

# WORLD RELIGIONS

## The Roman Catholic Mass and Transubstantiation Lesson 9

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In this lesson we will examine how the Roman Catholic religion views the Mass, their version of communion or the Lord's Supper. I think most people know that Roman Catholicism has some unique views of the Lord's Supper. Yet many Roman Catholics don't realize what is happening and why the priest does what he does and says what he says in the Mass and the implications of this in relation to the Bible. One might assume that the Mass in Roman Catholicism is a difference in "style," but it is not. It is an unbiblical ritual that declares and symbolizes doctrines that cannot be found in the Word of God and which are contrary to the Word of God. Because transubstantiation is a major and necessary part of the Mass, we will look at both the ceremony itself, in general, and the doctrine of transubstantiation in particular.

### I. DEFINITION OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION

- A. According to Roman Catholicism, when the priest consecrates the bread and wine, the substance of the bread and wine are supposedly changed into the literal body and blood of Christ. This change is called "transubstantiation." The asserted result is that under what appears to be bread and wine are really the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. By partaking of the consecrated bread and wine one is literally eating the body and blood of Christ.
  
- B. The Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1551) affirms in the Canons of the Mass:
  - 1. Canon 1. If anyone denies that in the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist are contained truly, really and substantially the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ, but says that He is in it only as in a sign, or figure or force, let him be anathema.<sup>1</sup>
  
  - 2. Canon 2. If anyone says that in the sacred and holy sacrament of the Eucharist the substance of the bread and wine remains conjointly with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and denies that wonderful and singular change of the whole substance of the bread into the body and the whole substance of the wine into the blood, the appearances only of bread and wine remaining, which change the Catholic Church most aptly calls transubstantiation, let him be anathema.

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<sup>1</sup> To pronounce someone or something "anathema" is to declare it or them accursed, false, heretical, damned to hell.

3. Canon 3. If anyone denies that in the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist the whole Christ is contained under each form and under every part of each form when separated, let him be anathema.
4. Canon 4. If anyone says that after the consecration is completed, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are not in the admirable sacrament of the Eucharist, but are there only in use, while being taken and not before or after, and that in the hosts or consecrated particles which are reserved or which remain after communion, the true body of the Lord does not remain, let him be anathema.
5. Canon 5. If anyone says that the principal fruit of the most Holy Eucharist is the remission of sins, or that other effects do not result from it, let him be anathema.
6. Canon 6. If anyone says that in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is not to be adored with the worship of latria, also outwardly manifested, and is consequently neither to be venerated with a special festive solemnity, nor to be solemnly borne about in procession according to the laudable and universal rite and custom of holy church, or is not to be set publicly before the people to be adored and that the adorers thereof are idolaters, let him be anathema.
7. Canon 7. If anyone says that it is not lawful that the Holy Eucharist be reserved in a sacred place, but immediately after consecration must necessarily be distributed among those present, or that it is not lawful that it be carried with honor to the sick, let him be anathema.
8. Canon 8. If anyone says that Christ received in the Eucharist is received spiritually only and not also sacramentally and really, let him be anathema.
9. Canon 9. If anyone denies that each and all of Christ's faithful of both sexes are bound, when they have reached the years of discretion, to communicate every year at least at Easter, in accordance with the precept of holy mother church, let him be anathema.
10. Canon 10. If anyone says that it is not lawful for the priest celebrating to communicate himself, let him be anathema.
11. Canon 11. If anyone says that faith alone is a sufficient preparation for receiving the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist, let him be

anathema. And lest so great a sacrament be received unworthily and hence unto death and condemnation, this holy council ordains and declares that sacramental confession, when a confessor can be had, must necessarily be made beforehand by those whose conscience is burdened with mortal sin, however contrite they may consider themselves. Moreover, if anyone shall presume to teach, preach or obstinately assert, or in public disputation defend the contrary, he shall be eo ipso excommunicated.

