

Real Presence? A Catholic Delusion

Written by K B Napier

Sunday, 16 August 2009 16:24

I recently had an amicable but fruitless session of discussions with a Roman Catholic. After I sent him reasons why the 'real presence' cannot be accepted as Biblical, and said that the Catholic 'church' is not Christian, he said "I must warn you not to speak ill of the Catholic church until you have accepted the scriptures of John 6:50-60, since it is deceitful to attack Catholic belief with your twist on scripture., and when you don't accept a passage (that is) amongst the most explicit of all the scriptures." John 6:50-60 is dealt with below.

When I pointed out that Christ did not use 'bread' and 'blood' in the communion texts to mean eating and drinking His real flesh and blood, my critic said something I thought was bizarre. I asked if he thought the apostles ate Christ's actual body when Christ was still with them in the room. He said "Do I actually believe that the Apostles actually ate Christ's body while He was in the room with them? Yes, I believe what the Gospel says. Do I believe Christ really, literally, is 'The Door', 'The Vine', 'the Lamb of God', and that we are literally 'the sheep'? Yes."

Now, I believe Christ is literally those things. But, symbolically, because logic tells us so, and so does scripture. My critic means by 'literally', that Christ is an actual door with handle, grain and hinges; an actual vine with leaves and grapes and roots; an actual lamb with bobbly tail, four hooves and bleat; and that we are actual sheep, with fleeces and four legs. I will let you come to your own conclusions on that, but it shows just how illogical Catholics can be. To retain a totally unscriptural stance they are willing to believe weird and senseless things. But, here is the rub... though they believe in a literal door, sheep, etc., they claim the outward appearances are as we really see them! Thus, though Christ is actually a wooden door with hinges, etc., we only see the outward appearance of a man! (For more on this see the Catholic philosophical [not theological] explanation of 'accidents' below).

Gnostic Beliefs?

My interpretation of John 6 is that offered by scripture itself, as I will prove. But, to a Catholic my argument is 'gnostic'! To him, my refusal to accept the Real Presence means Christ's flesh was worthless (which I do not say). The critic demanded that I furnish him with proof for my interpretations. Which is fair enough – until I tell you that I already did that, from scripture. But, to my Catholic critic, scripture is only as acceptable as the words of the 'church fathers' (a term used to describe early Catholic thinkers)! That is, the word of church fathers (and popes and tradition) is greater than the word from scripture itself. He rejected the idea of relying on

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scripture alone for all things to do with faith and interpretation, and will believe anything said by the 'fathers' even if it contradicts scripture. Such is Romish blindness.

The critic refused to accept my earlier argument concerning Matthew 16:18, that *petra* and *Petros* are different words (which they are), and that not all early Christians accepted the apostolic succession argument... even though he admitted it was 'well presented'! Only the word of the 'church fathers' would convince him! (See my argument in Article A/317).

He also demanded evidence (from the church fathers) that we should rely on 'Bible only' and 'faith alone'. He said that if I did not give these 'proofs' then my argument was 'irrational and faithless'. Read below to see if he was right.

The 'flesh'

In my discussion I counselled: "Jesus said that His words were 'spirit', and that flesh 'avails nothing.' Christ was building upon His own words... no flesh shall be saved (Matthew 24:22); the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41); the saved are not born of the will of the flesh (John 1:13); that which is born of the flesh is flesh.... 'Of the Spirit is spirit' (John 3:6); (note that the flesh of Christ is totally different), and yet, 'the flesh profiteth nothing' (John 6:63)," and so on.

It is obvious that the perfect, sinless, flesh of Christ is not the flesh of man. In my statement I was referring to the 'flesh of man', which usually connotes as sin (works of the flesh). Thus, it does NOT mean the flesh of Christ was worthless, only that the works of *man*, his 'flesh', are worthless. This is what Christ said... but the critic took it to mean something very different, because of his presuppositions. This is because Romanists are taught from a very young age and are routinely and systematically fed deception. This is why it is very hard to preach the Gospel to Catholics.

John 6:50 etc

"I am that bread of life". Now, to a Catholic those words are literal – Christ is an *actual* loaf of bread, just as He is 'actually' the biscuit used in Mass. But what does scripture tell us?

