

# ??Transubstantiation??

## More Letters to a Roman Catholic Priest

### Letter 1

Dear Sir: I still have on hand your two last letters, which I had no thought of neglecting so long. But I was obliged to make a lengthy journey, and it was followed by prolonged sickness from which I did not fully recover for some months. Before renewing our correspondence I also wished to familiarize myself more fully with Roman Catholic teaching and history. To this end I have read largely on both sides—Newman and Chiniquy, Gibbon and Littledale, the "Catholic Encyclopedia" and Protestant historians, the Fathers, pre- and post-Nicene, and medieval and modern theologians—in order to take up with you the questions at issue, absolutely without prejudice and, I trust, without misrepresentation. I think I have today more kindly feelings toward sincere Roman Catholics than ever before. Pardon me if I say that my research has given me a more intense dislike of many Church of Rome dogmas than I had previously possessed.

I rejoice in the measure to which Rome confesses the doctrine of Christ. I too am a member of the catholic church, the one body of which Christ alone is the head. He is exalted at God's right hand to be a prince and a savior. Every true believer in him is, through the Spirit's baptism, a member of that one body. But I feel, more strongly than ever, that the bishop of Rome and the faction that acknowledges his authority have largely perverted the gospel of Christ. They preach, instead, "another gospel: Which is not another," and you know the solemn anathema pronounced by the apostle Paul against all such. What a fearful thing if the Roman pontiff, while calling himself the vicar of Christ and the earthly head of the church, were himself to be under that fearful curse (Galatians 1:6-9).

In your last letter you say, and I believe rightly so, that "the real presence in the blessed sacrament is the pivotal point on which all turns." And you ask, "Is then Christ really present in the blessed sacrament, as we Catholics believe, or is it only a figure?" And here you confidently say, "I call all history and all antiquity to testify against you."

I confess that I am greatly surprised at the temerity which could permit you to use such words. Surely you are familiar with the fathers and history. I believe you are better acquainted with the writings of the former than I am. Therefore, you must know that the pre-Nicene fathers nowhere teach the doctrine you allege. (J.P. editor insert: See our book offer "The Church of Rome at the Bar of History" for proof!) It is nothing to me that the Roman church for centuries has held this doctrine, nor does it matter that the Eastern church holds the same, or that Luther himself taught something similar, or even that certain Anglicans, from Henry the Eighth down, largely agree with Rome. These are all comparatively modern. Antiquity, in this case, decides absolutely against them. It is not the writings of fallible men to which I refer as "antiquity" but to "that which was from the beginning," which is the authoritative records of the inspired apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. I will put before you every inspired account of the Lord's supper found in the holy scriptures and ask you to weigh them well, forgetting so far as you can, every construction put on them by post-Nicene theologians. Ask yourself if the scriptures quoted can possibly bear the interpretation Rome has given them.

In Matthew 26:26-29 we read:

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.

Mark's account is very similar (Mark 14:22-25):

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. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Luke's account (22:19-20) occupies only two verses (verses 17 and 18 clearly refer to the Passover cup preceding the institution of the Lord's supper):

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.

John, as you know furnishes no account of the institution of the Christian feast at all. His sixth chapter we will consider in a later letter

Paul, in I Corinthians 11:23-29, gives us the only remaining account:

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, when 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 shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. [The scripture quotations are from the 1911 Oxford Version, the only edition of the Bible I had on hand when writing, but neither the Douay nor the Authorized Version differ materially.]

Turning our attention to the Lord's words in regard to the cup, in Matthew he says: "Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Was he speaking literally or figuratively? To answer this question I will ask another: Had his blood been shed at that time or not? His words are, "This is my blood which is shed." It is an offence to our God-given intelligence to insist that the words "this is my blood" must be taken literally, while it must be acknowledged that in saying "which is shed," he was speaking anticipatively. Furthermore our Lord calls the liquid in the cup "the fruit of the vine," which would be absurd if it had been changed into his actual blood. Both these propositions apply with equal force to the quotation from Mark's gospel. And Luke makes it even stronger by saying, "this cup is the new testament in my blood." Would you say he meant us to understand literally that the cup contained the new covenant, and that when you drink it you are drinking the new covenant? Or is the expression clearly figurative?

