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Dear Paul:

I am going to answer your question, but not in a sentence or two. If you are sincerely interested in what the Church teaches, and I trust you are, I will honor you as my brother in Christ and attempt a more thorough explanation. The question will be answered in due course, after I lay a bit of groundwork. Please bear with me as I think through this with you, starting from the beginning. I would like to define a few terms and sources of authority in this matter.

When we get through this response, even if you don't agree with me, I hope you will be honest enough to admit that the Catholic teaching has plenty of biblical warrant for their teaching on the Mass. It is certainly a feasible position, not only biblically, but historically and in light of the overall revelation of God. And if we still disagree it will confirm that the Bible is not as perspicuous as often claimed, and that honest people come to honest disagreements. We read it through the lens of tradition—you and me alike, I from a two thousand-year tradition, you from a five hundred-year tradition.

As I understand your question, it is this: How can the sacrifice of the Mass, the offering of Christ in an unbloody manner, be an offering or sacrifice, while at the same time Catholics deny that it is a "re-sacrificing" of Christ? If it is a sacrifice, doesn't it contradict Scripture where we are taught that Christ was crucified once and for all? And wasn't one sacrifice enough, why does there have to be repeated sacrifices? How can the word "offering" be used of both, if they are not separate sacrifices? I hope I am correctly understanding your questions. If not, I may be writing a lot and shooting at a target other than the one you want me to address.

You asked me why the writers of the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* worded things as they did. I cannot speak for the writers of the Catechism, and why

they worded certain things the way they did. I can explain the content though, or at least I will try to explain what is a divine mystery. But first, you ask why a new Catechism "wasn't the old one good enough?" Yes and no. The older catechisms were based on Trent and very good. The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is based on the Scriptures like the old ones, and on all the prior Ecumenical Councils, but there was a new Council, Vatican II, in which the Holy Spirit led the Church further and deeper in the Faith. For example, the Church had never defined herself before Vatican II, but she did just that in *Lumen Gentium* in the Vatican II documents. Thus, the new Catechism, the first in four hundred years, updates the people of God and presents the truth of God within the current milieu, much as has been done throughout history.

I could ask you why so many Evangelicals are writing new commentaries as fast as they can be printed; aren't the older ones good enough? I have over 300 volumes of biblical commentaries on my shelf. Why do Protestants keep writing new ones? I would suggest that as time marches on and people ponder the truths of divine revelation in their minds and hearts (like Mary did) and develop it further. They build off previous understandings, they see more deeply into the Scriptures, due both to new insights, new leading of the Spirit, etc.? I don't think one should be surprised or cynical that a new catechism, and a beautifully written and theologically sound one at that, is published after four hundred years. My goodness, even the venerable King James Bible is brought up to date with modern language and translation.

Before we begin to look at the actual Sacrifice of the Mass, we should ask ourselves, by what authority and from what authoritative sources do we know what the Eucharist is, what it represents, and how to celebrate it. As a good Protestant, I viewed the Lord's Supper or communion as a simple routine we performed once a month to *mentally* remember what the Lord did for us. As simple as that. However, the Catholic today and the early Church from the first century understood it as much more. But is there more to it than a simple symbol, and if so, how do we know? First, is the New Testament a full accounting of everything that the liturgy entails and means? No, in fact it gives a very few details.¹ The details were given to the

¹ By the way, the Bible is certainly no final arbiter on monogamy, since it presents polygamy as the norm, and it is only through Catholic tradition that Evangelicals hold to monogamy. The same is true with the pro-life issue, the Trinity, the canon, and a host of other nonnegotiable that Evangelicals cling to on the basis of Catholic tradition without knowing it.

believers by Paul and the apostles in person as they lived and established their tradition with the churches (2 Thes 2:15; 3:6; 1 Cor 11:2). The New Testament documents were not meant as manuals on "How to Celebrate the Lord's Supper". Rather, that information had already been left with the churches and entrusted to the overseers (bishops). The subsequent epistles were merely corrective instruments, correcting abuses in what they had already been taught.

My point of bringing this up as I prepare to explain the "Sacrifice of the Mass" is to demonstrate that one cannot just go to the Bible alone and assume that everything is there, that the details of the "Supper" and its implementation and meaning are clearly spelled out, as in a Church Manual. This is just not so.² That even the Reformers couldn't come close to agreeing on these matters of the Lord's Supper in Marburg Germany in 1529 is not insignificant in this regard. When I visited Marburg in 1983, searching out my Reformation roots, I saw the large mural of them sitting at table hashing out the doctrines, yet failing to come up with the meaning of Scripture on the matter. If the biblical teaching was so clear (perspicuous), it is too bad that even those "reforming" the Church, and their heirs, the 28,000 Protestant groups have such a vast array of differences in this regard, with some Dispensationalists even denying that Baptism and the Eucharist are for the current dispensation. Are you aware that there was only one teaching on the Eucharist for fifteen hundred years, from the very first century? When the "Reformers" opened the floodgate of confusion, brought on by private interpretation and private judgment, it escalated into speculative and dogmatic theologies. Within fifty years of the "Ninety-five thesis" of Luther, there was a book published in Germany entitled *"Two Hundred Definitions of the Words 'This Is My Body'"*.

From Luther's perspective, dismayed by the factions already breaking away, he wrote, *"There are almost as many sects and beliefs as there are heads; this one will not admit Baptism; that one rejects the Sacrament of the altar; another places another world between the present one and the day of judgment; some teach that*

² Interestingly enough, the Old Testament never provided the Jews a manual of how to celebrate all the feasts either. This was known through tradition passed on through the centuries. The Jews understand that when Moses came down from the mountain he brought written laws and oral traditions. This is exemplified by the fact that in Exodus Moses sat among the people judging them and applying the Law of God. This authority was seen as passed down through the priesthood and leadership of Israel. Jesus acknowledged it without condemnation, in fact with orders to acknowledge it in Matthew 23:2 when he referred to the "seat of Moses".

Jesus Christ is not God. There is not an individual, however clownish he may be, who does not claim to be inspired by the Holy Ghost, and who does not put forth as prophecies his ravings and dreams" (cited in Leslie Rumble, *Bible Quizzes to a Street Preacher* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1976], 22).

From the perspective of the early Church, the Eucharistic celebration was bequeathed to the Church by the apostles themselves, not by Church Manuals or subsequent epistles. The Church was the repository of this information and practice, the depository of the apostolic teaching. It was she who passed the teaching and practice down to future generations. That is why the Church refers to the Sacred Tradition preserved in the Church. It is why I consider the Apostolic and Church Fathers as very important, for they are authentic witnesses to the Apostolic Tradition "deposited in the Church like a rich man deposits his money in a bank" (Irenaeus). This was the primary source of instruction in the first centuries. *Sola Scriptura* was unheard of and the Fathers even denounced those who attempted to promote doctrines from the Bible alone without the constant tradition and doctrines of the Church. It was the Church that contained the truth. She was the "pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). Martin Luther writes, "*We concede—as we must—that so much of what they [the Catholic Church] say is true: that the papacy has God's word and the office of the apostles, and that we have received Holy Scriptures, Baptism, the Sacrament, and the pulpit from them. What would we know of these if it were not for them?*" (*Sermons on the Gospel of John, Chap. 14–16* (1537), in vol. 24 of *Luther's Works* [St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publ. House, 1961], 304).

So, I will not only answer your question from the Bible, though I will do that, but I will also recall the teachings of the Fathers, for I respect their understanding. Those "*who had seen the blessed apostles and conversed with them, and still had their preaching ringing in his ears and their authentic tradition before his eyes. And he [Clement] was not the only one; there were still many people alive who had been taught by the apostles. . . . In the same order and the same succession the authentic tradition received from the apostles and passed down by the Church, and the preaching of the truth, have been handed on to us.*" (*Against Heresies*, 3, 3, 2f.). I respect their teaching, I would have to admit, more than current Evangelicals who have jettisoned their history and contradicted fifteen hundred years of the Holy Spirit's leading the Church. I find it interesting how much Evangelicals love their current cadre of teachers, but how ignorant and unconcerned they are with the teachings of the earliest believers—teachers extraordinaire.

So, with that bit of background, let's go a step further. You asked what the word "Mass" meant. The word "Mass" is, in itself, insignificant. It simply comes from the Latin phrase at the conclusion of the Mass, when the priest dismisses the people with the words, "*Ite, missa est*", or "Depart, it is the dismissal". It is just an appellation that stuck with prolonged usage. The Mass is a very comprehensive and profound liturgy that has wrapped in it mystery and typology. It incorporates the beauty and power of the Passion of Christ and recreates it before our eyes. It is symbolic and real, plain spoken and typological. It is a paradox yet simple. It contains all the dignity, profundity, symbolism, depth, and spiritual reality one would expect as the central element of worship in the Church founded by Christ and his apostles. It incorporates all the typology of the Old Testament, which was its shadow. The Mass was predicted by Malachi (Mal 1:11) as was understood by the early Church, which I will convincingly demonstrate later, as I have in earlier correspondence. "Mass" is just another title of the worship service, the liturgy, the Body of Christ partaking in the Lord's Supper.

Does the Mass entail a sacrifice? Of course, in several ways. Let me describe the simplest one first. In the Old Testament, a sacrifice started as an offering, something solemnly brought before God and offered to him. This is the first meaning of offering, or sacrifice, in the Mass. The people of God are gathered before the table of the Lord (the altar, the place of sacrifice; Mal 1; 1 Cor 10:21). The Israelites are commanded to bring their first-fruits to set on the altar as they worship the Lord. "*And now behold, I have brought the first of the produce of the ground which Thou, O Lord hast given me. ' And you shall set it down before the Lord your God, and worship before the Lord your God*" (Deut 26:10).

