

“A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” (Jn 15:20)

✠ Lecture XII: The Question of The Real Presence ✠

✠ Definitions:

- 1. Transubstantiation:** This term, associated with the Roman Catholic Church, is the change of the substance of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Lord Jesus Christ occurring in the Eucharist while all that is accessible to the senses remain as before. "Substance" here means what something is in itself. A hat's shape is not the hat itself, nor is its color the hat, nor is its size, nor its softness to the touch, nor anything else about it perceptible to the senses. The hat itself (the "substance") has the shape, the color, the size, the softness and the other appearances, but is distinct from them. While the appearances, which are referred to by the philosophical term accidents, are perceptible to the senses, the substance is not. Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Christians agree that the bread and wine truly and actually become the body and blood of Christ. They have in general refrained from philosophical speculation, and usually rely on the status of the doctrine as a "Mystery," something known by divine revelation that could not have been arrived at by reason without revelation. Accordingly, they prefer not to elaborate upon the details and remain firmly within Holy Tradition, than to say too much and possibly deviate from the truth. However, they do speak clearly of a "change" (in Greek μεταβολή) or "metousiosis" (μετουσίωσις) of the bread and wine. *Met-ousi-osis* is the Greek form of the word *Tran-substantia-tion*. (From Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia)
- 2. Consubstantiation:** This view, especially associated with Marin Luther, attempts to describe the nature of the Eucharist in concrete metaphysical terms. It holds that the fundamental "substance" of the body and blood of the Lord are present *alongside* the substance of the bread and wine, which remain present. It asserts the simultaneous presence of four essences in the Eucharist: that of the consecrated bread, the Body of Lord Jesus Christ, the consecrated wine, and the Blood of Lord Jesus Christ; but it differs from what the Lutherans believe in that it does not assert a "local" presence of the Body and Blood in the sacramental bread and wine respectively.
- 3. Memorialism or Real Absence:** This understanding of the nature of the Eucharist is especially associated with Zwingli. The Eucharist is nothing but a memorial of the suffering of the Lord, and not a sacrifice. The bread and wine are mere symbols of the Body and Blood.

✠ Why Do We Believe in the Real Presence?

Generally speaking, there are three reasons why we believe in the real presence of Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist:

- I) Biblical Reasons**
- II) Logical Reasons**
- III) Historical Reasons**

✠ Biblical Reasons ✠

- 1. Whenever our Lord Jesus Christ would speak **symbolically** and yet the Jews would understand His blessed words **literally**, St. John would point their mistake out:**
- a)** “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ So the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ **But He was speaking of the temple of His body.” (Jn 2:19-21)**
- b)** “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will

flow rivers of living water.’ **But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive.” (Jn 7:37-39)**

- c) “Then they said to Him, ‘Who are you?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Just as I have been saying to you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.’ **They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.” (Jn 8:25-27)**

→ Lord Jesus Christ said, “The bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world” (**Jn 6:51**) but “The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, ‘How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?’” (**Jn 6:52**)

→ Now, if Lord Jesus Christ was speaking symbolically and the Jews misunderstood Him, why didn’t St. John point their mistake out as he did previously? The fact that St. John didn’t do that means that Lord Jesus Christ was indeed speaking literally.

→ The reply of the Lord reinforces the fact that His words were literal, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you ... For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed” (**Jn 6:53,55**)

2. When Lord Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drink My blood abides in Me, and I in him” (**Jn 6:53-56**), many of His disciples took Him literally and said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” (**Jn 6:60**)

→ Now our Lord Jesus Christ was fully aware that **many** of His disciples understood His words literally and were offended, He even said to them, “Does this offend you?” (**Jn 6:61**) Moreover, St. John said, “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” (**Jn 6:66**)

→ Obviously, if Lord Jesus Christ had only meant that they would eat His flesh and drink His blood figuratively or symbolically, He would have said so before they walked away for it is written that “He explained all things to His disciples” (**Mk 4:34**) But the Lord did not explain and let them go. Therefore, He meant His words literally and of course not visually or cannibalistically but miraculously and Sacramentally.

→ Some people become confused by what Lord Jesus Christ said after the disciples complained. He said, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (**Jn 6:63**). They mistakenly think that this is proof that Lord Jesus Christ is saying that He only means that the disciples will eat His Flesh and drink His Blood spiritually and not literally. But it is illogical that the Lord would say that His Flesh “profits nothing” (useless) after saying that it gives life (**v 53**). Rather, Lord Jesus Christ is not talking about His Flesh, but about their flesh. He is telling the unbelieving disciples that they cannot grasp or come to His blessed teaching on the Eucharist by their senses or their flesh which “profits nothing” for this purpose, but only through faith or Spirit.

3. St. Paul said that our Lord said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is **broken** for you” (**1 Cor 11:24**). But we all know that the Body of our Lord was never broken, “when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs ... these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, Not one of His bones shall be broken” (**Jn 19:33,36**)

→ The fact that the Lord said that this is His Body “**which is broken**” affirms that it is not a symbol but rather the true body because if the bread were a mere symbol, then it shouldn’t be broken for the body on the cross was never broken. (The symbol should match the thing symbolized)

4. Whenever the term “eating flesh” occurs in symbolically Holy Scripture, it refers to slander, hate, and back stabbing:

- a) “When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell.” (Ps 27:2)
- b) “You who hate good and love evil; Who strip the skin from My people, and the flesh from their bones; Who also eat the flesh of y people, flay their skin from them.” (Mic 3:2-3)
- c) “If you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another.” (Gal 5:15)

→ If we interpret the Lord’s words about eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood symbolically, we fall in the worst interpretation.