If it be clear that our Lord speaks figuratively of the cup, by what rule of logic can we suppose he speaks literally of the bread when he says, "this is my body which is given for you"? Had his body already been broken, given, or sacrificed for us, when he instituted the supper? If not, he certainly speaks in a figurative way. So Paul takes it, and in I Corinthians 10:16 he writes, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" And he immediately adds, "For we are all partakers of that one bread." The one bread not only sets forth figuratively Christ's literal body, but it also is a figure of his mystical body, the church.

And so it was held by all the apostolic churches, nor was any other meaning attached to it until the predicted apostasy had begun. The Roman dogma of the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ being present under one species, and the consequent denial of the cup to the laity, is in itself a complete annulment of the dogma of the real presence. In the Lord's supper, as instituted by Christ, it was of the loaf alone that he said, "This is

my body," and it set forth his body as given in death; the cup set forth his blood as separated from his body, though that separation had not yet actually taken place. In warning the Corinthians concerning their unholy partaking of the Lord's supper, Paul wrote, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." It is still the bread, and still the cup; no change has taken place in the elements. Faith alone can see in the loaf and the cup a symbol of the crucified Savior.

And now I ask you, dear sir, in all seriousness, can you see anything in the Roman service of the mass that answers in any sense to the beauty and simplicity of the Lord's supper, as set forth in the scriptures we have read? There you have no pompous hierarchy separated from the laity, as though of a superior class, but a company of Christian believers gathered to partake together of a simple memorial feast, each one eating of the loaf, each one drinking of the cup, in reverent and hallowed remembrance of the Lord in his death.

As to the denial of the cup to the laity of communicants, I must write on that later.

## **Letter II**

My Dear Sir: I must now say something on Rome's denial of the cup to the laity. And here I turn your words back on you, and call all history (up to very recent years) and all antiquity to witness against you. You know that the canon enjoining communion in one kind was only passed on June 15, 1415, and that was at a time when the Roman church was without a head. The same council that enacted the decree had deposed Pope John XXIII on May 29, 1415 and his successor was not elected until November 11, 1417. Yet Roman apologists declare that the pope has authority to change the Lord's order from communion in two kinds (the bread typifying his body, the wine his blood) to communion in one kind only on the part of the commonalty. Priests alone were permitted to observe the original order of communion in two kinds.

Now this decree of the Council of Constance is a direct contradiction to Roman canon law of the centuries preceding. Pope Leo the Great, inveighing against the Manicheans, wrote in his Homily 41: "They receive Christ's body (which to him, of course, was the communion loaf) with unworthy mouth, and entirely refuse to take the blood of our redemption (referring to the cup, according to the Roman Interpretation); therefore we give notice to you, holy brethren, that men of this sort, whose sacrilegious deceit has been detected, are to be expelled by priestly authority from the fellowship of the saints." But Pope Gelasius I was stronger yet, for in a letter addressed to the Bishops Majoricus and John and embodied in the canon law of the Roman church, he wrote: "We have ascertained that certain persons having received a portion of the sacred body alone abstain from partaking of the chalice of the sacred blood. Let such persons, without any doubt, since they are stated to feel thus bound by some superstitious reason, either receive the sacrament in its entirety, or be repelled from the entire sacrament, because a division of one and the same mystery cannot take place without great sacrilege" (Corp. Jur. Can. Decre. 3:11-12). And with this agrees the decree of the Council of Clermont, personally presided over by Pope Urban II in 1095: "That no one shall communicate at the altar, without he receives the body and blood alike, unless by way of necessity, or caution." In the next century (A.D. 1118), Pope Paschal II wrote to Pontious, Abbot of Cluny, referring to the teaching of St. Cyprian: "Therefore, according to the same Cyprian: in receiving the Lord's body and blood, let the Lord's tradition be observed, nor let any departure be made, through human institution, from what Christ the Master ordained and did. For we know that the bread was given separately, and the wine was given separately by the Lord himself, which custom we therefore teach and command to be always observed in Holy Church, save in the case of infants and very infirm people, who cannot swallow bread.