The Church has always viewed this as deeply significant in the Mass. As we gather from around the local area to worship God, we bring our gifts to offer him. In a sense they are placed on the altar as an offering. We offer to God many things: Ourselves (Rom 12:1,2), our praises (Heb 13:15) and our gifts (1 Cor 16:2), etc. The Offertory in the Church is a means of fulfilling this realistically and symbolically. By the way, "symbol" is not a bad thing. I have a friend who says that the Gospel is no longer shrouded in symbolism. He is right, it is now revealed through symbolism. A funny thing is, he celebrates the Lord's Supper and claims it is *only* symbolic, which smacks of a major contradiction if you ask me. Symbols are necessary and correspond to the manner in which the human mind works. We use symbols for everything. Even for Protestants, baptism and Communion are symbols, crosses in churches, wooden "altars", Christian flags, wedding rings, bowing our

heads and folding our hands, kneeling, closing our eyes to pray, holding the “Word of God” high as we make a point from the pulpit, laying on of hands, etc. These are all symbols. (For more on this see an excellent book entitled *Evangelical Is Not Enough* by Thomas Howard and published by Ignatius Press.)

In the Offertory we bring two things to the altar. Is the altar a New Testament concept, or only a remnant of the past? The Catholic Church has an altar (Heb 13:10, 1 Cor 10:21; etc.). Ignatius (AD 35–107) and the earliest believers concur: *“Make certain, therefore, that you all observe one common Eucharist; for there is but one Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and but one cup of union with His Blood, and one single altar of sacrifice—even as also there is but one bishop, with his clergy and my own fellow-servitors the deacons. This will insure that all your doings are in full accord with the will of God”* (*The Epistle to the Philadelphians* 4, in *Early Christian Writings*, 94, written about 106 A.D.). Notice the four key words that continually crop up: body, blood, altar, and sacrifice. Protestant scholar J. N. D. Kelly comments on this last quotation, “Ignatius’ reference to the ‘one altar, just as there is one bishop,’ reveals that he too thought [of the Eucharist] in sacrificial terms”.

There is also an altar in Heaven, a golden one (Isa 6:6; Rev 6:9; 8:3, 5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7). It seems we can’t get away from altars, all the way from offerings sacrificed by the sons of Adam, through Abraham, up to the Cross and the Table of the Lord, the altar referred to by the writer of Hebrews, and then at the very end of the written revelation of inspired text, we find out that God has not dispensed with such things in this new “spiritual” era, but that he has a golden altar before his throne with a Lamb of sacrifice eternally before his eyes. What an amazing thing. Catholics have altars, representing both the cross and the Lord’s Supper (the same thing really) and Protestants have a table in the front of their sanctuary which is not an altar at all. Nevertheless, they still have altar calls for people to come forward and receive Christ. Ironical that they use all the Catholic words and symbols but strip it of the original meaning. We will get to that soon enough.

In the Church, after the Liturgy of the Word and the Intercessions, we have what we call the Offertory. This is where we give our gifts to God. We bring our money and give it to God and the Church for a multiplicity of purposes. This would correspond to the offerings and tithes of the Old Testament. It is in a biblical sense an “offering”, something given freely, offered to God.

These gifts, real and symbolic, are brought before the throne of God, they represent us, the believers, as we offer not only our gifts but ourselves, our families and all that we are and have on the altar. When I see the family walk forward each Sunday to present the gifts of bread and wine, I see myself and all of mine being accepted by the priest and laid on the altar. I submit myself to the cross, I offer myself again to God, I lay down my life like he laid down his, I submit to God's will, I am offered again to God as a living and holy sacrifice. He takes the little I give and turns it into Christ. What I am is consumed by the Father, not in flames of immolation as of old, but in an offering and blessing of thanks and acceptance. I think Catholics miss much of the beauty of the Mass, you probably did as a youngster, because we don't read enough, pray enough, practice enough, and meditate on these mysteries enough. It is sad that such riches are before our eyes and we fail to see. Jesus chided his followers then as he does now, "*Having eyes, do you not see . . .*" (Mk 8:18).

We bring the bread and wine, fruit of the earth, a gift from God, manufactured with human hands. We take something he gave us, we make it into bread and wine and we return a portion to him. We thank God for his gifts, for life, for the fruit of the earth. "Blessed be God forever!"

Now the Bread and Wine are on the altar. What next? Jesus does not say that they represent his Body and Blood (although there are Aramaic words he could have used had that been his intention), but he says they *are* his Body and Blood. In fact, some scholars think that the word "body" in Greek, was actually the word "flesh" in Aramaic (the language Jesus used) for there was no good word for "body" in Aramaic. So Jesus says, "This is my flesh." Sounds Catholic doesn't it?

The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist was never questioned in the early Church except by Gnostics. Why did Gnostics deny the Real Presence? Because they considered Jesus just a man and Christ a "spirit" that came upon him—two separate entities. Christ did not have a real body, therefore the Eucharist could not be the Real Presence or Body and Blood of Christ. The Fathers argued the other way: since his Real Presence is in the Eucharist, he must have had a real body on earth. Interesting twist, isn't it? Isn't it interesting that Protestants follow the Gnostic lead and not the constant teaching and practice of the first Christians? There was no alternate view in the early Church until well into the ninth century. It wasn't until the 1300s that malcontents began to challenge the Real Presence and interpret

Jesus's words symbolically instead of literally. (And it is the Protestants who are supposed to be those who interpret the Bible literally!).

Can you imagine Jesus being interrupted by James or John when he says, "This is my Body"? John blurts out, "No it isn't, it is just a symbol." I can see Jesus slowly look over and say, "What did you say?" It was, as we will see, that very thing which caused Judas to lose faith; it was at that point of belief in the Eucharist that Satan entered him.

I will leave the issue of the Real Presence for now, though when my book is released this Spring it will go into great detail on this issue, both from Old and New Testaments, the early Church, the Reformation and modern times. I have also included in my book a "Short History of the Resistance" of which you are (and I was) the progeny.

Back to Sacrifice: Jesus' words at the institution of the Lord's Supper are loaded with sacrificial overtones. He is taking what was a sacrifice, the Passover, and transforming it with new symbolism and realities. What the Jews previously ate each year, and they had to *eat* the lamb of sacrifice or it was of none effect, represented the future Lamb. But now that the Real Lamb was offered, they were to *eat* that Lamb, not in a symbol but in reality. Temporal lambs versus an Eternal Lamb. One symbolized, the other *was*. The Jews formerly at a symbol, the covenant people of God now eat the real thing. "*This is My Body which will be given up for you.*" What strange words. When studied in the Greek and in light of Jewish culture, which I will do a bit of in a minute, there is incredible sacrificial terminology used in the Eucharistic passages. I would suggest a tape by Mitch Pacwa if you really interested in this topic, and I do believe you that you are. It is entitled "Is the Mass a Sacrifice?" He discusses in great depth the Greek and Aramaic of the passage and the meaning of Jesus drawn from the Old Testament. It is really fascinating and I can loan you a copy if you like me to.

Before we get into the actual sacrificial nature of the Mass, let's look at a few relevant passages from the Bible. "*Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. . . . Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was much grass in the place; so the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. . . . And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the*

fragments left over . . .'. When the people saw the sign which he had done, they said, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world'" (Jn 6:4, 10-14).

The word "thanks" in Greek is εὐχαριστέω, from which we get the word "Eucharist". John deliberately repeats this verb in verse 23, where it should be regarded as a distinct allusion to the Eucharistic intent of the passage. This conclusion is especially justified since we know that the Gospel was written at the end of the first century, at a time when the Lord's Supper was already technically called the Eucharist, as can be demonstrated by the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of the Apostle John (e.g., *Ephesians* 13, *Philadelphians* 4, *Smyrnaeans* 7) and plenty of others. Protestant scholar Oscar Cullman writes, *"The long speech which Jesus makes in John's Gospel . . . has, since ancient times, been considered by most exegetes a discourse on the Eucharist. . . . Here the author makes Jesus himself draw the line from the miracle of the feeding with material bread to the miracle of the Sacrament"* (*Early Christian Worship*, trans. by A. Stewart Todd and James B. Torrance [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953], 93).

This is the only miracle performed by Jesus during his earthly ministry recorded in all four Gospels, demonstrating the miracle's significance. Jesus is setting the stage for the discourse on the "Bread of Life" which has "come down from heaven". It is with the multiplication of the loaves that Jesus demonstrates his ability to provide bread for all, by preparing a table in the wilderness, a parallel speaking of the whole world. We will soon see that Jesus explains that the bread he now offers, in the Eucharist, is his flesh, which is "food indeed" which will be provided through his Church to all men, in all places, for all time.

The sacrificial tone used by the Evangelists in the Synoptic Gospels suggests that the early Christians associated the multiplication of loaves with the Eucharist at a very early date, remembering that the Gospels were written in the second half of the first century. Catholic antagonist and Protestant historian Philip Schaff writes, *"Here the deepest mystery of Christianity is embodied ever anew, and the story of the cross reproduced before us. Here the miraculous feeding of the five thousand is spiritually perpetuated. . . . Here Christ . . . gives his own body and blood, sacrificed for us . . . as spiritual food, as the true bread from heaven"* (*History of the Church* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980], 1:473).

In this narrative, John gives us a beautiful picture of the Church: "all the people" numbering five thousand men (excluding women and children) representing

the universal Church, gathered in "small groups" of fifty to one hundred, representing the local churches, all being fed by Christ, the Great High Priest, who provides the "bread" to all the people through the hands of his priests, the apostles. Later, in the same chapter Jesus explains that the bread is his flesh, which must be eaten, just as the meat of the Passover Lamb had to be eaten. He lays the foundation for the future apostolic teaching and the sacraments of the Church.