5. St. Paul said, “He who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, **not discerning the Lord’s body**” (1 Cor 11:29).

→ To discern means, “To perceive or recognize clearly. To distinguish” (Webster’s New World Dictionary).

→ This verse clearly proves the transformation of the bread to the real body of the Lord and whoever takes communion without this faith eats and drinks judgment to himself.

6. The words of the Lord about this Sacrament are straightforward and clear:

- a) “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; **this is My body.**’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For **this is My blood** of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mt 26:26-28)
- b) “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to them and said, ‘Take, eat; **this is My body.**’ Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, ‘**This is My blood** of the new covenant, which is shed for many” (Mk 14:22-24)
- c) “And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying ‘**This is My body** which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘**This cup is the new covenant in My blood**, which is shed for you” (Lk 22:29-20)

→ Lord Jesus Christ said clearly, “This is My Body – This is My Blood” who can tell Him “No it is not!” Indeed, “Let God be true but every man a liar” (Rom 3:4)

7. St. Paul said, “I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. 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?” (1 Cor 10:15-16)

→ How can we possibly have communion with the Body and Blood of Lord Jesus Christ if the bread and wine were mere symbols?

✠ Logical Reasons ✠

1. The words of Lord Jesus Christ about this Sacrament constitute a **testimony**, “This is My Body, This is My Blood” also the Lord **testified** that His Body is food indeed and His Blood is drink indeed (Jn 6:56).
→ A testimony must be literal without figurative or symbolic language.
2. The words of Lord Jesus Christ about this Sacrament constitute a **covenant**, “This cup is the new covenant” (Lk 22:20) – “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life” (Jn 6:54)→ The words of a covenant must be literal. (Would you write a contract in symbolic words?)
3. Symbols and analogies must have a kind of resemblance to what they symbolize. For example, the brazen serpent and the crucifixion of the Lord, Jonah in the belly of the fish and the burial of the Lord, the story of offering Isaac the beloved son of his Father, and the offering of the only Begotten Son, etc.

→ The bread, which is broken, cannot be a symbol of the intact body of our Lord. Notice that because the Passover lamb was a symbol of the Lord, no bone was broken from it (**Ex 12:46**)

4. The saving spiritual blessings that are associated with this Sacrament (**Jn 6: 51-59**) cannot be attributed to eating mere bread unless this bread is truly transformed into the true body of the Savior.
5. The severe punishments that reach death (**1 Cor 11:31**) cannot be associated with eating mere bread and drinking mere wine unless they are truly transformed to the Body and Blood of Lord Jesus Christ.
6. It is written about the cup that it is for the remission of sins (**Mt 26:26-27**). The only way this can be true is for the mixture in this cup to be transformed to the real blood of the Savior for “without shedding of blood there is no remission” (**Heb 9:22**)

✠ Historical Reasons ✠

1. All apostolic Churches universally agree about the real presence of the Lord in the Sacrament of the Eucharist in spite of their disagreements on many other issues.
2. All Eastern and Western Church Fathers have agreed, without exception, that the words of the Lord about this Holy Sacrament are to be understood literally.
3. Martin Luther himself could not dare to deny the presence of the Lord in the Eucharist (although his view was still heretical) and it wasn't until later that Zwingli came up with the heresy of real absence which most of the Protestants believe today.

✠ FAQ:

Q5: What are the differences with the Roman Catholic Church concerning the Eucharist?

A5: There are no differences concerning the belief that the Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, there are some differences concerning the administration of the Sacrament:

- a) They consecrate unleavened bread (wafers) even though the very word “artos”, which is used in the Greek text of the gospel in the narration on the institution of the Sacrament, signifies precisely leavened, fermented, risen bread.
- b) They forbid infants and small children from taking communion. → Lord Jesus Christ said about the children, “Let the little children come to Me, **and do not forbid them**; for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (**Mt 19:14**). In fact the little children are the most worthy individuals to take communion and the adults need to take them as examples for indeed, “unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (**Mt 18:3**)
- c) They allow people to partake of the Holy Body without partaking of the Holy Blood. → Lord Jesus Christ administered both His Body and His Blood to His disciples and He said about the cup “Drink from it, **all of you**” (**Mt 26:27**). He also said, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man **and drink His blood**, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh **and drinks My blood** has eternal life” (**Jn 6:53-54**). St. Paul said, “As often as you eat this bread **and drink this cup**, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes” (**1 Cor 11:26**) – “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread **and drink of that cup**” (**1 Cor 11:28**).
- d) When communion of the laity takes place at the Roman Mass, the priest, besides the main unleavened wafer, from which he himself communes, consecrates others as well, little ones, one for each communicant. This custom contradicts the very concept of the unity of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Communion from ‘**one bread**’ has, according to the teaching of the word of God, a profound significance, “For we, being many, are **one bread** and one body; for we all partake of that **one bread.**” (**1 Cor 10:17**)

Q6: St. Paul said, “Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7). Is the apostle talking about the consecrating unleavened bread in the Eucharist?

A6: Leaven is a symbol of sin and evil, and St. Paul says in the verse that follows, “Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with **the leaven of malice and wickedness**, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor 5:8). St. Paul is not talking about the Eucharist but he is talking about the sinner that he mentioned in the beginning of this chapter about whom he also said, “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor 5:6). We can mention here that since the leaven symbolizes sin and our Lord indeed carried our sins, therefore it is more fitting to consecrate leavened bread in the Eucharist.

* This lecture is adapted from *‘The Sacraments of The Church’* By Archdeacon Habib Guirgess.