

## **I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW**

### **A. The controversy at the time of the Reformation was over Christ’s presence in the Supper**

#### **1. The Zwinglians said that Christ is not present in the Lord’s Supper at all in any sense.**

- a. This is the common, modern evangelical view. The Supper is not a sacrament, merely a sign, not a seal, and the primary (if not only) use of the Supper is remembrance.
- b. But, if that is true, the Supper is not a real partaking of Christ (see I Cor. 10:16)

#### **2. The Lutherans said that Christ is present in the Lord’s Supper in a physical sense.**

- a. The teaching is called “con-substantiation” because the true, physical body and blood of Christ is present “with, in and under” the bread and wine.
- b. Luther insisted on this b/c he wanted to do justice to Christ’s words, “This is my body.”
- c. For Luther, Christ could not be present in the Supper if He was not there with His physical body. Famously (and sadly) Luther said, “I would rather drink blood with the Papists than mere wine with the Zwinglians!” Late in life, Luther’s greatest controversies were over the Lord’s Supper.

#### **3. The Roman Catholics said that the whole substance of the bread and wine had been transformed into Jesus Christ so that in the Mass there was no bread and no wine at all.**

- a. This view is called “trans-substantiation.” Transubstantiation was officially declared a dogma in 1215, but was widely held in the church before this.
- b. Rome is very clear: “In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and therefore the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained” (*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1374) and “by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation” (*ibid*, paragraph 1376).
- c. This view has all kinds of implications which we will discuss in this lesson.

### **B. The Reformed position is to do full justice to the real presence of Christ in the Supper but to deny a physical, carnal or corporal presence of Christ’s body which is in heaven.**

#### **1. The Lutherans who taught that Christ’s physical body is present “in, with and under” the bread err seriously in their doctrine of Christ.**

- a. The Lutherans had to explain how it is possible for Christ to be physically present in heaven and also to be physically present in churches all over the world.
- b. The answer the Lutherans gave was *the ubiquity or immensity of Christ’s human nature*. They taught that at Christ’s Ascension Christ’s human nature was so glorified as to possess some of the divine attributes, esp. omnipresence.
- c. But the Reformed insisted that such a doctrine is impossible and is really a denial of the true humanity of Christ and of the Ascension of Christ at the Right Hand of God. A true humanity must have the attributes of a true human nature (Acts 3:21; Phil. 3:21). *Heid. Catechism*: “Christ is in heaven and we on earth” (Q&A 76); “Christ, who according to His human nature is now not on earth, but in heaven at the right hand of God His Father and will there be worshipped by us” (Q&A 80). *Belgic Confession*: “Christ always sits at the right hand of His Father in the heavens, yet doth He not therefore cease to make us partakers of Himself by faith” (Art. 35).

#### **2. But, this denial of the physical presence of Christ in the Supper in no way denies Christ’s real presence.**

- a. Christ *is* present in the Supper, but in a way which surpasses our understanding (“He works in us all that He represents to us by these holy signs, though the manner surpasses our understanding and cannot be comprehended by us as the operations of the Holy Ghost are hidden and incomprehensible. In the meantime we err not when we say what is eaten and drunk by us is the proper and natural body and the proper blood of Christ” (*Belgic Confession*, 35).

- b. Christ is present spiritually, and the fact that He is physically present in heaven is no barrier to His being spiritually present in the Supper, since, according to His divine nature He is omnipresent and He can communicate His body and blood to us by the Spirit of Christ.
- c. Because Christ is present spiritually, and not physically, we do not partake of Christ physically by literally “eating” Him (that would be of no benefit even if it were possible), but we partake of Him spiritually, by faith.
- d. By such a spiritual partaking of Christ by faith we are nourished, strengthened and more and more united to Jesus Christ, who is the true Bread of Life. Thus, the Lord’s Supper is a real means of grace to believers. “For Jesus Christ is the true object presented by them without whom they would be of no moment.”

## II. THE REFORMED OBJECTION TO ROME’S “MASS”

### A. The Roman Catholic Mass is not what happened in the Upper Room

#### 1. When Jesus said, “This is my body,” He did not mean, “This has become my body.”

- a. When Christ said those words in the Upper Room He was physically present with His body. The bread in His hand did not become part of His body, an extension of His arm. And the wine in the cup did not become His blood. It remained wine, and the bread remained bread! (Matt. 26:29).
- b. Clearly Jesus is speaking figuratively. The disciples did not think He meant cannibalism.

#### 2. When Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me,” He did not mean, “Sacrifice me!”

- a. If someone is physically present, you do not remember him. He is there! But Christ was speaking of a time when He would not be physically there, but only spiritually present. “Until He come.”
- b. Transubstantiation is absurd: the bread has supposedly changed but it looks, tastes, smells like bread. Rome’s answer: the substance has changed but the “accidents” remain (compare John 2:9)

### B. We have two fundamental objections

#### 1. First, the Roman Catholic Mass is a sacrifice (Heb. 9:26, 28; 10:10, 12, 14, etc)

- a. Rome teaches: “At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. This he did in order *to perpetuate* the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again ... As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed is celebrated on the altar, *the work of our redemption is carried out* ... 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. 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 contained and offered in an unbloody manner” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 1323, 1363, 1367).
- b. Some Protestants have said that the Mass is a repetition of the sacrifice of the cross, but this is, strictly speaking, incorrect. The Mass is a perpetuation, continuation or representation of the cross, that is, it is the same sacrifice as the cross.
- c. The Mass is offered to God to make satisfaction for the sins of the living and the dead as well as to earn for them all the graces necessary for them to receive salvation.

#### 2. Second, the Roman Catholic Mass is idolatry

- a. Rome teaches, that by the miracle of transubstantiation the bread and wine are changed into the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ, and therefore, says Rome, the Mass is to be worshipped.
- b. Vatican II says, “There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that all the faithful ought to show to this most holy sacrament (the Mass) the worship that is due to the true God, as has always been the custom of the Catholic Church. Nor is the sacrament to be adored any the less because it was instituted by Christ to be eaten. For even in the reserved sacrament he is to be adored because he is substantially present there through the conversion of bread and wine, which, as the Council of Trent tells us, is most aptly named transubstantiation” (*Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery*, p. 104).
- c. Since the Mass is a mere wafer of flour and water to worship it is idolatry!