After the multiplication of the loaves, Jesus says, "*I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.*" The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who 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.' . . . After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'" (Jn 6:43, 51-55, 66-68).

How would the first recipients of John's Gospel perceive these words, remembering that the Gospel of John was written between 90-100 A.D.? According to George Beasley-Murray, arguably the most prestigious Baptist exegete in print, "*it is not necessary to interpret the statement exclusively in terms of the body and blood of the Lord's Supper. Nevertheless, it is evident that neither the Evangelist nor the Christian readers could have written or read the saying without conscious reference to the Eucharist; to say the least, they would have acknowledged it as supremely fulfilled in the worship event*" (George Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36 of *Word Biblical Commentary* [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987], 95).

In this discourse it seems as if Jesus is being overly difficult and desires to scare off his disciples unnecessarily. He spoke extremely hard words to them, seemingly asking them to be cannibals, and, as a result, most of them turned in disgust and left him. The word "eat" is not a dignified word used to describe fine dining, but is the Greek for "gnaw" and "munch" and could be translated "masticating the flesh" (see Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John I-XII* [New York, NY: Doubleday, 1966], 283). "*This offense*", according to Cullman, "*belongs now to the Sacrament just as the [offense of the] human body belongs to the [divine] Logos*" (Cullman, *Early Christian Worship*, 100). And Protestants of

the Anabaptist and Zwinglian traditions *do* take offense at the Eucharist. This is the only recorded case of disciples turning away from Christ over doctrinal issues. As a Protestant I also turned away from the full implication of his words. Why didn't Jesus stop the departing disciples as they scattered in revulsion over the hillsides? He could have easily shouted out to them, "Wait, don't you understand that I am speaking symbolically? Come back, I am only speaking figuratively". He didn't do this, and many of his disciples left him. But, the Twelve remained: they realized that his words were the words of eternal life.

This passage has been understood, from the first days of the Church, as an explanation anticipating the Eucharist. St. Basil the Great (c. 330–379 A.D.) wrote in his epistle *To the Patrician Coesaria concerning Communion*, "It is good and beneficial to communicate every day, and to partake of the holy body and blood of Christ. For he distinctly says, 'He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life'." (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d. series, 8:179). According to Raymond Brown, "There are two impressive indications that the Eucharist is in mind. The first indication is the stress on eating (feeding on) Jesus' flesh and drinking His blood. This cannot possibly be a metaphor for accepting his revelation. . . . Thus, if Jesus' words in vi 53 are to have a favorable meaning, they must refer to the Eucharist. They simply reproduce the words we hear in the Synoptic account of the institution of the Eucharist: 'Take, eat; this is my body; . . . drink . . . this is my blood'. The second indication of the Eucharist is the formula found in vs. 51 [when] . . . John speaks of 'flesh' while the Synoptic accounts of the Last Supper speak of 'body.' However, there is no Hebrew or Aramaic word for 'body', as we understand the term; and many scholars maintain that at the Last Supper what Jesus actually said was the Aramaic equivalent of 'This is My flesh'." (*The Gospel According to John I–XII*, 284, 285). It should be remembered again that John wrote this Gospel between 90–100 A.D., when early documents make it clear that the Eucharist was clearly being celebrated as the literal Flesh and Blood of Christ in the Catholic Church across the Roman Empire. Couldn't John have made an explanation to clarify these words (as he was wont to do, e.g., Jn 1:42; 21:19) if indeed the Eucharist was merely symbolic and other practices would have bordered on idolatry? He could have told his readers that this was all symbolism and did not mean what the first generation Christians *thought* it meant. But, John wrote a sacramental Gospel and knew exactly what he was writing, and why.

Next we read of Jesus' words to Judas in the very same context of John 6: "Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a

devil?' He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was to betray him" (Jn 6:70, 71).

The context of a passage is always important for its interpretation. While reading the Bible, one should ask questions such as: "Why did the author place this anecdote in this location instead of somewhere else?" or "What conclusion did the author expect us to draw by placing this incident here?" In our current passages, it seems contextually significant that John mentions Judas' betrayal at this point in his narrative. Where else in the gospels do we find this event mentioned? In each Gospel the mention of Satan entering Judas is in the context of the Last Supper. Each account begins by noting that it was the Passover and ends with Satan entering Judas—so it is with John 6. *John frames his Eucharistic discourse in chapter 6 so that the reader will see the clear parallel with the Synoptic accounts of the Lord's Supper.* The first verse of John 6 says it was during the Passover that Jesus had this discourse on "eating his flesh". This anecdote about Judas seems to be out of place unless understood within this Eucharistic framework of the whole chapter. How amazing the Bible is!

Next let's look at the institution of the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist as recorded in the *Gospel of Mark* (written in last half of first century). Mark wrote, "*And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.'* And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, '*This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many*'" (Mk 14:22–24). It appears Jesus intentionally used terminology taken from Exodus 24:8: "*Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words*". It is here, you will notice, that the Lord Jesus fulfilled what he promised in John 6, "*This is my body . . . this is my blood.*" What words could be plainer? They were eating the Passover meal, eating the sacrificial lamb, the prefigured body of Christ, and now, sitting at the same table, He holds up a loaf of bread and says, "*This is my body*".

It is interesting that the Greek word for body (σῶμα) has a definite article making the statement appear stronger in Greek than can be expressed in English. It is literally "This is the body of mine". It is a declaration that *this* (the bread) is *the* body of mine. Jesus would have spoken these words in Aramaic, the language used by Jesus and his disciples. Some scholars think that the original words of Jesus in this declaration were, "This is my flesh", since there was no word in Aramaic for

“body”. This would tie in quite impressively with John 6, when Jesus says, “*you must eat my flesh and drink my blood.*”

Next we read Luke in his Gospel. “*And when the hour came, he sat at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, ‘Take this, and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me’. And likewise the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’*” (Lu 22:14ff.).

Paul and Luke add the element of “remembrance” (Gr. *anamnesis*) which is not included in Mark, or in the other Gospels. There is an indication of a liturgical development even within the New Testament period (see *The Study of Liturgy*, ed. by Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, and Paul Bradshaw [New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press; 1978, 1992], 204). The word “remembrance” is a sacrificial term and is used in the Greek Septuagint (the Septuagint was the Greek Old Testament widely read in Jesus’s time). “*In Lev. 24:7 it (anamnesis) stands for ‘azkarah, which was a memorial offering. . . . This particular ‘azkarah was evidently intended to be a perpetual reminder of the covenant’*” (*Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. by Colin Brown [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publ., 1979], 3:239). *Anamnesis* is used in Numbers 10:10, where it is again regarding sacrifice, which would undoubtedly bring to mind a sacrificial context for those who heard the words spoken at the Last Supper. That *anamnesis* was used of Old Testament sacrifices would not have missed Jesus’ attention at such a crucial sacrificial meal. It would appear he is drawing attention to the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist that he is instituting during the Passover, a point that Paul seems to understand well in First Corinthians.

Lastly from Luke, I would like to comment on one of the most interesting anecdotes in the New Testament. It seems obvious that the Eucharist is being referred to because of the similarity in terminology, the placement of the story, and the date of the Gospel. In the *Gospel of Luke* it is recorded: “*That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus. . . . While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes*

were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?' . . . And he said to them, 'O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, but they constrained him, saying, 'Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent'. So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?' And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. . . . Then they told [the apostles] what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread" (Lu 24:13-17, 25-33, 35).

What a strange way for these travelers to describe how and when they recognized of Jesus, and what a strange way to end a Gospel narrative. After his resurrection, Jesus was explaining the Scriptures to them as they walked along the road together. "*And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*" This had to be one of the best expository sermons of all time—preached by Jesus himself. However, even with Jesus himself expounding the Scriptures, they did not comprehend or grasp who he was. But, in the taking, breaking, blessing, and giving of the bread, "*their eyes were opened and they recognized him*". What a peculiar passage. They did not describe their "revelation" of Jesus because of "biblical preaching", but rather, "*He was known to them in the breaking of the bread*" (Lu 24:35). Luke recalls here the exact words Jesus used a few chapters earlier when he instituted the Eucharist (*took, blessed, broke, and gave*). The only times in the New Testament where these words are used in this manner is when the writer is referring to the Eucharist—and here in Luke 24. Was Luke intending to make a point, a correlation by concluding his Gospel with this historical anecdote? Raymond Brown writes, "*Luke's insistence that the disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread is often taken as eucharistic teaching meant to instruct the community that they too could find the risen Jesus in their eucharistic breaking of the bread*" (*The Gospel according to John I-XII*, 1100).

Anyway, let's look next at Paul's words in 1 Corinthians, keeping in mind Malachi 1:1. Paul writes, *"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord."*

So here Paul confirms the words of Jesus and the oral tradition of the Church, since these things were not yet written. In fact, considering chronology, 1 Corinthians is probably the first written record of Jesus' words at the Last Supper. A few thoughts on this passage before we go to another. The terms "received" and "delivered" are technical terms used for the transmittal of apostolic tradition (see also 1 Cor. 15:3). The Corinthians did not learn of the Lord's Supper by reading the New Testament. They learned of it from the tradition delivered or passed down by Paul in oral teaching and hands-on examples (2 Cor 11:2; 2 Th 2:15, 3:6), and he in turn received it directly from God, or most likely, orally from the original twelve apostles (Gal 1:18, etc.). The letters of the New Testament were not to replace the tradition taught by the apostles, the living Word of God delivered in person (1 Th 2:13). The Epistles of Paul were not sent as a comprehensive "church manual" with instructions for the Lord's Supper, for the Corinthians had been instructed in proper procedures by Paul himself, in person. The epistles were intended to correct abuses and flaws practiced by the Corinthians. The faith had been handed down orally, by the personal instruction of the apostles to the saints (Jude 3), that is, the Church. Epistles were sent later to encourage and exhort the churches in what they already knew through tradition (1 Cor 4:17; 2 Pet 3:1, 2).