'Bread', *artos*, can mean meat of any animal, or *any* other food, as well as 'bread' – flour and water mixed, then baked. The word is used either to mean the actual object to be eaten, or the

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sustenance it gives the body. Christ said (v48) that He was “that bread of life”. This is a spiritual meaning... He sustains us spiritually. He contrasts this with manna, which, though given by God, was physical. He said the men who ate the physical manna all died, because physical food only serves man until his natural end comes. We have to ask the Catholic: why choose the meaning of ‘bread’ (flour and water), when it can also mean any other food, such as meat? Why does the Mass not offer a lump of meat rather than bread? If Rome insists on the literal meaning, there can be no objection to having meat instead of bread.

Christ then said He was the “living bread” (verse 51), hearkening back to verse 48, and this bread was spiritual, as is found in the effect – to ‘live forever’. “Living bread” in this context does not mean anything physical. It is based on the same word used to refer to salvation, *zōē*.

It can mean the principle that makes a person physically alive, but it can also mean the fullness of life known only to believers, or the life devoted to God that will eventually be resurrected and live immortally in heaven. So, *why* choose just the one meaning, which grounds everything in this physical life, and not the other meaning, of eternal life in heaven?

The text clearly tells us that the word refers to eternity, and not this life and its physical things: “if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever”. We know that nothing from this life can ever enter heaven. That is why we will be given perfect new bodies when we are resurrected. Therefore, the ‘bread’ spoken of MUST, of necessity, have a spiritual meaning. That is, it is *symbolic* of Christ’s body, not an actual representation of it.

Christ then said that the bread would be in the form of His body, or flesh (which was perfect). It would be given for the ‘life of the world’. As living bread (above) is meant spiritually, so is this text, which merely repeats it. Christ specifically refers to it as the ‘flesh of the Son of Man’, not to any human flesh.

In verse 51, Christ says “and the bread I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” He has already contrasted manna (physical food) with the spiritual. Now He is saying that we receive life by His sacrifice on the cross; the death of His physical body. This will be the symbolic ‘bread’. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross will give “life (to) the world”.

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There is no point in saying that the 'bread' will keep people alive physically, because that is already available to mankind: God gave us food from crops, etc. Therefore, it must mean spiritual life, hence a spiritual symbol of that life, bread, which is the spiritual emblem of His actual body sacrificed on the cross. It is irrelevant that pro-Rome 'fathers' say otherwise, when scripture spells it out for us. The whole context is teaching a spiritual truth.

The problem with seeing all this as the actual flesh and blood, is that Christ said that whoever ate and drank them would have 'eternal life'. Now, if merely eating a physical biscuit and drinking some actual wine gives a man eternal life, this means that anyone, no matter how wicked, could enter heaven just by eating and drinking physical substances! Indeed, this is roughly what Rome teaches, because, in today's parlance, Rome is Arminian. Obviously, God's word denies this. Thus, the words have a spiritual meaning.

If Catholics insist on putting a physical spin on it, then they have a big problem with verse 56... "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." Taking the physical tack... it would mean that a man can somehow physically live inside Christ's actual body, and, at the same time, Christ can live physically inside the man's body! This is an absurdity of course. It can only have a spiritual meaning. Christ confirms this:

"this is the bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead..." (verse 58). Anything 'from heaven' is spiritual, pure and holy. It cannot be tainted by anything from this earth. We are told that the earth and everything in it is tainted by Adam's sin. Therefore, if we make biscuits from earthly substances and present them to God in 'Mass', we are giving Him earthly substances tainted by sin! Priests cannot somehow make the sin disappear, especially as the physical priesthood of Rome was banished by Christ when He banished the Judaistic priesthood by His sacrifice, making us all 'priests'! (The Romish priesthood is founded on the Judaistic model, an heresy).

The Absurdity of Rome's Claim

Catholics often refer to Protestant 'fundamentalists' in derogatory terms, when Catholicism, by maintaining a strictly literal approach, is itself 'fundamentalist'! (Note: The original 'fundamentalists' treated interpretation with care; Rome refers to present-day fundamentalists). The genuine way to interpret scripture is to read each part in its own context and with its own meaning. Poetry is poetry, literal is literal, and figurative is figurative! It is not possible to truly interpret unless this basic understanding is reached.

