apostles says this.

The lack of allusions to auricular confession in the whole New Testament makes one think of the only interpretation which can be given to the words of Jesus.

If they had understood that only those sins which they pardoned would be pardoned, they would have preached insistently, as the Catholic priests do, the need to go and confess their sins to some one of the apostles or those whom they ordained. Since it wasn't that way, it means that they didn't understand the words of Jesus the way the Catholic church does. For even granting that the words of Jesus in this case expressed what they literally said, the apostles and the disciples of the Lord never exercised this privilege.

It is not conceivable that the Lord should bind the salvation of men to the act of other men's pardoning their sins, and the apostles didn't understand it that way.

Then, what sense should be given to those words?

I must recall here that this book is not a book of theology or a manual of apologetics, as I have already mentioned in the introduction. So this is not the place to give a complete exegesis of the Gospel text, but only to indicate why I left Catholicism.

I shall suggest, nevertheless, that there can be only one interpretation which the apostles and disciples gave it, and therefore the only one that we ought to give it.

The apostles had been chosen to spread throughout the world the good news of the Gospel. Jesus said to them.

“Go and preach the gospel to the whole world. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be damned” (Mark 16:15, 16).

To be saved it is necessary that one's sins be forgiven him; to be condemned it is necessary that his sins be not pardoned.

The sins of those who believe will be pardoned, by faith and repentance on hearing the Word of God preached by the apostles.

Those will be condemned, that is to say their sins will not be forgiven them, who when they hear the Word of God preached by the apostles do not believe and do not repent.

Since the apostles are the means whereby men may obtain faith and with it salvation and forgiveness of sins, the Lord can truly say to them, “The sins which shall be pardoned through your preaching shall be pardoned, and the sins which shall not be pardoned through your preaching will remain unpardoned.”

Only faith in Jesus Christ, obtained through the Word of God, can pardon sins. There is no other means of remission.

ECCLESIASTICAL CELIBACY

There are many arguments which can be brought against this ecclesiastical rule. We shall give here only the refutation of the principal arguments set forth by the Catholics, on which this serious obligation of the Catholic priest is based.

They say, “Celibacy had its origin when the Son of God assumed flesh. He began on earth a virginal family.”

To this we have to say that it is well not to forget that when Jesus Christ founded His Church, which was His spiritual family and ours, He took no account of this virginity, but chose for the foundation stone and for members of His Apostolic College men who were not unmarried.

All the marvels and excellencies which Catholic authors describe when they try to show the need for a priest's being celibate, are the same reasons which there were to demand the same celibacy of the prophets, patriarchs, and priests of the Old Law; and we all know that that was not the case, but just the opposite.

God never declared that being a husband and Father was any hindrance to priestly and divine rank.

Why is it now demanded as an essential condition? In this thesis we would say to them what is said in philosophy: “That, which proves too much, does not prove anything.” They will say, perhaps, that the dignity of the present-day priest is very superior to that of the old.

But we say that this reply is absurd. When did God say that? Of course the activities of the minister of the Gospel are holy; but even so, why didn't Jesus Christ choose for the apostles only unmarried men like John?

Are we going to consider as a lack of dignity and purity what Jesus Christ never considered as such?

The mission of the prophets and priests of the Old Testament was holy, and in those circumstances the most holy that any man could desire. Those men represented God; they were interpreters of the divine law; and they offered burnt sacrifices to the Lord in the name of the people.

Since this mission was so holy, why didn't God demand continence of them? In certain priestly ministries the Lord demanded of them that on those days of their priestly ministry, they should dedicate themselves exclusively to the spiritual activities, separated from all fleshly intimacy and from all worldly affairs.

But this was a slight parenthesis in their matrimonial life, perfectly accepted and blessed by God. As is true in the case in which the New Testament priest is to carry out some extraordinary act of converting hardened sinners, or when he wants to obtain from the Lord an extraordinary grace, or a special blessing for his parishioners, and so on, he is recommended to exercise more prayer, fasting, penitence, and to abstain from all that might dissipate his efforts and make him less effective.

But to deduce from this the unconditional necessity of absolute continence is a baseless presumption and an obligation imposed on the priest without Scriptural foundation.

Continence, declared Jesus, "*is for those to whom the capacity has been given to receive it.*" "**He that is able to receive it, let him receive it**" (Matthew 19:12); "Take this in, you whose hearts are large enough for it" (Msgr. R. A. Knox).

Then do not make it obligatory on those to whom it is not given. And it is evident that it has not been given to all the priests, because they do not understand it nor can they practice it.

Dr. Rau argues with Father Monsabre: "After the divine life (one), nothing is so much one as angelic life; after angelic life nothing so much one as the celibate life" - *Teologia del Celibato Virginal* (Theology of Celibacy), page 55.

What a pity that they forget that Jesus Christ also said, "**And they twain shall be one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder**" (Matthew 19:5, 6).

Dr. Rau recognizes in his book, *Theology of Celibacy*, that celibacy is a gift of God, "naturally impossible, but possible to all with the aid of grace and it is offered to all" (Page 76).

How can God, we ask, offer a thing to all when He does not want all to have it?

As the beginning of the world He says to us: "**Be fruitful (increase) and multiply**" (Genesis 1:28).

Augustine, the great doctor of the Catholic Church argues thus: "Because the Church is virginal in its roots and it is altogether a virgin spiritually, the priest must be virginal."

Can a society, a moral entity, be virginal or incontinent?

If he says it because of the individual members who compose it, one must say that in its roots it is not. The apostles, several of them, and above all the “Head of the Church and first Pope,” Peter, were not. And neither were the clergy during the first centuries of Christianity.

Paul himself recommends to the bishop that he be the husband of one wife.

And In I Corinthians 7:34, he clearly states that it is a good thing to marry, although not to marry (his personal advice) is better.

So it is a matter of personal preference; or even, if you wish, of more or less perfection; but not a bad thing, not even in the bishop, according to Paul himself.

If marriage is a sacrament, one cannot see why it should be considered the worst sort of sin, and the most abominable act for a priest to have a legitimate wife.

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