

A Critique of William Webster's article: The Eucharist

William Webster, in his article "the Eucharist" attempts to pit the Catholic Church's teaching on the Eucharist (along others) against the teaching of the early Church Fathers in regards to the substantial Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the Eucharist as sacrifice, two doctrines that Webster rightly sees as interdependent.¹

Webster says that:

"The Roman Catholic Church teaches that when the priest utters the words of consecration, the bread and wine are changed into the literal body and blood of Christ. He is then offered to God on the altar as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin. The Council of Trent explicitly states that 'in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner who once offered himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross'. There are thus two aspects of the Roman doctrine: *transubstantiation*, which guarantees the 'real presence' of Christ; and *the mass*, in which Christ, thus present bodily, is re-offered to God as a sacrifice."

Before continuing it's important to correct Mr. Webster in that we do not believe that the bread and wine are changed into the literal body and blood of Christ, but rather that their *substance* is changed into the substance of Christ, body, blood, soul, and divinity. Hence the name "*transubstantiation*." If Mr. Webster's description were accurate, we would have flesh and blood on our altars after consecration. My correction may seem like nit-picking, but as we will soon see the theology concerning the Eucharist is complex and at points very subtle. We are describing a supernatural reality and it requires us to use precise language. Otherwise, confusion results. Unfortunately, this is not the only time Mr. Webster fails to speak with the precision necessary for this topic.

Mr. Webster continues by arguing that since transubstantiation "is not the only view which has been expressed in a consistent way throughout the history of the Church" the Catholic position cannot be said to be that of the early Church because "the Fathers of the first four centuries reveal...[a] diversity of opinion." To his credit, Webster does concede that there were early Church fathers who "maintained that the elements are changed into Christ's body and blood and that his presence is physical." In other words, they affirmed what Trent taught. However, he argues that this was only one of several (contradictory?) opinions.

The main difficulty in Webster's argument is that he has over-simplified what the Catholic Church actually does teach about the Eucharist, which is considerably more complex and fuller than mere Transubstantiation. The same can be said about the Eucharistic sacrifice. By presenting a stick-figure presentation of the Church's position, he is able to present quotes from the Early Church fathers that

¹ https://www.the-highway.com/eucharist_Webster.html

supposedly express other views than that of the bare notion of Transubstantiation. Therefore, he wrongly concludes, the early Church did not fully agree with the Catholic position.

The best way to refute this argument is to present a fuller and more comprehensive summary of what the Church does believe about the Eucharist. Once this is done the tension that some of these quotes seem to have with Catholic teaching will disappear.

WHAT THE CHURCH ACTUALLY TEACHES AND BELIEVES

First, the Church teaches that the Eucharist is one of the seven Sacraments. What is a Sacrament? The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches:

“The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions” (CCC 1131, emphasis added).

What's important here is that all the Sacraments are visible signs (or symbols, if you will) instituted by Christ to give grace (his divine life). Although they are all signs or symbols, they are not *merely* signs or symbols; they are "efficacious signs" in that they both "signify and make present the graces" they signify. For example, the efficacious sign of Baptism is water. That is the outward sign of that Sacrament. The sign or symbol of Baptism, the washing of water, points to what the Sacrament does, namely, it cleanses us from sin.

There are two aspects to every sacrament, the outward visible sign and the inward invisible reality accomplishes. The sign or symbolic aspect of a Sacrament is very important since it points the graces that are proper to the sacrament.

This is not a new idea. The older *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (or the *Roman Catechism*) says:

"But of the many definitions, each of them sufficiently appropriate, which may serve to explain the nature of a Sacrament, there is none more comprehensive, none more perspicuous, than the definition given by St. Augustine and adopted by all scholastic writers. A Sacrament, he says, is a sign of a sacred thing; or, as it has been expressed in other words of the same import: A Sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible grace, instituted for our justification" (RC, Part II)(emphasis mine).

Here again, a Sacrament as a "visible sign of an invisible grace." In regards to the Eucharist, the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* says:

“Besides the different significations already mentioned, a Sacrament also not infrequently indicates and marks the presence of more than one thing. This we readily perceive when we reflect that the Holy Eucharist at once signifies the presence of the real body and blood of Christ and the grace which it imparts to the worthy receiver of the sacred mysteries...”

Here the Roman Catechism spells out the two things signified by the Eucharistic elements, namely (1) the presence of the real body and blood of Christ and (2) the grace which it imparts. Webster focuses on the first part (the substantial presence), but completely ignores the second part - what the grace does or imparts to the recipient.

Therefore, we can break the teaching down into various elements:

Outward Sign	Bread and Wine	Signifies physical nourishment
		Signifies Christ's body and blood (death) ²
Invisible Reality	The whole Christ: body, blood, soul, and divinity.	Spiritual nourishment
		The substantial Presence of Christ

As you can see, the Eucharist is much more complex than mere Transubstantiation. We can speak about it in terms of its elements (bread and wine), their signification (food and drink, signs of figures of Christ's body and blood), their invisible reality (Christ), and the graces that the Sacrament brings about (spiritual nourishment and the substantial presence).

Since there are many distinctions here the Church wisely adopted a more precise way of referring to the Eucharist by using the philosophical terminology of Aristotle. The outward appearances are called accidents. That which stands under the accidents is the substance. How Christ gives us his flesh and blood is called the species. The change that occurs at consecration is called transubstantiation. By using this terminology, it is very easy to understand what is being spoken about. The problem is, however, before this terminology became standardized in the Church, the early Church fathers made use of imprecise language in which it is not always easy to understand exactly what is being referenced. It is here that Mr. Webster focuses the bulk of his attention.