Regarding the word "remembrance" I have a few comments. According to Thomas Howard, in *Evangelical Is Not Enough* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), the English word "remembrance" does not bring out the full meaning of the Greek word "anamnesis", which Christ used when instituting the Eucharist. *"The word suggests a remembering that is also a making present"* (106). The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* uses the word "re-presentation" and *"The making present by the later community of the Lord who instituted the Supper"* (1:348). *"This 're-calling' means that something 'past' becomes*

'present,' something which, here and now, affects us vitally and profoundly. In other words, the Eucharist is the making present of the true Pascal Lamb who is the Christ. . . . Thus from the earliest days, the Christian Church has understood the Eucharist as the 're-calling' of Christ's sacrifice, with its present redeeming power. All the early liturgies make it plain that in the worship of the Eucharist the Church is experiencing the power of the present Savior" (Olive Wyon, *The Altar Fire* [London: SCM Press, 1956], 35, 36). Protestant writer Max Thurian wrote, *"This memorial is not a simple subjective act of recollection, it is a liturgical action . . . which makes the Lord present . . . which recalls as a memorial before the Father the unique sacrifice of the Son, and this makes Him present in His memorial"* (*The Eucharistic Memorial, II, The New Testament, Ecumenical Studies in Worship* as quoted in *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. by Colin Brown [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publ., 1979], 3:244).

Jesus says that the Cup is the Blood of the New Covenant referring to the words of Moses. This wording clearly draws upon Old Testament sacrificial language, Exodus 24:8 in particular: *"And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.' "* Jesus refers us to real blood, not a symbolic wine that represents blood. Jesus, referring back to the words of the blood covenant of Moses says, *"This is my blood of the covenant"* as he hands the chalice to his disciples commanding them to drink his blood, which he had already explained to them in the discourse of John 6.

And finally, regarding the profaning of the Body of the Lord: being guilty of someone's *"body and blood,"* was to be guilty of murder. How could one be guilty of murder if the body (bread) was only a symbol? The Real Presence of Christ's Body is necessary for an offense to be committed against it. How could one be guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ by simply eating a little bread and drinking a little wine? *"No one is guilty of homicide if he merely does violence to the picture or statue of a man without touching the man in person. St. Paul's words are meaningless without the dogma of the Real Presence"* (Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty, *Eucharist Quizzes to a Street Preacher* [Rockford, IL.: TAN Books, 1976], 7-8).

I would like to look at one more passage of Paul before going into more detail on the actual Sacrifice of the Mass and the fact that there is only one sacrifice which took place in time and that the daily sacrifice of the Mass is a re-presentation of that

one singular sacrifice, but not a re-crucifixion of Jesus. Please bear with me a few minutes more.

Paul writes further, *"I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? . . . I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons"* (1 Cor 10:15–18, 20–21).

What does the word "participation" mean in this passage? Is this just symbolic language? No, it means a real participation. St. Augustine places these words on Jesus' lips to describe what happens at the Eucharist: *"You will not change me into you as happens with bodily food; rather, you will be changed into me"* (*Confessions* 7, 10, 16, in Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* 3:57). Even the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* by Gerhard Kittel (trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983], 3:798), says, *"κοινωνία denotes participation, fellowship, esp. with a close bond. It expresses a two-sided relationship. It means participation, impartation, fellowship."*

St. John Chrysostom says, *"For what is the bread? The Body of Christ. And what do they become who partake of it? The Body of Christ: not many bodies, but one body"* (*Hom. on 1 Cor. 24*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, 12:140). We are not just participating in a symbolic gesture, but as Paul clearly says, we are actually participating in the body and blood of Christ. How can that be if it is just a symbol. Fundamentalists claim to be those who are Bible literalists: the Bible says what it means and means what it says, however, as a Fundamentalist I was too quick to set aside the literal, intended meaning, and the teaching of the whole ancient Church, to fit the Bible into the Fundamentalist tradition I had accepted.

The Eucharist also represents the unity of the Body, which Protestants have torn asunder. There is no more striking example of the unity of the Body of Christ than that of the bread and wine. Bread is made of many individual grains that are gathered together and ground into flour before being baked by the Holy Spirit into

one integrated loaf. Individual grapes are gathered and crushed together to form wine. As the elements of the grains form a loaf, so all of us who eat of the one loaf, the Body of Christ, are formed into one body. We become his body in a very real way as we all partake of, or eat, his Flesh and drink his Blood. Remember that Paul says we eat of *one loaf* which indicates the real body of Christ, for from appearance sake we all eat separate loaves. Catholics are all eating of one loaf, the risen Christ, the bread of Life.

The Eucharist is the pinnacle and source of unity, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* so clearly states, "*The Eucharist is our daily bread. The power belonging to this divine food makes it a bond of union. Its effect is then understood as unity, so that, gathered into his Body and made members of him, we may become what we receive*" (no. 2837, quoting from St. Augustine's *Sermon 57, 7*).

Does Paul think in sacrificial terms? Look at his terminology and comparisons. Remember, 1 Corinthians is not a "handbook" or "catechism" of Christian doctrine. That had already been delivered to the Corinthians through tradition (1 Cor 11:2), personally by Paul. The epistle was only meant as a corrective missive to remind and improve their understanding and practice. "*The sacramental status of the bread and wine is not only presupposed but is made the basis of the argument. . . . The spiritual food and drink now reappear more closely defined as the body and blood of Christ: although the ultimate basis of this definition will be given later (1 Cor 11:23-26), Paul can assume it as common ground shared with his audience, strong enough to support the further argument. . . . What the New Testament writings presuppose . . . is of greater importance than what they actually describe*" (*The Study of Liturgy*, 191).

Interestingly, St. Paul is comparing three different sacrifices. His readers were clear as to his meaning. Each sacrifice is offered on an altar (table of sacrifice): first, that of the Jews (v. 18), second, that of the pagans (vs. 19-21; offered to idols), and lastly, that of the Christians, the Eucharist. By his comparisons, Paul confirms the sacrificial nature of the Christian Eucharist. The "*table of the Lord*" is a common technical term in the Old Testament referring to the altar of sacrifice (Lev 24:6, 7; Ez 41:22; 44:15; Mal 1:7, 12); the correlation would have immediately been made by the readers. I am surprised I missed it in my earlier days. The "*table of the Lord*" in the Church, referred to by Paul, and drawing from Old Testament terminology and practice, is now the altar for the new sacrifice referred to by Malachi (Mal 1:11). Notice that the "*table of the Lord*" is mentioned twice in the

first chapter of Malachi, before and after God's promise of a future, worldwide sacrifice offered by the Gentiles. The "*table of the Lord*," or a sacrificial altar, will be the place of this offering which corresponds to the Eucharist offered on the "*table of the Lord*" in 1 Corinthians 10:21.

Paul, were you aware of this stuff when you left the Catholic Church? Aren't the parallels striking and unmistakable? Malachi twice frames the "pure sacrifice" of the Gentiles, with the sacrificial "*table of the Lord*". Paul then uses this same terminology to explain the new sacrifice offered on the "*table of the Lord*" in the Church. The sacrifice of the Eucharist on the "*table of the Lord*" is contrasted with the other well-known sacrifices offered on tables or altars, both pagan and Jewish. Paul, the brightest student of the brightest Jewish rabbi, Gamaliel, is not using this Old Testament terminology lightly—he is a scholar. He knows his readers understand the significance of his sacrificial terminology relating to the Eucharist. Is there any question that Paul, the brilliant teacher of the Torah, understood the Eucharist in sacrificial terms, offered on the "*table of the Lord*" as a fulfillment of Malachi 1:11? *"The parallelism that Paul draws between Jewish and pagan participation in their sacrifices through eating the meat of the victims and Christian fellowship with Christ through the Eucharist shows that he considers the eating of the Eucharist a sacrificial repast and implies that the Eucharist itself is a sacrifice"* (Jerome Biblical Commentary, ed. by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968], 269).

Sometimes I get so excited about the Lord and the Church that I get choked up as I write. The Lord has been so wonderful. Now we can finally address your specific question: How can the Mass be a real sacrifice and yet not re-sacrifice Christ. In a nutshell, and I think I made this clear in my Ankerberg article, there is only one sacrifice, an eternal sacrifice, and we are partaking in it daily in the dimensions of time and space, on the temporal plane. Protestants tend to be stuck in time (I know, I was there), whereas the Catholic tends to view things in terms of time and eternity. The same effect is seen when we discuss the intercession of the saints. I have Protestants ask: "Where does the Bible say we should pray to dead saints?" The Catholic is puzzled and responds, "Where does the Bible say that saints are dead?" It is simply a matter of perspective. Protestants tend to have a tin roof over their head, not able to see past the dimension of time—and the temporal realm—into eternity. To them saints are dead and Christ's sacrifice is over and

done. To a Catholic the saints are alive,³ *but* in another dimension (heaven), and the sacrifice of Christ was accomplished two thousand years ago, *but* is still a real, happening, and eternal event in the eyes of a God and a Church not locked into time alone, and without the restricted vision that Protestants have accepted due to their inherited tradition.