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I hope you can see that to keep to a physical meaning leads to absurdity. It is also an absurdity to maintain an 'accidents' approach, to say that the biscuit is 'actually' the real body of Christ, etc. 'Accidents' are based on an Aristotelian philosophical hypothesis. The reality is the exact reverse: that the bread and wine *symbolise* Christ's body and blood. If Christ meant that the bread and wine were his real body, then the apostles were eating his actual body even though He was in the room with them!

In philosophy, 'accident', *sumbebekos*, is something that belongs (or maybe not) to something without changing its real being or essence. For Aristotle (and as quoted by Aquinas), the 'accident' can be its colour, size, shape, etc. To put it in simple terms, a person can be described as 'lovely' and 'wonderful', even if he or she is fat, short and even 'ugly'! This is because the external appearance does not reflect his or her inner qualities, their 'essence'. The outward appearance is only the 'accident'. The inner is the 'real substance'. I think you can now see where Rome gets its 'Real Presence' from. But, can we legitimately use the terms of philosophy to describe and interpret theological and Biblical concepts?

Yes, we can, but only if those terms coincide with what God says. If they do not, then we must ignore them. Transubstantiation in the Mass is when the outside appearance of the biscuit/wafer and the wine stay as we see them, but their inner 'essence' is changed into the actual body and blood of Christ. To put it another way, what we see with the eyes is not what is on the plate or in the cup. Others use the term 'trans-elementation' or 're-ordination'.

Rome decided to change the philosophical term 'accidents' so that it could be used in a theological way. So, it became 'species'. Either way, the 'species' or 'accidents' are only what we see outwardly, and these do not give us the essence of a thing or person. Thus, Rome claims that when Christ spoke of the bread as His body, He meant the actual essence – His real body – even though the bread still looked and tasted like bread. Is all this acceptable? No, it is not. And any sane person will agree.

At the 'consecration of the eucharist' (also called 'episcopal ordination'), the priest sets apart the wafer and the wine for service to God, even though communion is not a 'service to God' at all, but an act of obedience to Christ's simple command at His last supper. However, the Roman Council of Trent declared anyone who does not accept its teaching on this, to be 'anathema'... another absurdity.

The fact remains: Rome cannot in anyway prove that substantiation takes place. It is all in the

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mind, a philosophical hypothesis that cannot be shown to be true. The Roman idea is that just as the word 'Trinity' is not expressed in scripture, its reality certainly exists. Yes, but this is very different. The Trinity can be confirmed simply by finding those texts that mention some kind of link with each other's state, i.e. that the Spirit, the Son, and the Father are all God. In that case, each is found in scripture clearly defined. But, the smoke and mirrors of a supposed transubstantiation is not in the same league! The Trinity speaks of three persons of the same substance, but transubstantiation speaks of totally unrelated substances. Bread is totally unrelated to a physical body, and wine is totally unrelated to blood. They are different things, not of the same kind! Therefore, the Catholic's own reasoning proves their ineptitude.

Water into Wine

In the miracle of the water-into-wine, Jesus did not transubstantiate water into wine – that is, have the water remaining as water in taste and appearance, and yet insisting it was 'really' wine! He actually changed substance that was recognised to be real water, so that it became real wine! Both states were witnessed by the hosts and so they could verify that what was once water was now wine.

In the case of the Mass, however, there is no such verification. Only the Roman 'church' says that the bread and wine have changed, without any kind of proof whatever! Some Anglicans hold to the Romish belief, but that is not surprising, for Anglicanism is merely a 'softer' version of Catholicism. They offer as 'proof' the words of Christ at the last supper.

But, what Christ said does not lend credence to the Roman view at all. The only way it could, is if we allow the text to be manipulated by heretics who do not understand that what Christ did on the cross had a spiritual meaning. Yes, He actually died, but the effect and aim were spiritual.

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood". "This is my body... this is my blood." Do these have a physical meaning? Of course not! The fact that many earlier Christian leaders believed in this change of appearances do not mean the belief is correct. It just means they did not understand what Christ said. The early Christians used to gather in the synagogue and worship as Jews. Does this mean they were right? Or, that they were actually Judaistic? No, they were not, which is why the actual Jews, not finding this mix of Christian and Jew agreeable, finally changed the type of service so that it *could* not be attended by Christians!