THE MYSTERY OF FAITH

As if this weren't complex enough, there's yet another layer of meaning to the Eucharist in that it is the "mystery of faith." Christ establishes the Eucharist solely on the strength of his word. Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (1965), summarizes:

“And so we must approach this mystery in particular with humility and reverence, not relying on human reasoning, which ought to hold its peace, but rather adhering firmly to divine Revelation.

St. John Chrysostom who, as you know, dealt with the Mystery of the Eucharist in such eloquent language and with such insight born of devotion, had these most fitting words to offer on one occasion when he was instructing his faithful about this mystery: ‘Let us

² The separate consecration of the bread and wine signify the separation of blood from the body, namely death. This is what is meant by "proclaiming the death of the Lord until he comes again" (1 Cor. 11:26) and perhaps Galatians 3:1.

submit to God in all things and not contradict Him, even if what He says seems to contradict our reason and intellect; let His word prevail over our reason and intellect. Let us act in this way with regard to the Eucharistic mysteries, and not limit our attention just to what can be perceived by the senses, but instead hold fast to His words. For His word cannot deceive.'

The scholastic Doctors made similar statements on more than one occasion. As St. Thomas says, the fact that the true body and the true blood of Christ are present in this Sacrament 'cannot be apprehended by the senses but only by faith, which rests upon divine authority.' This is why Cyril comments upon the words, *This is my body which is delivered up for you*, in *Luke 22, 19*, in this way: 'Do not doubt that this is true; instead accept the words of the Savior in faith; for since He is truth, He cannot tell a lie.'

Hence the Christian people often follow the lead of St. Thomas and sing the words: 'Sight, touch and taste in Thee are each deceived; The ear alone most safely is believed. I believe all the Son of God has spoken; Than truth's own word, there is no truer token.'

And St. Bonaventure declares: 'There is no difficulty over Christ's being present in the sacrament as in a sign; the great difficulty is in the fact that He is really in the sacrament, as He is in heaven. And so believing this is especially meritorious.'"

Faith in Christ and belief in the Eucharist are intrinsically interrelated. This can be seen with special clarity in the "Bread of Life" discourse in John 6 where Christ repeated appeals to his own authority and concludes with Simon Peter's words, "...Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68-69).

The Eucharist is much fuller and more multidimensional than just saying "the bread and wine are changed into the literal body and blood of Christ" - a definition so simplistic that it doesn't even accurately describe transubstantiation let alone the whole Catholic teaching on the Eucharist.

THE MEANING OF SCRIPTURE

There is one more thing to keep in mind before we look at Webster's paper. Protestants generally (not all) believe that Scripture has only one sense and meaning: the literal historical sense. But this was not so in the early Church. The early Christians understood that Scripture has a literal and a spiritual sense that can have multiple meanings. This is especially true for those fathers who were part of the Alexandrian school since their approach to Scripture tended to focus almost exclusively on the spiritual meaning of the text.

In addition to the spiritual sense, the fathers also occasionally accommodated texts to their treatise, homilies, and discourses. That is, they would take the words of Scripture and use them to expound on an idea or a lesson without due care of their original context. This is not very common, but it does occur.

The different ways of interpreting Scripture poses a problem for Webster's main argument. He claims that there was a "diversity of opinion" in regards to the Eucharist, but fails to distinguish whether a given father

is interpreting Scripture according to the literal historical sense, the spiritual sense, or whether the text is being accommodated. We should also note that the spiritual sense is always an addition to the literal sense.

Keeping this in mind let's look at the fathers cited by Webster:

THE DIDACHE

Webster says: "The Didache... is an early manual of Church discipline... and it simply refers to the Lord's Supper as spiritual food and drink. There is no indication that the elements are transformed in anyway."

The Didache, quoting an early Eucharistic prayer, reads:

"You, almighty Master, have created all things for your name's sake, and have given food and drink to men for their enjoyment, so that they might return thanks to you. Upon us, however, you have bestowed spiritual food and drink, and eternal life through your Servant. Above all we give you thanks, because you are mighty. Glory be to you forever" (10, 3-4).

The Didache juxtaposes ordinary food and drink (which is given by God for our enjoyment) with the "spiritual food and drink" (which is given along with eternal life *through* your Servant - Christ). Therefore, there is something more going on here. Something turns ordinary food and drink into spiritual food and drink. A change, in my opinion, is implied.

Moreover, the Didache is speaking about the Eucharist in terms of its signification: spiritual food and drink. True, it doesn't use the Aristotelian words of accident, substance, and species. But speaking about the Eucharist in terms that are perfectly Catholic, as evidenced by the Eucharistic Prayer prayed in the ordinary form of the Mass:

"Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands, *it will become our spiritual drink.*"

Again, Webster says that the Didache is silent in regards to a change. True. It does say, however, that this spiritual food and drink was "bestowed" upon us. How was it bestowed upon us? How does ordinary food and drink become spiritual food and drink? Obviously, a change must occur. The quotation in the Didache does not spell out this change, but then again it is quoting a prayer not a catechism. Indeed, as Webster himself notes, the Didache is a manual of Church discipline. It's not a theological treatise. Webster is making an argument from silence and given the nature of the work it is an unwarranted one.

JUSTIN MARTYR

Webster concedes that Justin believed "the eucharistic elements as being more than common bread and wine, in that when they are consecrated, they become the body and blood of Jesus." However, he notes,

in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, 70 Justin speaks of the Eucharist "as a memorial and remembrance of his body and blood." Here is the quote from Justin:

"It is quite evident that this prophecy also alludes to the bread which our Christ gave us to offer in remembrance of the Body which He assumed for the sake of those who believe in Him, for whom He also suffered, and also to the cup which He taught us to offer in the Eucharist, in commemoration of His Blood."