To say that Christ died once and for all (Heb 7:27; 9:12; 10:10) and that he is offered at each Mass as a sacrifice seems contradictory, or paradoxical to a Protestant who tends to look at everything horizontally instead of vertically, but it is no problem if you change your way of thinking, if you broaden your vision to think biblically. Let me ask you: "How can Jesus be a King sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on High (Heb 1:3), and still be a Lamb of slaughter, a sacrifice on the altar (Rev 5:6)? How can He be in both places in two radically different conditions? For that matter, how can he be sitting in heaven at the right hand of the Father and at the same time be in a different place, in our hearts (Col 1:27)? He now has amazing capabilities, prerogatives not exercised while he walked the earth, having surrendered for a time some of the prerogatives of deity (Phil 2:5-11).

It is one of these seeming paradoxes that we now approach. Do Catholic "re-sacrifice" Christ on the altar at each Mass? No. Do Catholics re-present and participate in the one sacrifice of Christ at the Mass? Yes. Let's look again at Malachi 1:11 which prophecies of the future pure sacrifice on the Table of the Lord. "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name *shall be* great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense *shall be* offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name *shall be* great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts." Notice the plurals and singulars here. In every place (plural) and a pure offering (singular). One offering offered in every place. Having already discussed this verse I won't belabor the point, but this corresponds beautifully with the Mass, as the first Christians picked up on as early as the first century when the

³ Mt 22:29-32: "But Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God. "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.'"

Heb 12:1: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

apostles were still alive, in fact, since the understanding is so widely spread by the first and second century, it can be assumed that this was a clear apostolic teaching, from the apostles themselves. Remember, they taught a lot of things not recorded in the few documents we have collected into the canon. So we have a single offering offered in multiple locations, in the future among the nations throughout the whole world—an excellent description of the Mass.

We must now stress the permanence of Christ's sacrifice. It is not *only* a once and for all event, though it is in relation to time and space, but it is perpetual in its reality and effects in relationship to eternity. It does not cease, the sacrifice that is, it and its effects continue. Christ always offers himself to the Father. He always offers, although he only died once. It is the one pure offering of Malachi. He always offers this immolation whose physical act is past but whose value remains. He constantly makes intercession for us as the High Priest. Christ, both sacrifice and priest. Suffering and death are passing things. But he who has passed through suffering and death remains for ever clothed in the merits of this suffering and this death. You wouldn't disagree with this because you also understand the finished work of Christ, offered once, effective for all time.

Christ stands before the Father on the golden altar before the throne with a slit throat. This what John tells us: "*And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain*" (Rev 5:6). This is depicted beautifully in a painting by Jan Van Eyck entitled "The Adoration of the Lamb" which is in Ghent Belgium. I had the privilege of standing before this painting with admiration for almost an hour analyzing and appreciating it. It is probably my favorite painting of all time (with Rembrandt's "Raising of the Cross" a close second, which I saw in Munich). The Lamb stands majestically on the altar with his throat gashed open in the manner of Old Testament sacrifices. The Holy Spirit hovers over him shedding light on everyone. Blood pours from the Lamb into a chalice. People from the four corners of the earth (Malachi's east and west) come to the Lamb to partake of the one cup and the one flesh, and to worship at the eternal sacrifice re-presented to every age.

Christ does not cease to offer his sacrifice. He is eternally making intercession for his people. When the era of redemption is over and the Second Coming completed, the sacrifice of Christ will be completed. A sacrifice is completed when those for whom it is offered, taste its fruits and receive all the benefits of its efficacy. Christ will then no longer have to offer himself as an

impetratory and expiatory "victim" on the altar. It is for mankind on earth, for men still living in time, in a state of becoming righteous and redeemed, that Christ offers himself as a victim. This permanent offering of the sacrifice of the Cross will last as long as earthly time lasts. The offering of Christ presented to the Father is for this world and it looks forward to the consummation of the last day.

There has been a lot of speculation by theologians, Catholics and Protestants alike, on the nature of the Lord's Supper. Catholic theologians have debated and speculated on the nature and effects of the Eucharist in an attempt to plumb the depths of this great mystery. So simple and yet so profound. So temporal and yet so eternal. Theology is coming ever nearer to a fully understanding its fulness, but such fullness will be reserved for the final day when that which is seen dimly in a mirror will be seen and understood fully. The consecrated bread and wine signify not only Christ's body and blood but also his sacrifice, The consecration of the two species is a symbolic immolation but *the symbolism is sacramental and so contains what it signifies, The Mass is a sacrifice, because it signifies and at the same time contains the whole reality of the sacrifice of the Cross.*

[For a while here I will draw from Marie-Joseph Nicolas's excellent book *What is the Eucharist?* since it is thorough yet simple to understand. I have over seventy books on my shelf dealing exclusively with the Mass and the Eucharist, but I do not have time to quote them all :-) which I am sure you will appreciate.]

But what is meant by the words "the whole reality of the sacrifice of the Cross"? If we are to understand them, there are two extreme opinions we must eliminate. One goes too far, the other not far enough. The first, if it dared to go further, would argue: time and space are abolished in the mystery of the Eucharist; what I make present at the Mass, is the passion, the death and then the resurrection of Christ. This explanation is absolutely impossible. Time is not like space. What is past no longer exists in the form dominated by time which is implied by the historical facts of suffering and death. Coexistence between yesterday and today is not possible. On the contrary, Christ's glorified body is absent from, yet coexists with us. We exist at the same instant, the same moment in duration. To make him present is not to give him back the being he no longer has, it is to put his being where it may come into contact with ours. In no way, then, is Christ present on the altar as dead and bleeding, but according to his present state as risen from the dead.

Others say that what is most important in the sacrifice of the Cross is the interior sacrifice, the wholly spiritual and immanent state of oblation which was its soul. Jesus's inner oblation has not ceased to be, it continues in heaven and it is expressed in a particularly striking and visible way by the gift of himself in the Eucharist. But this explanation of the facts does not see clearly enough that the sacrifice of the Eucharist is the sacrifice of the Cross. It would rather seem that there are, according to this view, two "moments" in one unique sacrifice, the eucharistic "moment" being merely the sign and the commemoration of the historical moment while at the same time acting as a new externalization and incarnation of the interior disposition.

We must go further than this and preserve that idea of permanence in the first explanation which is lacking in the second. We have only to remember the idea of the *permanence* of the sacrifice of the Cross itself. It is not only the state of Christ's soul as offering which remains, it is also what he offers, that is, his immolated human nature as it issues from suffering and death, clothed with the merit which it possesses as the permanent fruit of his sacrifice. What passes away serves the cause of what remains. Christ's suffering and death which are passing events serve the cause of that state of victim which is infinitely pleasing to God. Christ is eternally he who died for us and he offers himself as such. The priest, when he consecrates the bread and the wine, makes him present to us in this same state, or, more accurately, he himself, through the instrumentality of the priest, makes himself present as such, as the victim, as risen from the dead, that is as emerging for our sakes from death.

This is what the Council of Trent means by the words: it is the same sacrifice because it is the same priest, the same victim, offered in another manner. At the Mass, this same sacrifice is offered in a sacramental and symbolic way. The Mass is the sacrament of the sacrifice of the Cross in so far as the latter continues to exist. That is why the Council makes it clear that the Mass possesses all the virtue of the sacrifice of the Cross and applies its fruits to us. As we have said, the virtue of the sacrifice of the Cross is the power with which in God's eyes it clothes Christ. Christ is contained in the Eucharist as exercising this power and applying it here and now to all those who share in the Eucharist. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the Eucharist is the sacrifice of the Cross made present once again. The idea of renewal which this expression implies is, however, not quite exact. We are dealing with an actual and active presence of the victim which is always sacrificed and this is what Christ is until the end of time. When we say to the faithful: "Be present at

Mass as though you were at the sacrifice of the Cross," we are exaggerating if we mean that the faithful are to feel compassion for Christ as though he were suffering here and now. We are not exaggerating if we mean they are to share in the offering which Christ makes of himself on our behalf, an offering which, as past, was painful and bloody and, because it was so, possesses all its present power.

The Mass therefore is not a new sacrifice, that is, it adds nothing to that of the Cross in the sacrificial order. It does not place before God any new act of propitiation and expiation. It provides him with no new reason for giving grace to mankind. The same victim is present in that ever active state conferred on him by his immolation followed by his resurrection. His eucharistic state adds no new value in the order of sacrifice. The Mass is a sacrifice solely through its relationship with the sacrifice of the Cross.

Nevertheless every Mass is a true sacrifice. Every consecration is a sacrificial act although in the sacramental order, that is, as signifying and containing the invisible and eternal sacrificial act of which it is the sensible sign. There are, we know, as many presences of Christ as there are consecrated hosts. Yet there is only one Christ present in all of them. This is what Paul says, even though we all have separate individual loaves in each parish, they are all partaking of the *one* bread. Similarly, there are as many sacrificial offerings as there are Masses said, and yet there is only one sacrifice of Christ which is expressed in all these sacrifices. There are many sacrifices which are related to one single absolute sacrifice and which acquire, each one, their sacrificial character from this relationship alone.

Paul, it will help us to understand this if we always bear in mind that there is one principal Author of the multitude of eucharistic consecrations, one only true invisible priest, represented by the multitude of priests at the Mass-Christ in glory, the eternal priest.

And we must not think that the New Covenant did away with the priesthood. In the Old Testament there were three levels of priest: the High Priest, Aaron and his successors, the Levites as ministerial priests, and then the whole people of God as the universal priesthood (Ex 19:6: "*You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.*"). We see three levels of priests: High Priest (only one), ministerial priests (all the Levites), and the universal priesthood (all God's people). It is the same today! We have three levels: one High Priest (Jesus Christ), ministerial priests (apostles and

their successors, the bishops and presbyters), and the people of God (a nation of priests). No matter how much things change, they stay the same. There is a wonderful continuity.

Back to the Mass. What then is new in the Mass, different from the one Crucifixion? What does the eucharistic sacrifice add to the sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated in the person of the risen Christ? To use more technical terms, what does the "sacrament" add to the "reality" which it makes present?