## II. DEFINITION OF ROMAN CATHOLIC MASS

- A. John O'Brien: "When the priest announces the tremendous words of consecration, he reaches up into the heavens, brings Christ down from His throne, and places Him upon our altar to be offered up again as the victim for the sins of man. It is a power greater than that of saints and angels, greater than that of seraphim and cherubim.

Indeed it is greater even than the power of the virgin Mary. While the blessed virgin was the human agency by which Christ became incarnate a single time, the priest brings Christ down from heaven, and renders Him present on our altar as the eternal victim for the sins of man – not once but a thousand times! The priest speaks and lo! Christ, the eternal and omnipotent God, bows His head in humble obedience to the priest's command.

Of what sublime dignity is the office of the Christian priest who is thus privileged to act as the ambassador and the vice-gerent of Christ on earth! He continues the essential ministry of Christ: he teaches the faithful with the authority of Christ, he pardons the penitent sinner with the power of Christ, he offers up again the same sacrifice of adoration and atonement which Christ offered on Calvary. No wonder that the name which spiritual writers are especially fond of applying to the priest is that of *alter Christus*. For the priest is and should be *another Christ*.<sup>2</sup>

- B. Roman Catholic's *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaking of the Mass says in section 1367: "The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: "The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." "And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered Himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is

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<sup>2</sup>John O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions*, (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Inc., 1974), 255-256.

contained and is offered in an unbloody manner. . . this sacrifice is truly propitiatory.”<sup>3</sup>

### III. HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MASS AND THE DOCTRINE OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION

#### A. Key Dates

1. In 394 Mass started to be celebrated daily, but not in its present form.
2. About 500 Mass instituted as a reenactment of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
3. Mandatory attendance was required about 1000 AD and failure to do so was declared to be a mortal sin.

#### B. Robert Morgan summarizes the history of the doctrine of transubstantiation:

In Europe at the turn of the thirteenth century hundreds of great Gothic cathedrals were erected, among them the famous Notre Dame in Paris. A young man, studying at the University of Paris, watched with interest. He listened to reports of crusader armies and discussed theology with his fellow students. They didn't dream he was destined to become the most powerful man in the world.

He was Giovanni Lotario de' Conti, and his interests were law and theology. Then he entered the service of the church. On February 22, 1198, at the young age of 37, he was consecrated pope, and immediately chose the name Innocent III.

The new pope wanted the papacy to reflect the mysterious majesty and Gothic splendor of the new cathedrals like Notre Dame, and he set out at once to become absolute ruler over both church and state. He wrote to kings, princes, scholars, and universities, seeking to influence events in Europe. He organized new crusades to capture the Holy Land. He identified heresy and worked hard to root it out. He massacred dissenters. He expanded papal control of central Italy. He involved himself in the selection of kings and emperors. He forced King Philip II to return to his wife. He brought England's King John to his knees. In one way or another,

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/para/1367.htm>

he dominated the leaders of Europe, insisting that he was their spiritual leader.

Pope Innocent also made his mark on church dogma. In 1215 he convened the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome. The council issued 70 pronouncements, the most significant involving the Lord's Supper. The council decreed that the elements of the Eucharist actually possess the substance of the body and blood of Christ, a doctrine known as transubstantiation.

Pope Innocent died in 1216 at age 56. "No other mortal," wrote one historian, "has before or since wielded such power." He had gained the whole world.<sup>4</sup>

#### IV. THE DOCTRINES OF THE MASS

A. **Christ is brought down from heaven as the bread and wine are consecrated by the priest.** See above

B. **Christ is supposedly sacrificed over and over again in the Mass.**

1. The twenty-second session of the Council of Trent, under a section entitled "Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass," says:

And inasmuch as in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner the same Christ who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross, the holy council teaches that this is truly propitiatory and has this effect, that if we, contrite and penitent, with sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence, draw nigh to God, we obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid [Heb 4:16]. For, appeased by this sacrifice, the Lord grants the grace and gift of penitence and pardons even the gravest crimes and sins. For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests who then offered Himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different. The fruits of that bloody sacrifice, it is well understood, are received most abundantly through this unbloody one, so far is the latter from derogating in any way from the former. Where,