Let's begin by saying that it is safe to assume that Justin isn't contradicting himself - saying one thing in one text and denying it in another. Since Webster already concedes that Justin *did* believe in a change from bread and wine to the body of Christ, his words in the *Dialogue* must be complimentary to that position. And this is easily done by looking at the meaning of the Greek word translated "remembrance" or "commemoration."

The word translated "remembrance" and "commemoration" in Greek is *anamnēsin* – the same word Jesus used at the Last Supper when he said, "do this in remembrance of me." When you look at how this word is used in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint, the preferred OT text for the NT), you'll find that it is only used once to mean "remember" (Wisdom 16:6). The other four times (Lev. 24:7, Num. 10:10, Ps 37:1 and 69:1) it refers to something that calls attention to a sacrifice being offered. Given this background, it's clear that Justin Martyr is not contradicting his view in the substantial change occurring in the Eucharist, but rather is speaking to another aspect of the Eucharist, namely that it is a sacrificial offering. As we mentioned earlier, the Real Presence in the Eucharist and the Eucharistic sacrifice are interrelated.

IRENEAUS OF LYONS

Webster says: "Irenaeus of Lyons (140-202 A.D.) clearly believed the bread and wine became the body and blood of Jesus at consecration, but he also stated that the elements were composed of two realities — one earthly and one heavenly, or spiritual. He implied that at consecration, though the elements are no longer common bread and wine, they do not lose the nature of being bread and wine."

Did Irenaeus believe that the bread and wine remain after consecration as Webster suggests? The answer, it seems to me, is no.

Irenaeus twice mentions that after the words of consecration what was once ordinary bread becomes the body of Christ and the cup contains his blood:

"But how can they be consistent with themselves, [when they say] that the bread over which thanks have been given is the body of their Lord, and the cup His blood... " (4, 18, 4)

...and again, in the very passage that Webster quotes (4, 18,5), he says:

"For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist..."

If it is "no longer common bread" then what is it? He doesn't say the body and blood are present "in, with, and under" the bread and wine, as perhaps a Lutheran would. He simply says it is the Eucharist. So clearly, Irenaeus believes that a change occurs and the bread and wine are changed into Christ's body and blood, but what about the added clause: "...the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly"? Webster believes that the earthly refers to the bread that remains after consecration and the heavenly to the body and blood of Christ. But this ignores the parallel that Irenaeus draws afterwards. Let's quote the line in its entirety:

"For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity" (emphasis mine).

According to Webster, Irenaeus is implying "...that at consecration, though the elements are no longer common bread and wine, they do not lose the nature of being bread and wine." But this doesn't fit Irenaeus parallelism.

In regards to the Eucharist:

The bread (from earth) -> invocation of God -> "no longer" common bread (from earth) but the Eucharist.

In regards to those who receive the Eucharist:

our bodies [from earth] -> receive the Eucharist -> "no longer corruptible having the hope of the resurrection."

For the parallelism to hold, it seems to me, the bread would have to be *completely changed* to the Eucharist (the earthly to the heavenly) because our bodies will be *completely changed* from corruption to incorruption (the earthly to the heavenly). If the bread remained then according to this parallelism our bodies would remain partly corruptible and partly incorruptible. But what kind of resurrection is that?

It is here that Webster's use of imprecise terminology gets in the way. He says that "they do not lose the nature of being bread and wine." If Webster means by "nature" the outward appearances or accidents of bread and wine, he is completely correct and I think this is what Irenaeus means when he speaks of the Eucharist containing an earthly reality. This is perfectly Catholic. However, if Mr. Webster means by "nature" the accidents *and* substance of bread and wine remain, he is incorrect because we have already seen in Irenaeus' parallelism that he believes a complete change occurs. Since the bread is "no longer common bread" yet it retains its former appearance, I believe his reference to the Eucharist containing an "earthly reality" must be a reference to the accidents that remain after consecration.

TERTULLIAN (155/160-240/250 A.D.)

Webster says: "[Tertullian] ...spoke of the bread and wine in the eucharist as symbols or figures which represent the body and blood of Christ. He specifically stated that these were not the literal body and blood of the Lord. When Christ said, 'This is my body,' Tertullian maintained that Jesus was speaking

figuratively and that he consecrated the wine 'in memory of his blood' (*Against Marcion* 3.19). Some theologians have claimed that the ancient usage of the words 'figure' and 'represent' suggested that the symbols in some mysterious way became what they symbolized. But Tertullian uses the word 'represent' in a number of other places where the word carries a figurative meaning. For example, in *Against Marcion* 4.40 he says, 'He represents the bleeding condition of his flesh under the metaphor of garments dyed in red.'

It's worth quoting *Against Marcion* 4, 40 in full and keep in mind what we have said about the Catholic position on the Eucharist earlier in this paper:

"Then, having taken the bread and given it to His disciples, He made it His own body, by saying, "This is my body," that is, the figure of my body. A figure, however, there could not have been, unless there were first a veritable body. An empty thing, or phantom, is incapable of a figure. If, however, (as Marcion might say,) He pretended the bread was His body, because He lacked the truth of bodily substance, it follows that He must have given bread for us. It would contribute very well to the support of Marcion's theory of a phantom body, that bread should have been crucified! But why call His body bread, and not rather (some other edible thing, say) a melon, which Marcion must have had in lieu of a heart! He did not understand how ancient was this figure of the body of Christ, who said Himself by Jeremiah: "I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter, and I knew not that they devised a device against me, saying, *Let us cast the tree upon His bread,*" which means, of course, the cross upon His body. And thus, casting light, as He always did, upon the ancient prophecies, He declared plainly enough what He meant by the *bread*, when He called the bread His own body. He likewise, when mentioning the cup and making the *new testament* to be sealed "in His blood," affirms the reality of His body. For no blood can belong to a body which is not *a body* of flesh. If any sort of body were presented to our view, which is not one of flesh, not being fleshly, it would not possess blood. Thus, from the evidence of the flesh, we get a proof of the body, and a proof of the flesh from the evidence of the blood. In order, however, that you may discover how anciently wine is used as a figure for blood, turn to Isaiah, who asks, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, from Bosor with garments dyed in red, so glorious in His apparel, in the greatness of his might? Why are thy garments red, and thy raiment as his who cometh from the treading of the full winepress?" The prophetic Spirit contemplates the Lord as if He were already on His way to His passion, clad in His fleshly nature; and as He was to suffer therein, He represents the bleeding condition of His flesh under the metaphor of garments dyed in red, as if reddened in the treading and crushing process of the winepress, from which the labourers descend reddened with the wine-juice, like men stained in blood."