No Proof

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Remember: there is NO PROOF that transubstantiation takes place, except in the mind of heretic Rome. And if we insist that those who take the bread and wine are accepted by God, then we enter into another absurdity, where anyone, no matter how wicked, will enter heaven!

The absurdity goes further... what of “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees”? The Roman view would necessarily mean that if a Pharisee gave us leaven, or used it in his cooking, then we are placed in danger! But, it does not mean that. The ‘leaven’ refers to the *teachings* of these unbelievers, not to their cooking.

What about “ye are the salt of the earth”? It is spiritual. Otherwise, we have yet another absurdity, where a Christian is actual salt found deep in the earth, to be mined like other actual rock! How far do we go in this nonsense?

Early Roman Christians Believed It?

Rome says all the early Christians believed as they do. The problem is, they cannot prove it. It was certainly not an issue when Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome, or when he was in Rome. And not mentioned when he contacted them whilst on his missionary journeys. Nothing was said by any of the twelve apostles, or the other apostles (major disciples who preached powerfully). Importantly, nothing can be found in scripture.

The point is this: we can accept any extra-Biblical information, even if it comes from secular sources, so long as it verifies or supports scripture. But, we cannot accept any external information as authentic, if it speaks of issues not found in scripture. That is, any external source that *confirms* scripture is acceptable, but any that *contradicts* or *denies* scripture is to be rejected.

The most we can do is treat it with interest. It can never be accepted as equal to scripture in authority. Why not? Because, once you go outside scripture and allow information *not* found in scripture to interpret God’s word, there is no end to what can be accepted... anyone can say anything, and we would have to treat it as authentic! This cannot be, because it destroys the concept of God’s word being just that! Indeed, this is what happened when the Toronto Blessing demolished the faith of many – it insisted that we were now in ‘extra-Biblical times’.

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Romanists also claim that belief in the Real Presence existed before the New Testament was written. Who said so? Some experts say the New Testament was started about 30 years after the death of Christ! Anyway, how can Rome prove it to be true? Yes, the apostles passed on their teachings orally as well as in writing – but nobody can verify what was said orally. It cannot, then, be used as equal to scripture.

The whole issue of Real Presence, then, is merely Romish conjecture, without proof. Even if we allow the possibility that Protestants have got it wrong, there is no way to prove the Roman teaching to be correct. Therefore, it is unacceptable as doctrine.

Blasphemy

In many instances scripture uses figurative language with spiritual, not physical, meanings.

The belief that there is a 'real presence' leads to another thing, a blasphemy, that a priest can 'call down' Christ at will, and 'sacrifice' His body yet again. Christ's sacrifice was once-only and He will remain in heaven until He returns in power with His angels.

Of course, Rome covers its trail well on this, too (after all, they have had almost two thousand years to invent cover stories!). When accused of trying to sacrifice Christ every time they hold Mass, they give a counter-argument (of course). Rome says that they do not try to sacrifice Christ daily in Mass, but only enact the *one* sacrifice at *different* times and in different places. "The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, V. The Sacramental Sacrifice Thanksgiving, Memorial, Presence, 1367). If that sounds like semantic nonsense, feel free to think it! If it sounds like utter gobbledygook, this is because it is exactly that.

Notes from the Catechism

V.1356 says that Christians have celebrated Eucharist this way from the beginning. But, there is no proof this is true.

V.1357 says that the bread and wine are the actual body and blood of Christ. Again, the only 'proof' is Rome's claim, based on the philosophy of Aristotle.

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V1359 states that the Eucharist includes thanksgiving for the whole of creation. It is a sacrifice when presented to God through the death and resurrection of Christ. When the priest offers Mass, then, he is repeating this thanks to God as did Christ. But, scripture says none of this!

Rome then mixes separate issues, to make them vague and difficult to examine. However, we may do so...

V.1362 says that 'the making present and the sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice, in the liturgy of the Church...' Then,

V.1363 'in the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way 'present and real'. Thus, the liturgy is made equal to the actual sacrifice of Christ.

Rome then tries to make this equal to the Jewish Passover, saying that when Jews celebrate the Passover, it is exactly the same as Christians taking communion. This is not true – at the last supper, Jesus Himself celebrated Passover to a certain point, and then changed it to become what we know as communion, to be a memorial to Him, not an actual sacrifice. The sacrifice was on the cross. The last supper was instituted BEFORE Christ was sacrificed, as a simple memorial, a symbol.