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<sup>4</sup>Robert J. Morgan, *On This Day : 265 Amazing and Inspiring Stories About Saints, Martyrs & Heroes*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000) Feb. 22nd.

according to the tradition of the Apostles, it is rightly offered not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those departed in Christ but not yet fully purified.<sup>5</sup>

2. The Council of Trent also defended that in the Mass Christ is sacrificed over and over again in session 22, under the "Canons On the Sacrifice of the Mass":
  - a. Canon 1. If anyone says that in the Mass a true and real sacrifice is not offered to God; or that to be offered is nothing else than that Christ is given to us to eat, let him be anathema.
  - b. Canon 2. If anyone says that by those words, do this for a commemoration of me [Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24f], Christ did not institute the Apostles priests; or did not ordain that they and other priests should offer His own body and blood, let him be anathema.
  - c. Canon 3. If anyone says that the sacrifice of the Mass is one only of praise and thanksgiving; or that it is as mere commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross but not a propitiatory one; or that it profits him only who receives, and ought not to be offered for the living and the dead, for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities, let him be anathema.
  - d. Canon 4. If anyone says that by the sacrifice of the Mass a blasphemy is cast upon the most holy sacrifice of Christ consummated on the cross; or that the former derogates from the latter, let him be anathema.
  - e. Canon 5. If anyone says that it is a deception to celebrate Masses in honor of the saints and in order to obtain their intercession with God, as the Church intends, let him be anathema.
  - f. Canon 6. If anyone says that the canon of the Mass contains errors and is therefore to be abrogated, let him be anathema.

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<sup>5</sup>Council of Trent, Session 22, chapter 2.

- g. Canon 7. If anyone says that the ceremonies, vestments, and outward signs which the Catholic Church uses in the celebration of Masses, are incentives to impiety rather than stimulants to piety, let him be anathema.
- h. Canon 8. If anyone says that Masses in which the priest alone communicates sacramentally are illicit and are therefore to be abrogated, let him be anathema.
- i. Canon 9. If anyone says that the rite of the Roman Church, according to which a part of the canon and the words of consecration are pronounced in a low tone, is to be condemned; or that the Mass ought to be celebrated in the vernacular tongue only; or that water ought not to be mixed with the wine that is to be offered in the chalice because it is contrary to the institution of Christ, let him be anathema.

**C. Salvation is said to be obtained by participating in the Mass ritual.**

- 1. "As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which "Christ our Pash has been sacrificed" is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out."<sup>6</sup>
- 2. "The sacrifice of the Mass effects the remission of the temporal punishments for sin which still remain after the forgiveness of the guilt of sins and of the eternal punishment, not merely remitted by the conferring of the grace of Penance, but also immediately because the atonement of Jesus Christ is offered as a substitute for our works of atonement and for the suffering of the poor souls. The measurement of the punishments of sins remitted is proportional."

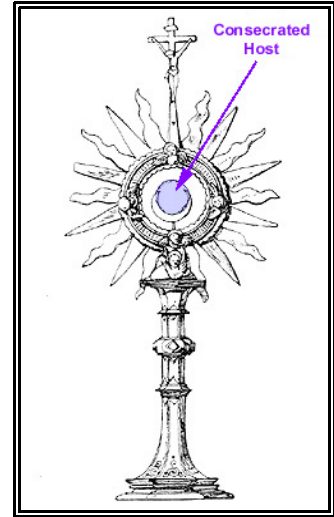
Okay, you're going to get your sins remitted but it's proportional in the case of the living to the degree of perfection in their disposition. In the case of the suffering souls, the satisfactory operation of the sacrifice of the Mass is applied by way of intercession, as they are in the state of grace and thus oppose no obstacle. Theologians generally teach that at least part of their punishment for sins is infallibly remitted."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Paragraph #1364, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