Now what title has the church of Rome to declare itself unchanged, catholic and apostolic in its practices, as well as doctrines, when a council without a pope can deliberately overthrow the teaching of four popes on a matter of this kind? The fact is, Rome has completely annulled the words of our Lord Jesus Christ as to this, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

This to a Catholic is a most serious thing. When our Lord in John 6 speaks of "eating his flesh and drinking his blood," Romanists implicitly believe it refers to participation in the eucharist, yet his church forbids him to drink of the cup, unless he has taken priestly orders.

But does the much disputed passage in John 6 have any reference to the Lord's supper, or is it intended to set forth a great spiritual truth? I believe the latter. If you accuse me of using private judgment, you too are using private judgment, though you may decry it, when you decide to accept the teaching of the Roman church as to the same passage. I repudiate it as against both our God-given reason and holy scripture's teaching, which is to me far more reliable authority than any interpretation the church may put on it.

To the Jews seeking material advantages, our Lord said, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you" (John 6:27). They referred him to Moses, who had fed their fathers in the wilderness with manna, desiring him to provide them too with literal bread. To this he answered: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life" (6:47-48). Unbelieving Jews discussed this 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" (6:53-54).

Now this is the teaching of our Lord as to eating his flesh and drinking his blood. This suggests what they might have done at that time, namely, live by eating his flesh and drinking his blood. His blood had not yet been poured out on the cross, nor his flesh wounded in death, but those who came to him, trusting him as their Savior, were already recipients of the new life, which he came to give. That the eating and drinking were spiritual and not literal is clear from verse 57, where he speaks of living by the Father, in the very same way that they who were eating him, lived by him. And how did he live by the Father? He lived as a man of faith. "I will put my trust in him" expressed the continuous habit of his life, and as we who believe in him thus live by faith in Him, we eat his flesh and drink his blood. He says in verse 63: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

What further proof have we need of? I think it plain that the Lord Jesus was referring, not to a sacrament yet to be instituted, but to a spiritual reality, known even then to those who believed on him. And all the councils of Rome cannot annul his words as to this.

His disciples at that time, who were such in deed and not merely by profession, were already living by him yet had never partaken of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. And we may rest assured that wherever and whenever a repentant soul turns now to Christ and trusts him as the savior who has given his life for the world, he both eats his flesh and drinks his blood, and thus has life eternal, which the Roman sacrifice of the mass does not even pretend to give. What intelligent Romanist really believes he has eternal life, a life in Christ that can never be forfeited, through participation in the mass? Is it not a fact that this, as all other Roman sacraments, leaves the participant uncertain and anxious still as to the final outcome? But it is otherwise with those who rest implicitly on the words of the son of God: "Verily, Verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47).

May I, without giving offense, press some questions home to you, my dear sir? Have you this great gift, promised by our Lord Jesus to all who believe in him? Are you certain that you have everlasting life? After all your years of devoted service in the church of Rome, after all your obedience of her decrees, are you now at rest in your soul as to the question of your sins? Do you know them all to be forgiven and put away, through the offering of Jesus Christ once for all on the cross? Have you been justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? My dear sir, if you cannot answer simple questions like these in the affirmative, is it not time to stop and ask yourself how it is that the system to which you cling has not given you that certainty and peace which is the portion of those who enjoy apostolic Christianity? Is it not

possible that you have missed your way? Is it not possible that the whole church to which you belong has in some manner, perhaps to you unaccountable, fallen from the simplicity of apostolic days into grievous apostasy?

Very sincerely yours,

Dr. H. A. Ironside

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Jesus People Editor note: The Mormon Church, Roman Catholic Church and Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses) all claim they are the only true Church of God – All three are "mistaken"!
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## On the Lord's Supper

**I.** As in the preceding Disputation we have treated on Baptism, the sacrament of initiation; it follows, that we now discuss the Lord's Supper, which is the sacrament of confirmation.