It's clear to me that Tertullian is speaking about the Eucharist in terms of it being an efficacious sign. Especially when he begins by saying: "Then, having taken the bread and given it to His disciples, He made it His own body, by saying, "This is my body," that is, the figure of my body." The bread is "made" his body. But the bread is not made into his body (i.e., under the species of flesh and blood) but as a figure (i.e., a

sign). If you recall, the sign-function of the sacraments point to an invisible reality and the grace it effects. Christ's words make it into a sacrament; an outward sign (i.e., a figure of his body) that points to the invisible reality (i.e., Christ himself).

It's important to note that Tertullian uses this point against the heretic Marcion who denied that Christ had an actual physical body. Tertullian notes that if Marcion is correct then it is impossible for the bread to be a "figure of a body" because *it would be a sign with nothing to signify!* Does this passage teach transubstantiation? It certainly fits if we understand Tertullian's words to mean that at the consecration Christ made the bread his body by making it into an efficacious sign.

As for the rest of the passage, Tertullian simply points out how the sign of bread for Christ's body was used by the prophets. The blood likewise shows that Christ assumed a real human body capable of suffering and bleeding.

Tertullian is very well aware of the sacraments as efficacious signs. For example, he says in his work *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, chapter 8:

"The flesh, indeed, is washed, in order that the soul be cleansed; the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated; the flesh is signed (with the cross), that the soul too may be fortified; the flesh is shadowed with the imposition of hands, that the soul also maybe illuminated by the Spirit; the flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ, that the soul likewise may fatten on its God. They cannot then be separated in their recompense, when they are united in their service."

Although this passage may not have the same razor-sharp precision that our later definitions have, nevertheless, we can see that he understands the sacrament as consuming Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist and its invisible grace of nourishing the soul.

Webster continues:

"His interpretation of John 6 similarly indicates that when he spoke of the bread and wine as figures and symbols of Christ's body and blood, that is exactly what he meant. He says that Christ spoke in spiritual terms when referring to the eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood and did not mean this literally."

Therefore, Webster concludes:

"Clearly he did not teach the concept of transubstantiation."

But Tertullian did not deny transubstantiation, although he did deny Webster's truncated version of it. Tertullian wrote:

"Now, because they thought His discourse was harsh and intolerable, supposing that He had really and literally enjoined on them to eat his flesh, He, with the view of ordering the state of salvation as a spiritual thing..."

Tertullian isn't denying transubstantiation, but cannibalism. Jesus does not enjoin us to eat his flesh and drink his blood *as* flesh and blood, which is what the people who disputed in John 6 apparently believed. That would be cannibalism. Catholicism teaches that Christ really does really and literal give us body *as a sacrament*. If Tertullian wished to deny transubstantiation, he should have said that they supposed Christ to really and literal give his flesh to eat *under the appearances of bread and wine*. That would be transubstantiation, but John 6 is talking about the Real Presence, not transubstantiation.

In regards to the rest of Tertullian's' interpretation of John 6, he interprets John 6 according to its spiritual sense.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (150-211/216 A.D.)

Webster claims that Clement "...called the bread and wine symbols of the body and blood of Christ, and taught that the communicant received not the physical but the spiritual life of Christ."

Clement is from the catechetical school in Alexandria which focused on interpreting Scripture according to the spiritual or allegorical sense. A moment browsing of the context reveals that this is exactly what he is doing here. Clement wrote:

"But you are not inclined to understand it thus, but perchance more generally. Hear it also in the following way. The flesh figuratively represents to us the Holy Spirit; for the flesh was created by Him. The blood points out to us the Word, for as rich blood the Word has been infused into life; and the union of both is the Lord, the food of the babes — the Lord who is Spirit and Word. The food — that is, the Lord Jesus — that is, the Word of God, the Spirit made flesh, the heavenly flesh sanctified. The nutriment is the milk of the Father, by which alone we infants are nourished."

This is a classic case of allegory: The flesh represents the Holy Spirit. The blood "point out to us" the Word. The blood and the Word have been infused into life. The food is the Lord Jesus. Nutriment is the "milk of the Father." We are infants.

Now to interpret a text according to the spiritual sense does not deny the literal and historical sense. Indeed, if the spiritual sense of Jesus' words concerns faith, life, spirit and other allegorical symbols, what is left for the literal sense, if not something other than these things. Clement never gives us the literal sense of these passages, but it seems to me that the real substantial presence of Christ would make a fitting literal historical interpretation.

Origen (185-253/254 A.D.)

Webster says that he "...likewise, speaks in distinctively spiritual and allegorical terms when referring to the eucharist."

Webster does well to explain Origen in this manner, since Origen was from the same Alexandrian school - that focused almost exclusively on the allegorical interpretation of Scripture - as Clement.

However, there are sections in Origen's writings that do speak directly about the Eucharist. One such place is in his apologetic work, *Against Celsus*, 8, 33:

"For this reason, then, let Celsus, as one who knows not God, give thank-offerings to demons. But we give thanks to the Creator of all, and, along with thanksgiving and prayer for the blessings we have received, we also eat the bread presented to us; and *this bread becomes by prayer a sacred body*, which sanctifies those who sincerely partake of it" (Emphasis mine).