<sup>7</sup>Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, <http://www.catholictreasury.info/quote4.htm>

D. **The host or Eucharist is worshiped.** In the Roman Catholic Mass, most notably in the "Feast of Corpus Christi" or the "Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ," the Eucharist ("Jesus Christ" in the form of a wafer) is put into a device called a "monstrance." Though they come in various designs, the classic design is a kind of sun burst made out of gold. Where the sun would be is a place to hold the thin Eucharist wafer, the host. This practice started in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Eucharist is placed in the monstrance, paraded around, adored and worshiped. Thus Roman Catholics commit idolatry as they worship a piece of bread.<sup>8</sup>



## V. **THE MASS, TRANSUBSTANTIATION, AND ROMAN CATHOLIC PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS**

The Roman Catholic Mass, though not found in the Bible, is extremely important to Roman Catholicism. So important in fact that the Roman Catholic church sanctioned the execution of many Christians who rejected the Roman Catholic Mass and particularly the doctrine of transubstantiation.

A. **Concerning those 300 or more ministers burnt at the stake in Smithfield, England, on the outskirts of London by the Roman Catholic Queen Mary Tudor "bloody Mary,"** J. C. Ryle notes:

The principal reason why they were burned was because they refused one of the peculiar doctrines of the Romish Church. On that doctrine, in almost every case, hinged their life or death. If they admitted it, they might live; if they refused it, they must die.

The doctrine in question was the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated elements of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. Did they, or did they not believe that the body and blood of Christ were really, that is, corporally, literally, locally, and materially, present under the forms of bread and wine after the words of consecration were pronounced? Did they or did they not believe that the real body of Christ, which was born of the Virgin

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<sup>8</sup><http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11344a.htm> There is a lot of information on the worship of the Eucharist in Roman Catholic writings <http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/cdweuch.htm#3>.



Mary, was present on the so-called altar so soon as the mystical words had passed the lips of the priest? Did they or did they not? That was the simple question. If they did not believe and admit it, they were burned.<sup>9</sup>

Ryle also Quotes Fuller:

"The sacrament of the altar was the main touchstone to discover the poor Protestants. This point of the real, corporal presence of Christ in the sacrament, the same body that was crucified, was the compendious way to discover those of the opposite opinion."<sup>10</sup>

**B. Testimonies of men burnt at the stake for rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation.** J. C. Ryle lists the testimonies of a handful of those faithful men burnt at the stake in Smithfield for rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation:

1. *John Rogers:* "I was asked whether I believed in the sacrament to be the very body and blood of our Savior Christ that was born of the Virgin Mary, and hanged on the cross, really and substantially? I answered, I think it to be false. I cannot understand really and substantially to signify otherwise than corporally. But corporally Christ is only in heaven, and so Christ cannot be corporally in your sacrament."<sup>11</sup> And therefore he was condemned and burned.
2. *Bishop John Hooper:* "Tunstall asked him to say, whether he believed the corporal presence in the sacrament, and Master Hooper said plainly that there was none such, neither did he believe any such thing. Whereupon they bade the notaries write that he was married and would not go from his wife, and that he believed not the corporal presence in the sacrament; wherefore he was worthy to be deprived of his bishopric." And so he was condemned and burned.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, (London: Chas J. Thynne, 1898) 40. In the footnote Ryle notes: "The Mass was one of the principal causes why so much turmoil was made in the church, with the bloodshed of so many godly men." Fox [*Foxe's Book of Martyrs*].

<sup>10</sup>J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, 41. Noting Fuller, *Church History*, vol. iii. p. 399, Tegg's edition.

<sup>11</sup>J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, 41. Noting Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 101, edition, 1684.

<sup>12</sup>J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, 41. Noting Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 123.