**II.** We define it thus: the Lord's Supper is a sacrament of the new Testament immediately instituted by Christ for the use of the church to the end of time: In which, by the legitimate external distribution, taking, and enjoyment of bread and wine, the Lord's death is announced, and the inward receiving and enjoyment of the body and blood of Christ are signified; and that most intimate and close union or fellowship, by which we are joined to Christ our head, is sealed and confirmed on account of the institution of Christ, and the analogical relation of the sign to the thing signified. But by this believers profess their gratitude and obligation to God, communion among themselves, and a marked difference from all other persons.

**III.** We constitute Christ the Author of this sacrament: For He alone is constituted, by the Father, the Lord and Head of the church, possessing the right of instituting sacraments, and of efficaciously performing this very thing which is signified and sealed by the sacraments.

**IV.** The Matter is, bread and wine; which, with regard to their essence, are not changed, but remain what they previously were; neither are they, with regard to place, joined together with the body or blood, so that the body is either in, under, or with the bread, &c.; nor in the use of the Lord's Supper can the bread and wine be separated, that, when the bread is held out to the laity, the cup be not denied to them.

**V.** We lay down the Form in the relation and the most strict union, which exist between the signs and the thing signified, and the reference of both to those believers who communicate, and by which they are made by analogy and similitude something [unum] united. From this conjunction of relation, arises a two-fold use of signs in this sacrament of the Lord's Supper: The First, that these signs are representative: The Second, that, while representing, they seal Christ to us with his benefits.

**VI.** The End is two-fold: The First is, that our faith should be more and more strengthened towards the promise of grace which has been given by God, and concerning the truth and certainty of our being ingrafted into Christ. The Second is, (1.) that believers may, by the remembrance of the death of Christ, testify their gratitude and obligation to God; (2.) that they may cultivate charity among themselves; and (3.) that by this mark they may be distinguished from unbelievers.

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## On the Popish Mass

**I.** Omitting the various significations of the word "Mass" which may be adduced, we consider, on this occasion, that which the Papists declare to be the external and properly called "expiatory sacrifice," in which the sacrificers offer Christ to his Father in behalf of the living and the dead; and which they affirm to have been celebrated and instituted by Christ himself when He celebrated and instituted his Last Supper.

**II.** First. We say, this sacrifice is falsely ascribed to the institution of the Lord's Supper: For Christ did not institute a sacrifice but a sacrament; which is apparent from the institution itself, in which we are not commanded to offer any thing to God, at least nothing external. Yet we grant, that in the Lord's Supper, as in all acts, is commanded, or ought to exist, that internal sacrifice by which believers offer to God prayers, praises and thanksgiving: In this view, the Lord's Supper is called "the Eucharist."

**III.** Secondly. To this sacrifice are opposed the nature, truth and excellence of the sacrifice of Christ. For, as the sacrifice of Christ is single, expiatory, perfect, and of infinite value; and as Christ was once offered, and "hath by that one oblation perfected for ever them who were once sanctified," as the Scriptures testify, undoubtedly no place has been left either for any other sacrifice, or for a repetition of this sacrifice of Christ.

**IV.** Thirdly. Besides, it is wrong to suppose that Christ can be or ought to be offered by men, or by any other person than by Himself: For He alone is both the Victim and the Priest, as being the Only One who is truly "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

**V.** From all these particulars it is sufficiently apparent, that it is not necessary, nay, that it is impious, for any expiatory sacrifice now to be offered by men for the living and the dead. Besides, it is a piece of foolish ignorance, to suppose either that the dead require some oblation; or that they can by it obtain remission of sins, who have not obtained pardon before death.

**VI.** In addition to these three enormous errors committed in the Mass, with respect to the sacrifice, to the priest, and to those for whom the sacrifice is offered, there is a Fourth, which is one of the greatest turpitude of all, and is committed in conjunction with idolatry;-- that this very sacrifice is adored by him who offers it, and by those for whom it is offered, and is carried about in solemn pomp.

In these words, "The Mass is an expiatory, representative and commemorative sacrifice," there is an opposition in the apposition and a manifest contradiction.

Works of James Arminius Vol. II pages 442-444