According to Origen, it is "by prayer" that the bread presented to us becomes "a sacred body" that sanctifies. Notice the realism in Origen's description. It is the sacred body that sanctifies the recipient, not the disposition of those who partake of it.

EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA (263-340 A.D.)

In regards to Eusebius, Webster writes that he "...identified the elements with the body and blood of Christ but, like Tertullian, saw the elements as being symbolical or representative of spiritual realities."

Again, isn't that the very definition a sacrament?

Webster continues:

"He specifically states that the bread and wine are symbols of the Lord's body and blood and that Christ's words in John 6 are to be understood spiritually and figuratively as opposed to a physical and literal sense."

Webster seems to be dependent upon a secondary source, Darwell Stone's *The History of the Holy Eucharist* for this text. Unfortunately, the Eusebius' *Theology of the Church* isn't available in English (at least I was unable to find an English translation. All I could find was Stone's quotation. Eusebius is responding to Marcellus of Ancryra who argued, based on Jesus' words "The flesh profits nothing" that it would be unreasonable for the Word to be permanently united with the flesh. Eusebius writes:

"But do you, receiving the Scriptures of the Gospels, perceive the whole teaching of our Savior that He did not speak concerning the flesh which He has taken but concerning His mystic body and blood."

But since I do not have a copy of this work, I can't tell exactly what he means by the "mystic body and blood."

According to T. E. Pollard's *Johannine Christology and the Early Church*, Eusebius' "spiritualization" of John 6 is part and parcel of his larger Christological understanding as God's Word being the definitive revelation of God. Therefore, as Pollard concludes:

"For Eusebius the 'mystic body and blood' are the teaching of the Son of God about himself, the mystery which, before the incarnation, was hidden from all but Moses and the prophets, but is now proclaimed to all. To Eusebius, with his Greek conception of God

as the One who is beyond the universe, invisible and unknowable, any asserting that God has circumscribed himself in a body by assuming flesh, any assertion, indeed, that GOD was in Christ, is Sabellianism. For him, it is not God who was in Christ, but the Logos. It was a demi-god who was joined to human flesh in order to teach men the truth that God has a Son. In Eusebius' system there is no real need for an incarnation, for all that Jesus Christ makes known was already known to the prophets and the patriarchs."³

If this is so, Eusebius' interpretation is tinged by his defective understanding of the Incarnation, which reduces the importance of the "Word made flesh" to merely the means that God bestows knowledge of himself. If he got it wrong on the role Christ's humanity plays in the Incarnation, it's clear he got it wrong on the Eucharist.

The same is also true for his understanding of the Eucharist as the true "image" of Christ. As Enrico Mazza explains in his *The Celebration of the Eucharist: The Origin of the Rite and It's Development*:

"At Caesarea there was a much venerated image of Christ which, it was claimed, was a true image. Constantia, sister of Constantine, wrote a letter to Eusebius, asking to have this true image. Eusebius sent a sharply negative reply and gave a theological reason: There could be no "true image" capable of representing the actual features of Christ. The Son is an image of God, but in this kind of image form and substance goes together; Eusebius thus rejects a concept of image as purely material. In his view, an earthly image consists of a form and a substance that are different; it is difference (amid likeness) that characterizes his idea of image. In taking this line he is completely in turn with Platonism. In his view, the true image of Christ is not to be found in a painting but in the Eucharist. Listen to his description of the handing on of the mysteries: 'Christ himself handed on to his disciples the symbols of the divine economy of salvation and order them to make of these the image of his body'... [The Council of Nicaea conveyed the idea that the Son is the consubstantial image of the Father]... This step was strongly influenced by the thinking of Athanasius, which imposed 'the idea of an image that is equal in essence, or consubstantial, which the original model, and in which the original model is present 'undiminished.' This concept of image is certainly far removed from Platonism, according to which the image is the very reality of the original, but in a diminished form."⁴

Eusebius' use of platonic philosophy and his heterodox views in Christology moved him to conceive of the Eucharist as a symbol or image of Christ's body. However, once the Council of Nicaea had pronounced the orthodox understanding of image (as it related to the Son's relationship to the Father) the old concept had become obsolete. As Mazza concludes:

"We must say that the Nicene interpretation, namely, 'consubstantial image' is completely adapted to the christological problem, but we must also admit that, given this

³ *Johannine Christology and the Early Church*, T. E. Pollard, (Cambridge: At the University Press), 1970, p. 294.

⁴ P. 145-46.

definition of image, it is no longer possible to maintain the archaic concept of the Eucharist as the image of the Body of Christ.”⁵

The Council had standardized the definition of image in such a way that the older platonic use that Eusebius embraced – with its propensity for a heterodox interpretation – became obsolete.

Eusebius is perhaps one of the stronger cases Webster offers, yet should his opinion – which was tainted by his heterodox views of Christ – really be counted as an example of one of the “diverse opinions” on par with that of Trent? If so, Webster should have also included Marcion in his list as a viable alternate opinion to Trent since Marcion believed that Christ pretended that the Eucharist was a figure of his body. My point is that Eusebius’ heterodox tendencies have caused him to accept a defective way of understanding the Eucharist. Therefore, his views, in this regard, really should be looked at more as a historical curiosity than a viable opinion held by the early Church.

"AS TIME PASSED...."

Webster continues: "As time passed clearer descriptions of the eucharist as the transformation of the elements into the literal body and blood of Christ emerged in the writings of Fathers such as Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom and Ambrose. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, taught that the eucharist was the perpetuation of the incarnation and similarly Cyril of Jerusalem adopted a highly literal approach...."

While it is true that as time went on treatise on the Eucharist began to use more precise language bringing out more forcefully the belief in Christ’s substantial presence.