First and foremost, it adds the fact of making this reality present, of inserting the transcendent sacrifice of Christ into our human time from which he emerged by his resurrection. Eternity slices down into our time, or we are taken up, transported into heaven to partake of the liturgy revealed in the book of Revelation. Either way is the same; we are included in an eternal event, a heavenly liturgy, a cosmic worship service. We must not forget that the salvation of each man is achieved during the time of his earthly life by "contact", by meeting with his Savior. This personal meeting, this reply of each of us to God taking our flesh and giving us his life, is brought about first of all and essentially by faith, a faith which is also an acceptance. The object of this saving and justifying faith is Christ in the very act by means of which he saves us. "But my real life is the faith I have in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). I have to appropriate to myself and to make my own the redeeming sacrifice made by Christ in my name. That is the condition I must fulfil if I am truly to receive in myself salvation, God's pardon, his love and his grace. The idea underlying the institution of the sacraments is to make this saving act of Christ sensibly, concretely, exteriorly present. I adhere to this presence by faith which grasps its object and submits itself to the all-powerful act by which I am saved. Every sacrament is an invisible act of Christ in the soul and is founded on the sacrifice of Christ, just as every fruitful reception of a sacrament is founded on my faith in the sacrifice of Christ who died for me. In the Eucharist, it is this sacrifice itself which is made actual and present to me. All its efficacy is put at my disposal. I believe and I receive. When I use the word "I", I am somewhat distorting the facts. The efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is offered to, and placed at the disposal of, every man existing in this realm of time into which Christ's sacrifice is inserted.

The Eucharist alone gives Christ this existence in human time. His death and resurrection deprived him of it. Without the priest who serves as his instrument and, in a sense, as the prolongation of his humanity (a continuing incarnation, in a sense,

as is also the Body of Christ, the Church), Christ would certainly offer his sacrifice, but not from this earth and in terrestrial time. Similarly the Word could not become man and one of us without that portion of flesh which he took from the Virgin Mary.

We are now in a position to show in more detail what is new in the sacrifice of the Mass in comparison with that of the Cross. Let's look at them individually.

1. Each consecration implies an actual and new intervention on Christ's part since he is the principal and invisible priest of the Mass. It is he who offers himself and not properly speaking the priest who offers the host.

2. This intervention is not a new offering in relation to the offering he perpetually makes of himself and which is the very state of his risen being. It is an application of His eternal offering, its insertion at a given point in space and time.

3. The sacrifice of the Mass therefore does not acquire through its sacramental offering any merit, any efficacy, any sacrificial value that is new, but a new application of this efficacy. The Mass applies the sacrificial efficacy of the Cross at a given moment of time and to the men who live at that time.

4. The sacrifice of the Cross, by taking this sacramental form, has this added to it: that it is offered through the instrumentality of the Church, that is, through the instrumentality of men. Christ the Priest acts here by means of an instrument into which the power of his priesthood passes and gives life to the words and to the visible human gestures. And it is precisely by using this instrument that the sacrifice limits not its intrinsic value but its effective scope. It has in view the objectives of the Church here present, of the ministers and the faithful in the congregation, and it goes out to meet their faith. But what seems to limit the horizon of Christ's sacrifice in fact perfects it, not of course in the sense that it makes it more perfect in itself, but in the sense that it enlarges its human scope. I mean that it is to a greater extent the sacrifice offered by men to God in and through their Head and their sovereign Priest.

5. Similarly, the victim of the sacrifice of the Mass takes up into himself all our personal offerings. It is one of the essential principles of the Treatise on the Redemption (and we might call it the principle of Co-redemption) that men, far from being dispensed by the sacrifice of Christ from offering themselves in sacrifice, are rather made capable by it of doing so. The imperfect victims which we are, are

given value by their union with the perfect victim. By offering himself through the instrumentality of men, Christ offers men themselves with him. This is admirably expressed by the offertory rite. The bread and wine taken from the Creation are the symbol of an that men have received from God, of all their goods, of their very being. The changing of the bread and wine into the very being of Jesus Christ expresses well the total assumption by Jesus Christ of what we have and are. After the Consecration, it is no longer ourselves that our hands offer but Christ in us. God alone by becoming man could bring into existence the perfect victim, but it is everything human which he incorporates into himself, it is the whole Church which he makes his body and an extension of himself.

6. Finally, Christ's sacrifice, by becoming eucharistic, realizes more fully the idea of sacrifice as we have explained it. When he died on the Cross, Christ certainly gathered the whole community of mankind into himself. He was its priest and he offered its sacrifice. This victim was visible, objective, external. Nor did it lack a unique symbolism of unparalleled power, since the "kind of death" which he chose, raising him up as it did with arms outstretched, genuinely signified the total gift of an obedient and submissive victim, his offering to God and his gift to men. Yet the very reality of this immolation prevented it from having a ritual character. He was the visible victim, but not *visibly* the priest, since he suffered passively and the authors of his immolation, far from performing a sacred rite in the name of us all, were perpetrating an odious and sinful deed. Christ's sacrifice becomes a ritual act in its eucharistic form. As such, it is always beginning again according to the will of men living in time and unable to continue to exist save by repeating their acts.

Christ's sacrifice does not cease to be real, it begins again in sacred and liturgical forms that are all symbolic. It was Christ himself who, before his actual death, created this characteristic of his sacrifice, linked as it is with our earthly condition. He offered his sacrifice ritually at the Last Supper before offering it actually on the Cross.

We must never forget that we are dealing here with a rite that contains a reality and a twofold reality, that of Christ offering himself, an immolated and risen victim, and also the reality of men offering their real lives and their real being, their day-today existence. Our share in the sacramental sacrifice would be a living lie if it consisted solely of empty forms and signs, if it did not involve the real offering of our own lives in union with Christ, in the real conditions in which we live. Sacramental life is never self-sufficient, it presupposes our real life, Christ's as well

as that of Christians. It presupposes real life and the gift of this life until the day of our death. It presupposes and requires faith as well.

This will help us to understand how the Mass is the sacrifice of the whole human race and how, on the other hand, it is the sacrifice of the Church alone, that is, of mankind already redeemed. Only those who believe may share in it, for it is by believing and by accepting it that we do in fact share in it. It is by offering to God in Christ our earthly possessions that we bring our share to the perfect victim who is Christ. The Church alone in her living members is therefore united to Christ in the eucharistic sacrifice.

But this sacrifice intercedes for the whole world. It offers the whole world salvation. We have tried to make it clear that this means the whole world as it now is, all that which, since it exists in human nature, is thereby open to receive the grace of Christ, and is entitled to appropriate to itself his death and resurrection.

We can sum up by saying that the sacrifice of the Mass adds our sharing in it to the sacrifice of the Cross, which does not thereby acquire more value or power, but a more human character. In order to explain this, it is customary to insist on the fact that each Mass is a new application of the virtue of the sacrifice of the Cross. But we must not forget that the "virtue" of the sacrifice of the Cross is above all its direct power over the Heart of God, its value as perfect worship. The application to men of its virtue—and it is thus that its efficacy reaches "its consummation"—always presupposes the offering of its value through human instrumentality. And this is what in fact takes place. Every Mass contains in itself, in all its fullness, the adoration of Christ, his thanksgiving, his desire to make reparation, but as passing through the Church, through us, and so making our religion and our offering his own.

So, we end where we began: The Sacrifice of the Mass is the sacrifice of Christ represented in a sacramental way, providing us his Body and Blood in fulfillment of his promise. The statement in the Catechism I hope is clear for you now. If not, reread the above and try again. For a reminder, the Catechism states "*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 is offered in an unbloody manner."

So why do Protestants seem to always say that Catholic's have *another* sacrifice, or a re-sacrificing of Christ over and over and over again. One friend said, "With all the "pieces of Christ's body you Catholics eat, I am surprised there is any of him left in heaven." What a stupid thing to say. Catholics see it is a participation in the one sacrifice, sacramentally. I have to believe that it is just a simple misunderstanding and not an attempt to misrepresent or slander. But I think there are others who intentionally misrepresent the Catholic teaching in order to confuse people or mislead them. I do not by any means consider you as one of them. I tend to find you honest and sincere in these matters and hope I am right.

I also find history is on the Catholic's side, especially from the quotations I have previously provided. One last time I will cite St. Justin who was beheaded for his faith in 165 AD. *"Hence God speaks by the mouth of Malachi, one of the twelve prophets, as I said before, about the sacrifices at that time presented by you [Jews]: 'I have no pleasure in you,' says the Lord, 'and I will not accept your sacrifices at your hands; for from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same My Name has been glorified among the gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to My Name, and a pure offering: for My Name is great among the gentiles says the Lord, but you profane it.' He then speaks to those Gentiles, namely us, who in every place offer sacrifices to Him, that is, the bread of the Eucharist and also the cup of the Eucharist, affirming both that we glorify His Name and you profane it."*

Ignatius, the disciple of Paul and Peter writes from the first century, *"But look at those men who have those perverted notions about the grace of Jesus Christ which has come down to us, and see how contrary to the mind of God they are. . . . They even abstain from the Eucharist and the public [liturgical] prayer, because they will not admit that the Eucharist is the self-same body of our Savior Jesus Christ, which [flesh] suffered for our sins, and which the Father in His goodness raised up again. Consequently, since they reject God's gifts, they are doomed in their disputatiousness. They should have done better to learn charity, if they were ever to know any resurrection. . . . Abjure all factions, for they are the beginning*

of evils."⁴ If I have to throw my lots in with these noble predecessors of our faith, the first generations after the apostles, or with the self-styled Bible-only Protestants today who jettison the first fifteen centuries of the Church, there is no contest. I throw my lot in with them. I am in good company!