3. *Rowland Taylor*: "The second cause why I was condemned as a heretic was that I denied transubstantiation, and concomitation, two juggling words whereby the Papists believe that Christ's natural body is made of bread, and the Godhead by and by to be joined thereto, so that immediately after the words of consecration, there is no more bread and wine in the sacrament, but the substance only of the body and blood of Christ." "Because I denied the aforesaid Papistical doctrine (yea, rather plain, wicked idolatry, blasphemy, and heresy) I am judged a heretic."<sup>13</sup> And therefore he was condemned and burned.
4. *Bishop Ferrar*: He was summoned to "grant the natural presence of Christ in the sacrament under the form of bread and wine," and because he refused to subscribe this article as well as others, he was condemned. And in the sentence of condemnation it is finally charged against him that he maintained that "the sacrament of the altar ought not to be ministered on an altar, or to be elevated, or to be adored in any way."<sup>14</sup> And so he was burned.
5. *John Bradford*: ". . . wrote to the men of Lancashire and Cheshire when he was in prison: "The chief thing which I am condemned for as an heretic is because I deny in the sacrament of the altar (which is not Christ's Supper, but a plain perversion as the Papists now use it) to be a real, natural, and corporal presence of Christ's body and blood under the forms and accidents of bread and wine: that is, because I deny transubstantiation, which is the darling of the devil, and daughter and heir to Antichrist's religion."<sup>15</sup> And so he was condemned and burned.
6. *Bishop Nicholas Ridley*: "The said Nicholas Ridley affirms, maintains, and stubbornly defends certain opinions, assertions, and heresies, contrary to the Word of God and the received faith of the Church, as in denying the true and natural body and blood of Christ to be in the sacrament of the altar, and secondarily, in affirming the substance of bread and wine to remain after the words of consecration."<sup>16</sup> And so he was condemned and burned.

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<sup>13</sup>J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, 42. Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 141.

<sup>14</sup>J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, 42. Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 178.

<sup>15</sup>J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, 42. Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 260.

<sup>16</sup>J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, 43. Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 426.

7. *Bishop Latimer*: "That thou hast openly affirmed, defended, and maintained that the true and natural body of Christ after the consecration of the priest, is not really present in the sacrament of the altar, and that in the sacrament of the altar remains still the substance of bread and wine." And to this article the good old man replied: " After a corporal being, which the Romish Church furnishes, Christ's body and blood is not in the sacrament under the form of bread and wine."<sup>17</sup> And so he was condemned and burned.
8. *Archdeacon Philpot*: Bishop Bonuer said to Philpot: "You have offended and trespassed against the sacrament of the altar, denying the real presence of Christ's body and blood to be there, affirming also material bread and material wine to be in the sacrament, and not the substance of the body and blood of Christ."<sup>18</sup> And because the good man stoutly adhered to this opinion he was condemned and burned.
9. *Arch Bishop Cranmer*: Hear, lastly, what Cranmer said with almost his last breath, in St. Mary's Church, Oxford: "As for the sacrament, I believe, as I have taught in my book against the Bishop of Winchester, the which my book teaches so true a doctrine, that it shall stand at the last day before the judgment of God when the Papist's doctrine contrary thereto shall be ashamed to show her face."<sup>19</sup> If any one wants to know what Cranmer had said in this book, let him take the following sentence as a specimen: " They (the Papists) say that Christ is corporally under or in the form of bread and wine. We say that Christ is not there, neither corporally nor spiritually; but in them that worthily eat and drink the bread and wine He is spiritually, and corporally in heaven."<sup>20</sup> And so he was burned.

Thus history shows that the Roman Catholic Mass and specifically the doctrine of transubstantiation have been used as the touchstone doctrine, which if denied, brought a sentence of execution upon many godly men.

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<sup>17</sup>J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, 43. Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 426.

<sup>18</sup>J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, 43. Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 495.

<sup>19</sup>J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, 44. Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 562.

<sup>20</sup>J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, 44. Ryle notes *Cranmer on the Lord's Supper*, Parker Society edition, p. 54.