Webster continues:

"At the same time, there was a continuing representation by many Fathers of the eucharistic elements as figures or symbols of the Lord’s body and blood, although they also believed the Lord was spiritually present in the sacrament. Pope Gelasius I (492-496A.D.), for example, believed that the bread and wine in substance at consecration did not cease to be bread and wine, a view shared by Eusebius, Theodoret, Serapion, Jerome, Athanasius, Ambrosiaster, Macanus of Egypt, and Eustathius of Antioch."

Since Webster brings up Pope Galasius I, let’s look at this passage, which is quoted in Darwell Stone’s work:

"The Sacrament which we receive of the body and blood of Christ is a divine thing. Wherefore also by means of it we are made partakers of the divine nature. Yet the substance or nature of the bread and wine does not cease to be. And certainly, the image and likeness of the body and blood of Christ is set out in the celebration of the mysteries. Therefore, it is plain enough shown to us that we must think this in the case of the Lord Christ Himself which we confess, celebrate, and receive in the case of the image of Him.

⁵ p. 146-147.

Thus, as the elements pass into this, that is the divine, substance by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and none the less remain in their own proper nature, so they show that the principal mystery itself, the efficacy and virtue of which they truly make present (representant) to us, consists in this, that the two natures remain each in its own proper being so that there is one Christ because it whole and real."

Gelasius notes that the Eucharist is "a divine thing" (*divina res*) and by consuming the divine thing we become partakers of the divine nature. Gelasius also says, "Yet the substance or nature of the bread and wine does not cease to be." Does this mean that he believed that the bread and wine remain after consecration? I have two reasons to doubt this to be the case.

First, the preceding line identifies the Eucharist as a "divine thing." Surely, if the Eucharist was Christ's body and blood plus the substance of bread and wine, he could not say that. It would only be partly divine.

Second, Gelasius himself later says, "Thus, as the elements *pass into this, that is the divine substance* by the operation of the Holy Ghost and none the less remain in their own proper nature..." Although his language is imprecise, he does, never the less, state that the elements (bread and wine) "pass into" the divine substance. Is this not transubstantiation? If not, it sure does sound like it. He also says "...and none the less remain in their own proper nature." What does he mean by nature? Since the "divine thing" isn't manifested after consecration, it seems to me that what he means by "nature" must be the accidents or appearances of bread and wine. In other words, the elements (of bread and wine) become (pass into this, that is the divine substance), yet they retain their nature (i.e., physical appearances or accidents). If this is so, it mirrors the definition given at Trent.

AUGUSTINE

In regards to Augustine, there are so many things to comment on that I don't think I will be able to do so. In regards to Augustine saying that the Eucharist must be taken figuratively. Webster quotes *On Christian Doctrine*, 3, 16, 2:

"If the sentence . . . seems to enjoin a crime or vice. . . it is figurative. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man," says Christ, "and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." This seems to enjoin a crime or a vice; it is therefore a figure, enjoining that we should have a share in the sufferings of our Lord, and that we should retain a sweet and profitable memory of the fact that His flesh was wounded and crucified for us."

It's worth looking at this quote without Webster's ellipsis:

"If the sentence is one of command, either forbidding a crime or vice, or enjoining an act of prudence or benevolence, it is not figurative. If, however, it seems to enjoin a crime or vice, or to forbid an act of prudence or benevolence, it is figurative. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, says Christ, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. (John 6:53) This seems to enjoin a crime or a vice; it is therefore a figure, enjoining that we

should have a share in the sufferings of our Lord, and that we should retain a sweet and profitable memory of the fact that His flesh was wounded and crucified for us."

The more complete quote, I think, makes it easier to grasp Augustine's point. Scripture never commands something immoral. Therefore, if you encounter a text that appears to command something immoral. One example Augustine gives is where Paul says, "If your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink; for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head." The first part, because it is concert with charity is a literal command. The second part about heaping coals of fire is figurative. He interprets the coals of fire allegorically as "...the burning groans of penitence by which a man's pride is cured who bewails that he has been the enemy of one who came to his assistance in distress."

What then is the literal meaning of the command "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man...and drink His blood..."? Augustine says that this "seems to enjoin a crime or a vice." Eating flesh and drinking blood *as flesh and blood* is indeed a crime, but it is not so as a Sacrament. He therefore counsels that it should not be taken as a command to literally eat flesh and drink blood, but that it should be interpreted figuratively or allegorically. But notice how his figurative interpretation sounds like a veiled description of the Eucharist:

"...we should have a share [communicandem] in the sufferings of our Lord, and that we should retain a sweet and profitable memory [in memoria] of the fact that His flesh was wounded and crucified for us."

In regards to John 6, Webster says: "Passages of Scripture must always be interpreted in the light of the entire revelation of Scripture, he concluded, and he used John 6 as a specific example of a passage that should be interpreted figuratively."

However, Augustine's Homily on John 6 (*Tractate 27 on St. John*), although complex, nevertheless teaches that when we consume the Eucharist, we consume the "*divina res*" (divine thing) of the sacrament. E. J. Kilmartin describes Augustine's theology in this regard as:

"...Augustine's employment of *res* (thing) where he speaks about the mystery signified by sacraments of the New Law: '...concerning the variety of signs, which since they pertain to *res divinas* (the divine thing) are called sacraments.' In particular Augustine also uses the term *res* to designate the mystery signified by the eucharistic elements."