I know this was longer than you probably anticipated, or desired, but I wanted to be a little more thorough with the hopes of giving some background. I hope it helps clarify things for you and enables you to understand the Catholic, historical, and biblical teaching of the Eucharist. It is for that reason that I spent a good deal of time with the biblical passages, the quotations of the early Fathers and the explanation of the Catholic understanding of what actually happens at Mass. Even if you disagree, I hope you will at least be easy on your Catholic brethren, realizing that this teaching is very defensible biblically, and is certainly feasible. It is neither anti-biblical nor incomprehensible, though it most certainly is a deep mystery.

I will be unable to correspond much in the next months since I have several conferences to prepare for, a bi-weekly Bible study I begin teaching in November to we anticipate hundreds of Catholics (and Protestants) to attend, and I am under pressure from the publisher to finish up book number two. Plus my kids are thinking I am married to this silly computer. I will now take a rest. God bless you Paul and may we continue to be friends as we discuss important issues dear to both of our hearts. Should you like recommendations for good reading material on this to research it further, I would be glad to suggest some titles, not the least my book which goes into quite a bit of further detail. I have also ordered a book for you which I will mail when it arrives.

⁴ Ignatius of Antioch, *The Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 7, 8, in *Early Christian Writings*, 102–103, written about 106 A.D. There is no question that Ignatius considered the Eucharist to be the Real Presence of Christ, the self-same flesh which was crucified and raised again. This was no innovation; he was writing nothing new to the believers across Asia, only confirming what they already knew and practiced. He expounded the common doctrine of the whole Church, and no one treated his letters as radical or out of line with the universal apostolic teaching. Historian Warren Carroll tells us that at the time of his martyrdom Ignatius was "at least thirty years a bishop, probably trained by the Apostle John, and was apparently at this time the most venerated living member of the whole Church" (*The Founding of Christendom*, [Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 1993], 1:455).

Saturday, October 19, 1996

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May Gods richest blessing be upon you, your family and your congregation as you strive to serve him in holiness and love.

In Christ,

Steve Ray

Two Enclosures: 1) A passage from John Hardin's *The Catholic Catechism* and
2) the original section from my letter to John Ankerberg which inspired this conversation.

A brief excerpt from John A. Hardon's *The Catholic Catechism*:

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

"Already at the Last Supper, Christ made it plain to the apostles that what he was there enacting and what he would complete on Calvary was a sacrifice, which he wanted them to continue in his memory. In Judaism, bread and wine were familiar sacrificial elements. The words Jesus used at the institution, when he spoke of the New Covenant, of his body that would be given up, of his blood that would be poured out, of doing this in memory of him—all have deep sacrificial implications.

"In apostolic times the Church had no doubt that, while the sacrifice of the cross was certainly adequate for the redemption of the world, Christ intended to have this sacrifice perpetuated in a ritual manner until the end of time. This was one of the principal themes of the letter to the Hebrews, which assumed that Christ had offered himself once to God the Father upon the altar of the cross, but went on to affirm that his redemption was an enduring event. Christ's priesthood "remains forever." It continues "since he is living forever to intercede for all who come to God through him" (Heb. 7:24-25).

"Renewal of Calvary. Christ's own association of what he did at the Last Supper with what he was to do on Good Friday has been the Church's own norm for intimately relating the two. The sacrifice of the altar, then, is no mere empty commemoration of Calvary, but a true and proper act of sacrifice, whereby Christ the high priest by an unbloody immolation offers himself a most acceptable victim to the, eternal Father, as he did on the cross. "It is one and the same victim; the same person now offers it by the ministry of his priests, who then offered himself on the cross. Only the manner of offering is different."

"The priest is the same, namely, Jesus Christ, whose divine person the human minister represents at the altar. "By reason of his ordination, he is made like the high priest and possesses the power of performing actions in virtue of Christ's very person."

"The victim is also the same, namely, the Savior in his human nature with his true body and blood. Worth stressing is that what makes the Mass a sacrifice is that Christ is a living human being with a human will, still capable of offering (hence priest) and being offered (hence victim), no less truly today than occurred on the cross.

"However, the critical question still remains: Just how are the Mass and Calvary related? They are interrelated in three ways: as re-presentation, as

memorial, and as effective application of the merits gained by Christ by his death on the cross.

1. The re-presentation means that on the cross, Jesus offered himself and all his sufferings to God by an immolation of himself that brought on his physical death, but an immolation that he freely offered to his heavenly Father. On the altar, by reason of the glorified state of his human nature, "death has no more power over him" (Rm. 6:9). Consequently, the shedding of his blood is impossible. Nevertheless, according to the plan of divine providence, the continued sacrifice of Christ is manifested in the Mass by external signs that are symbols of his death. How so? "By the transubstantiation of bread into the body of Christ and of wine into his blood, his body and blood are both really present." But that is not all. Their separation in consecration "symbolizes the actual separation of his body and blood. Thus the commemorative re-presentation of his death, which actually took place, on Calvary, is symbolically shown by separate symbols to be in a state of victimhood."

"Catholicism, therefore, affirms that because Christ is really present in his humanity in heaven and on the altar he is capable now, as he was on Good Friday, of freely offering himself to the Father. He can no longer die since he is now in a glorified body, but the essence of his oblation remains the same. It is the continued willing surrender of himself to the will of the Father.

2. The Mass is a memorial of Christ's passion and death throughout the Eucharistic liturgy, as described already in a ritual from the second century.

The Apostles in their memoirs, which are called Gospels, have handed down what Jesus ordered them to do; that he took bread and, after giving thanks, said: 'Do this in remembrance of me; this is my body.' In like manner, he took also the chalice, gave thanks, and said, 'This is my blood.' And to them only did he give it.

"Is it only the death of Christ that is commemorated? The Church teaches it is "a memorial of his death and Resurrection," though obviously in different ways. When we say that the Mass commemorates Christ's death, we mean that in a mysterious way Christ really offers himself as the eternal priest and that his oblation is not only a psychological remembrance but a mystical reality. When we say that the Mass is a memorial of his resurrection, this too is not merely a mental recollection. After all, the Christ who is now in heaven and the principal priest at the altar is the risen Savior. His resurrection is not only an event that took place

once, but a continuing fact of salvation history. To call the Mass a memorial of the resurrection may conjure up the image of a pleasant memory that swiftly crosses the mind. It should rather tell us that in the Mass the risen Lord is present and in our midst and bids us unite ourselves, still mortal, with him who is our resurrection.

3. The Holy Sacrifice is the divinely ordained means of applying the merits of Calvary. At this point it will be useful to clarify an otherwise complicated question: How does the Mass apply the merits of Christ's passion and death? During the period of the Reformation, this was one of the most vexing issues that faced the Church, whose priests were told they were wrong to claim that Masses were a source of divine grace. Either they were wrong, or St. Paul was mistaken when he wrote that when Christ died, "He, on the other hand, has offered one single sacrifice for sins, and then taken his place forever, at the right hand of God" (Heb. 6: 10). The dilemma seemed insoluble: Either Christ died once for all and his death is sufficient for the redemption of mankind, or in spite of his death, Masses must be said to somehow shore up what was presumably inadequate in the passion of the Savior.

"The Council of Trent addressed itself to the issue in a memorable paragraph that summarizes fifteen centuries of Catholic belief on the efficacy of the Mass, but an efficacy that depends entirely on Calvary:

This sacrifice [of the Mass] is truly propitiatory, so that if we draw near to God with an upright heart and true faith, with fear and reverence, with sorrow and repentance, through the Mass we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For by this oblation the Lord is appeased, he grants grace and the gift of repentance, and he pardons wrongdoing and sins, even grave ones.

The benefits of this oblation (the bloody one, that is) are received in abundance through this unbloody oblation. By no means, then, does the sacrifice of the Mass detract from the sacrifice of the cross.

Therefore, the Mass may properly be offered according to apostolic tradition for the sins, punishments, satisfaction, and other necessities of the faithful on earth, as well as for those who have died in Christ and are not yet wholly cleansed.

"What the Church teaches is that, while the blessings of salvation were merited for mankind on the cross, they are still to be applied to us, principally

through the Mass. Between the two ideas of merit and application stand the towering facts of faith and human freedom: faith to believe that God wants us to use such channels as the Mass, and freedom to humbly unite ourselves in spirit with Christ's self-immolation—he on the cross, which he endured, and we on our cross, which he bade us to carry daily if we wish to be his disciples.”

Excerpt on the Mass from my letter to John Ankerberg critiquing his book *Protestants and Catholics*:

The Mass

Next, I flipped to page 81 where I think you seriously misrepresent the Catholic position regarding the Mass. Catholics will listen to you if you are honest and correctly represent their position. But, if you only caricature the Catholic teaching, they will rightly dismiss you as uneducated, or uninterested in the truth. It would be best if you give the honest position of the Catholic Church and deal with it squarely, instead of setting up straw men that are easily demolished. The Catholic Church does not teach that Christ is re-sacrificed on the altar. Why do you try to say that they do? The quotation you use from the *Catholic Encyclopedia* does not use the word "re-sacrifice," yet you paraphrase it in your own words, saying it teaches "re-sacrificing." Words are important and smart Catholics will catch on to what you are doing—playing footloose with the terminology to suit your interests. The Catholic Church teaches exactly the opposite, and you as a scholar should know that. Christ was sacrificed once for all, as Hebrews clearly tells us, and He does not need to come down and get crucified every day.