V.1366 'The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross...'. Though Rome insists it is not 'another' sacrifice', this is what it is in reality. Rome is very good at making many words, so as to confuse and make issues vague enough to support any number of its own interpretations.

V.1367 "The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests..." In itself this disproves the claims of Rome, for nowhere does Christ say communion should be enacted by priests. Indeed, He abolished the physical priesthood forever!

V.1368 says that the Eucharist is also a sacrifice of the Church to God, equal to Christ's

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sacrifice... interceding for all men. This is not found in scripture. No man can offer Christ's sacrifice as an equal. And no man intercedes for mankind, because all men who are elect have Christ as Intercessor.

V.1370 The Eucharist includes the 'offering of Christ' given by the dead, "In communion with and commemorating the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints..." And so the heresy continues!

V.1371 The Eucharist is also offered for those still in Purgatory, that place of torture invented by Rome to keep its members mindful of the 'need' to always seek out priests to give them absolution!

The Catechism then says that Rome believes prayers for the dead at Mass are 'beneficial' in that they can relieve the dead of their guilt for sins!! The more Rome says, the more she displays her ignorance and heresy!

V.1372 continues with the idea that the Church is sacrificed alongside Christ, as an equal partner.

V.1373 is where the priest is given prominence: "Christ Jesus... is present... in the sacraments of which he is the author, in the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the person of the minister." In the priest?

V.1374 says "The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as 'the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend.'

There are only two 'sacraments' – communion and baptism! The others are Romish inventions. The 'Eucharist' is not above Baptism but is just another command.

V.1375 What is the 'proof' Rome gives that this 'Real Presence' is actual? No, it is not scripture,

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but 'St John Chrystostom'! Then, 'St Ambrose' is added as witness.

V.1381 finally comes to the crux of the matter: "That in this sacrament are the true Body of Christ and his true Blood, is something that 'cannot be comprehended by the senses', says St Thomas, 'but only by faith, which relies on divine authority'.

So, if you do not accept it, you have no divine authority! Yet, it cannot be comprehended by the senses... it is a matter of 'faith'... or foolish gullibility. It is the existential 'leap in the dark', a belief based not on scripture but on *blind* faith, which is the activity of an unbelieving mind that has no convincing argument on its side.

The Flesh Avaieth Nothing

Christ said the flesh avaieth nothing... meaning that He was disputing the understanding of the apostles, who thought He was talking about His real body. The apostles mistook Christ's words in this way on other occasions. Christ then said that what He was talking about was 'spirit'. As He said, it is the Spirit that quickeneth... gives eternal life... and this is what He said when He used the words "bread of life"! After that, many disciples left Him and walked away! That is, those who had a physical understanding of Him as Messiah, whom they wanted to be an earthly king.

Peter then confirms this spiritual meaning by saying "thou hast the words of eternal life" Note: the 'words' of eternal life, not the physical body in Mass.

This is again expounded in John 6:33: "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world." Now, if the abode of God is spiritual, only the spiritual can come from it: Christ.

To think otherwise is again to enter into absurdity. If by His 'body' (in communion) was meant His actual body, then the words in John 6:35 are meaningless "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." If we take this to refer to His physical body, then it would mean that once someone 'ate' His body in communion, he would never be hungry again! But, the text is clearly about spiritual things... "he that believeth on me shall never thirst". If it is not spiritual, then if we believe on Christ we will never need to drink fluids again! As I say, 'real presence' leads to absurdity. You can't mix

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physical and spiritual at random, because they are not of the same kind.

It reminds me of the glut of TV series featuring so-called 'demons'. They are always opposed by human beings, who fight them with karate and kick-boxing! And the demons fight back in the same way!! Demons are spirit and are more powerful than human beings. They do not, and do not need, to fight physically!! Romish beliefs are often as silly as that kind of thing.

The expositor, Vine, refers to the bread of communion as 'metaphorical'. The word 'life' can mean physical life, but it also can mean eternal life. Catholicism prefers to use only the one meaning – physical life.

There is much more that could be said, but the above is sufficient.

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