Earlier, we saw how the Catechism of the Council of Trent quotes Augustine's definition of a sacrament as "a sign of a sacred thing." Augustine's *res divinas* certainly refers to the real (substantial) presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

According to Augustine:

"Evil persons and heretics have the 'sacrament only outwardly, but they do not have the reality itself (*res ipsa*).⁶ Catholics, on the contrary, 'eat not only in the sacrament, but in reality (*re ipsa*) the body of Christ, since they themselves are *constituted in this* his body."⁶

The Latin *res ipsa* or *re ipsa* literally means "the thing itself," which Augustine says is "the body of Christ." In layman's terms, if you receive the Eucharist in a state of mortal sin you do not receive the graces of the sacrament. However, the worthy recipient of the Eucharist consumes the *re ipsa* (the thing itself) namely the body of Christ.

The Council of Trent echoes Augustine's teachings in this regard:

"Now as to the use of this holy sacrament, our Fathers have rightly and wisely distinguished three ways of receiving it. For they have taught that some receive it sacramentally only, to wit sinners: others spiritually only, those to wit who eating in desire that heavenly bread which is set before them, are, by a lively faith which worketh by charity, made sensible of the fruit and usefulness thereof: whereas the third (class) receive it both sacramentally and spiritually, and these are they who so prove and prepare themselves beforehand, as to approach to this divine table clothed with the wedding garment (Session 13, 8).

Augustine's realism concerning the Eucharist is apparent. By consuming the Eucharist, those who worthily receive him *are constituted in this* his Body, just as Paul says that the one Eucharistic loaf *makes* us one body in Christ (1 Corinthians 10:17). As I understand Webster, this cannot be so since it is faith, not the worthy reception of the Eucharist, that the operative power.

Augustine is not denying the real presence of Christ (body, blood, soul, and divinity contained under the eucharistic species). Indeed, he begins his homily with these words:

"The proof that a man has eaten and drank this, if he abides and is abode in, if he dwells and is dwelt in, if he adheres so as not to be deserted. This, then, he has taught us, and admonishes us in mystical words that we may be in his body, in his members under himself as head, *eating his flesh*, not abandoning our unity with him. But most of those

⁶ The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology, Edward J. Kilmartin (Liturgical Press). (Emphasis mine).

who were present, by not understanding him, were offended; for in hearing these things, they thought *only* of flesh, that which they themselves were" (Emphasis mine).

Augustine links "eating his flesh" with becoming one body. By consuming this sacrament, we consume the *res ipsa*: the very body of Christ itself. And being united to him we are constituted by consuming the *res ipsa* one body in Christ.

Webster apparently missed this aspect of Augustine's theology and says:

"Augustine viewed the eucharist in spiritual terms and he interpreted the true meaning of eating and drinking as being faith: 'To believe on Him is to eat the living bread. He that believes eats; he is sated invisibly, because invisibly is he born again.'"

Not quite. Augustine's main concern in his tractates 26 and 27 on John 6 is how Christians who worthily receive the Eucharist in innocents and contrite hearts, receive the spiritual effects (or what Augustine calls the "virtue of the sacrament"). This is why he insists that an unbeliever an immoral Christian receive the Eucharist carnally only, while worthy Christians receive both sacrament *and the virtue of the sacrament*. As we have seen above, this is not only Augustine's understanding, but that of Trent as well.

In fact, Augustine summarizes his main point as follows:

"...- let all this, then, avail us to this end, most beloved, that we eat not the flesh and blood of Christ *merely* in the sacrament, as many evil men do, but that we eat and drink to the participation of the Spirit, that we abide as members of the Lord's body, to be quickened by His Spirit, and that we be not offended, even if many do now with us eat and drink the sacraments in a temporal manner, who shall in the end have eternal torments." (tractate 27, 11 in John) (emphasis mine).

Augustine is not pitting transubstantiation against the reception of God's grace. On the contrary, he is saying that one does not receive the graces of the sacrament merely by consuming Christ's body and blood. If that were true, evil people would benefit from simply receiving the Eucharist. Rather, it is one who is in the state of grace, an abiding member of Christ's body, who in humility and faith receive the sacrament that receives the grace (i.e., the virtue) of the sacrament.

Webster continues by asserting:

"Augustine argued that the sacraments, including the eucharist, are signs and figures which represent or symbolize spiritual realities. He made a distinction between the physical, historical body of Christ and the sacramental presence, maintaining that Christ's physical body could not literally be present in the sacrament of the eucharist because he is physically at the right hand of God in heaven, and will be there until he comes again. But Christ is spiritually with his people."

Finally, Webster recognizes that Augustine believed in the sacramental principle of signs or figures that point to an invisible reality! But even here, we have a language problem. But what about his last line? Did

Augustine believe that Christ's body was incapable of being present in the Eucharist? Webster gives the following support from Augustine in footnote 15:

"In respect of the presence of the Majesty we have Christ always; in respect of the presence of the flesh, it was rightly said to the disciples, But Me ye will not always have. For the Church had Him in respect of the presence of the flesh, for a few days; now, by faith it holds, not with eyes beholds Him."

There are only two differences between the "presence of the Majesty" and the "presence of the flesh." The first difference is that the presence of the Majesty will be with the Church always, where the "presence of the flesh" was only "for a few days" while Christ was on earth. The second difference is that "the presence of the flesh" could be seen and the "presence of the Majesty" cannot be seen with our eyes. Augustine specifies no other difference, at least not in the paragraph Webster supplied. It seems to me that Augustine here is speaking about the same body (Christ: body, blood, soul, and divinity) being present in two ways: In former days, his body could be beheld by our eyes and now it can be beheld only with the eyes of faith. But in both cases, it is Christ's body.

A few paragraphs earlier Augustine wrote:

"If in the person of Peter were denoted the good men in the Church, in the person of Judas were denoted the bad men in the Church; to them is it said, "But Me ye will not always have." For what is, "Not always?" and what is "Always?" If thou art a good man, thou belongest to the body, which Peter denotes; thou has Christ both in the present and in the future; in the present by faith, in the present by sign, in the present by the Sacrament of Baptism, in the present by the meat and drink of the Altar. Thou hast Christ in the present, but wilt have Him always; because when thou shalt depart hence thou wilt come to Him Who said to the thief, Today shalt thou be in paradise."