Catholics teach that there was only one sacrifice, and that the Mass is a representation of that sacrifice, a partaking in, and of, the one sacrifice—the eating of the Lamb (Ex. 12:11; John 6:52-58). There are not *many* sacrifices—only one. Catholics teach that the Mass is a taking part of the *one* sacrifice, the sacrifice on Calvary. Notice however, that we see Christ before the throne of God in Rev. 5:6, forever presented as a "*lamb as though slain*" (the Greek perfect tense). The Apostle John tells us the Lamb *was* slain, but is still on the altar before the throne of God.⁵ So we have another anomaly: Christ seated at the right hand of the Father, and Christ, the Lamb of God standing on the Altar. In the temporal world, He was slain once, but in heaven, the world outside time, it appears that the sacrifice of Christ is an eternal event. We are even told that He was crucified *before* the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

Let's take a close look: when was Christ crucified, 1) "before the foundation of the world," 2) in 30 AD, or 3) as the "*Lamb standing as though slain*"

⁵ How do we Protestants explain an altar, the table of sacrifice, in *heaven* before the throne of God (Is. 6:1; Rev. 6:9; 8:3, 5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7). Didn't altars become extinct with the new covenant or dispensation?

presented in eternity future? The Catholic simply sees the Mass as a partaking of that eternal event. It brings that eternal event into their very presence. It transports them into heaven to see, experience and partake of the eternal liturgy going on before God's very throne. Catholics wonder why Evangelicals make this so complicated, since they think of it as really quite simple.

To be honest on page 81, you should have quoted the new Catechism of the Catholic Church, and not given your own paraphrased and private interpretation of what their book says.⁶ In paragraph 1367 the Catechism states (and I happen to have a copy), "*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 is offered in an unbloody manner.' " So why do us Protestants seem to always say that Catholic's have *another* sacrifice, or a re-sacrificing of Christ over and over again. They see it is a participation in the one sacrifice. History seems to be on their side, and this is something else I want to talk to you about. But first, one of the early Christians, Justin Martyr wrote,

*"Hence God speaks by the mouth of Malachi, one of the twelve prophets, as I said before, about the sacrifices at that time presented by you [Jews]: 'I have no pleasure in you,' says the Lord, 'and I will not accept your sacrifices at your hands; for from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same My Name has been glorified among the gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to My Name, and a pure offering: for My Name is great among the gentiles says the Lord, but you profane it.' He then speaks to those Gentiles, namely us, who in every place offer sacrifices to Him, that is, the bread of the Eucharist and also the cup of the Eucharist, affirming both that we glorify His Name and you profane it."*⁷

⁶ If you treat their own documents cavalierly, the Catholic will lose trust in the way you read and interpret the Bible. Credibility is hard to regain with a reader, once you've lost it.

⁷ **Justin the Martyr** in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* c.135 A.D. [Chapter 41]. Justin explains the Eucharist as a sacrifice, and that had been prophesied about hundreds of years earlier by Malachi [1: 10]. This was the universal teaching of the primitive Church.

"Justin speaks of 'all the sacrifices in this name which Jesus appointed to be performed,

When I read Paul's letter to the Corinthians I seem to see the same kind of language:

"I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation⁸ in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? . . . I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink of the

viz. in the Eucharist of the bread and the cup, and which are celebrated in every place by Christians'. Not only here but elsewhere too, he identifies 'the bread of the Eucharist, and the cup likewise of the Eucharist,' with the sacrifice foretold by Malachi.

"It was natural for early Christians to think of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. The fulfilment of prophecy demanded a solemn Christian offering, and the rite itself was wrapped in the sacrificial atmosphere with which our Lord invested the Last Supper. The words of institution, 'Do this,' must have been charged with sacrificial overtones for second century ears; Justin at any rate understood them to me 'Offer this.' If we inquire what the sacrifice was supposed to consist in, the Didache for its part provides no clear answer. Justin however, makes it plain that the bread and wine themselves were the 'pure offering' foretold by Malachi. Even if he holds, that 'prayers and thanksgivings' are the only God-pleasing sacrifices, we must remember that he uses, the term 'thanksgiving' as technically equivalent to 'the eucharistized bread and wine.' The bread and wine, moreover, are offered 'for a memorial of the passion,' a phrase which in view of his identification of them with the Lord's body and blood, implies much more than an act of purely spiritual recollection. Altogether it would seem that, while his language is not fully explicit, Justin is feeling his way to the conception of the Eucharist as the offering of the Savior's passion." Early Christian Doctrines by renowned Protestant scholar J.N.D. Kelly (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978).

⁸ What does the word *participation* mean? Is this also symbolic language? No, it means a real participation. St. Augustine places these words on Jesus' lips to describe what happens at the Eucharist: "You will not change me into you as happens with bodily food; rather, you will be changed into me." (*Confessions*, VII, 10, 16) Even Kittel's says, "κοινωνία denotes participation, fellowship, esp. with a close bond. It expresses a two-sided relationship. It means participation, impartation, fellowship." (TDNT, III, 798).

St. Chrysostom says, *What in fact is the bread? The body of Christ. What do they become who receive communion? The body of Christ.*" (Chrysostom, *Hom. on 1 Cor. 24, ad loc.*). He seems to think this is not just participating in a symbolic gesture, but that Paul says, we are actually participating in the body and blood of Christ. How can that be if it is just a symbol. Are the first Christians the Bible literalists or are we?

*cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons."*⁹

Notice the sacrificial language being used. The term "*table of the Lord*" is a technical term and in the Old Testament always refers to a table of sacrifice. Why would Paul use such blatantly sacrificial terminology if he is trying to deny any association with the Eucharist and sacrifice? These are questions that Catholics are going to ask when they read your criticisms. I wish you had handled this better or they will never get to your chapter *A Personal Word To Catholics*.

⁹ "*The sacramental status of the bread and wine is not only presupposed but is made the basis of the argument. . . . The spiritual food and drink now reappear more closely defined as the body and blood of Christ: although the ultimate basis of this definition will be given later (1 Cor. 11:23-26), Paul can assume it as common ground shared with his audience, strong enough to support the further argument. . . . What the New Testament writings presuppose . . . is of greater importance than what they actually describe.*" (*The Study of Liturgy* ed. by Jones, Wainwright, Yarnold, and Bradshaw; NY: Oxford University Press; 1978, 1992).

It seems St. Paul is comparing three sacrifices offered on altars (tables): that of the Jews (v. 18), that of the pagans (vs. 19-21; offered to idols), and that of the Christians, the Eucharist. Paul confirms the sacrificial nature of the Christian Eucharist. The "*table of the Lord*" is a common technical term in the Old Testament referring to the altar of sacrifice (Lev. 24:6, 7; Ez. 41:22; 44:15; Mal. 1:7, 12). The "*table of the Lord*" in the Church, referred to by Paul, and drawing from Old Testament terminology and practice, is now the altar for the new sacrifice referred to by Malachi (Mal. 1:11) according to the first and second century Christians. Notice the "*table of the Lord*" is mentioned twice in the first chapter of Malachi, before and after the Yahweh's promise of a future, world-wide sacrifice offered by the gentiles. The "*table of the Lord*," or sacrificial altar, will be the place of this offering which corresponds to the Eucharist offered on the "*table of the Lord*" in 1 Cor. 10:21.

The parallels are striking: Malachi twice frames the "*pure sacrifice*" of the gentiles, with the sacrificial "*table of the Lord*." Paul then uses this same terminology to explain the new sacrifice offered on the "*table of the Lord*" in the Church. The sacrifice of the Eucharist on the "*table of the Lord*," is contrasted with the other well-known sacrifices offered on *tables* or altars. Paul, the brightest student of the brightest Jewish teacher, Gamaliel, is not using this Old Testament terminology lightly. He knows his readers understand the power of his sacrificial terminology in regards to the Eucharist. It seems that Paul, the brilliant teacher of the Torah, understood the Eucharist in sacrificial terms, offered on the "*table of the Lord*" as a fulfillment of Malachi 1:11. "*The parallelism that Paul draws between Jewish and pagan participation in their sacrifices through eating the meat of the victims and Christian fellowship with Christ through the Eucharist shows that he considers the eating of the Eucharist a sacrificial repast and implies that the Eucharist itself is a sacrifice.*" (*Jerome Biblical Commentary* Edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968.)

Here is what really bothers me and you don't appear to address it. Why is the Protestant position on the Lord's Supper at such odds with the universal teaching of the first Christians who called the Lord's Supper "Eucharist"? I always thought the first four centuries of Christendom were essentially Evangelical, and then pagan elements infiltrated, and the Catholic Church was the resulting mutation. After reading the writings of the Fathers (the Didache, first century; Ignatius of Antioch, 106 AD; Clement of Rome, 96 AD; Justin Martyr, second century; Barnabas, first century, etc.) I could *not* find my favorite Evangelical doctrines represented, if fact, I found distinctly Catholic doctrines.¹⁰ This is a real problem that needs to be addressed and you didn't seem to address it. It was smart of you to keep your readers from referring to the history of the first centuries. It certainly disturbed me when I began to read our Christian history. Why would those who received the Gospels from the apostles have gone off the track so quickly? It didn't make any sense. Why did the Lord wait fifteen hundred years, until Luther came along, to get the train back on the tracks? I guess a thousand years is like one day to Him.

¹⁰ For example, the first century Christian, Ignatius of Antioch, who history tells us knew the apostles, writes, *"Observe those who hold erroneous opinions concerning the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how they run counter to the mind of God! They concern themselves with neither works of charity, nor widows, nor orphans, nor the distressed, nor those in prison or out of it, nor the hungry or thirsty. From Eucharist and prayer they hold aloof, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father in His loving-kindness raised from the dead. And so, those who question the gift of God perish in their contentiousness. It would be better for them to have love, so as to share in the resurrection."* (Epistle to the Smyrnaeans 6, 7)