It is interesting that "at present" we have Christ in the food and drink of the Altar. Of course, this homily is not on the Eucharist *per se* and it only mentions the "meat and drink of the altar" in passing.

However, there are other areas in Augustine's work where he does speak realistically about the real presence. For example:

"That bread which you can see on the altar, sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. That cup, or rather what the cup contains, sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ. It was by means of these things that the Lord Christ wished to present us with his body and blood, which he shed for our sake for the forgiveness of sins."⁷

Also, in *Sermon 243,2* he said:

"The Lord Jesus wanted those whose eyes were held lest they should recognize Him, to recognize Him in the breaking of the bread. The faithful know what I am saying. They

⁷ Augustine, Sermon 227 (WSA 3/ 6:254)

know Christ in the breaking of the bread. For not all bread, but only that which receives the blessing of Christ, becomes Christ's body."

And in his explanation of Psalm 119:109 (*Explanation of the Psalms* 33, 1, 10) he said:

"And he was carried in his own hands." But, brethren, how is it possible for a man to do this? Who can understand it? Who is it that is carried in his own hands? A man can be carried in the hands of another; but no one can be carried in his own hands. How this should be understood literally of David, we cannot discover; but we can discover how it is meant of Christ. For Christ was carried in His own hands, when, referring to His own Body, He said: "This is My Body." For He carried that Body in His hands."

Notice that this is not a vague spiritual presence, but a concrete presence contained in the Eucharist. Moreover, if Christ could hold his own body in his hands at the Last Supper, as Augustine believed and taught, how could it be impossible for Christ's glorified body that sits at the right hand of God to also be present in the Eucharist? It seems to me that if he could do the former, he could do the latter. Indeed, I cannot see how Augustine could cogently argue that Christ could hold his body in his own hands at the Last Supper and yet the same body is incapable of being held at the celebration of the Eucharist.

Webster concludes:

"These views of Augustine are obviously in direct opposition to those of the Council of Trent. In fact, teachings such as his on the eucharist were anathematized by that Council."

Really? If you compare what Augustine said to Trent, you'll see they are essentially saying the same thing but using different words.

"For neither are these things mutually repugnant,-that our Saviour Himself always sitteth at the right hand of the Father in heaven, according to the natural mode of existing, and that, nevertheless, He be, in many other places, sacramentally present to us in his own substance, by a manner of existing, which, though we can scarcely express it in words, yet can we, by the understanding illuminated by faith, conceive, and we ought most firmly to believe, to be possible unto God" (Trent, Session 13, 1).

There's nothing in the paragraph Webster quotes that contradicts Trent, as far as I can see. Indeed, even his ambiguous use of "presence of his Majesty" and "presence of his flesh" only goes to confirm Trent's remark that in light of this mystery we can "scarcely express it in words."

Webster continues: "The view of the transformation of the elements into the literal body and blood of Christ eventually triumphed within the Church but not without consistent opposition."

It's interesting that he should characterize what he has presented as "consistent opposition." Even if Webster's thesis were true, this would not be a very accurate characterization. Even if the texts he cites *did* teach consubstantiation, which they don't, there still is an essential agreement with Trent. It still

affirms that a substantial change occurs. It still affirms that Christ is substantially present in the Eucharist. The difference is between whether they undergo a partial change and a complete change. And, as we have seen, they affirm a complete change. In regards to speaking about the Eucharist as a sign or symbol, this again is Catholic since they do not deny the inner substantial reality to which these symbols point to or signs signify. Probably the best evidence Webster gives comes from Eusebius, who is laboring under a defective understanding of the Incarnation and Christ's consubstantiality with the Father. As a result, he wishes to speak of the Eucharist as the only true "image," since according to platonic thought it would imply that Christ is a diminished image of the Father. But even here, Eusebius does not see the Eucharist as an image like that of a painting, because those kinds of images differ from the thing imaged in both form and substance, but as a true image, as Christ himself, the image of the invisible God.

Mr. Webster's attempt to show that the early fathers held contradictory views on the Eucharist simply fails.

"There is the literal view of transubstantiation which could be that expressed by Chrysostom; the Lutheran view of consubstantiation, which could be that taught by Irenaeus or Justin Martyr; the spiritual view of Calvin, which is closely aligned with Augustine; and the strictly symbolic view of Zwingli, which is similar to that expressed by Eusebius."

We have seen that this simply is not true, unless one wishes to read an awful lot into a few isolated passages. We've shown that Irenaeus believed the bread was changed by the prayer of consecration just as the person who receives the Eucharist is changed. There's no consubstantiation here. Justin doesn't work either. Both fathers' words, although ambiguous, do fit the Catholic understanding. In regards to Calvin and Augustine, Augustine says things that Calvin would reject. As for the "strictly symbolic view," I don't believe anyone Webster presents held to a "strictly symbolic view. True, several fathers expounded on the symbolism of the Eucharist as spiritual food or they read John 6 according to the spiritual sense, but none denied the substantial presence nor affirmed that the Eucharist was *only* symbolic. Indeed, if the spiritual sense of John 6 concerns faith and believing in Jesus, what would be the literal sense?

THE SACRIFICIAL ASPECT OF THE EUCHARIST

Before we begin this section, we should quote from the Council of Trent on the Eucharist. Session 22, chapter 1 says:

"Forasmuch as, under the former Testament, according to the testimony of the Apostle Paul, there was no perfection, because of the weakness of the Levitical priesthood; there was need, God, the Father of mercies, so ordaining, that another priest should rise, according to the order of Melchisedech, our Lord Jesus Christ, who might consummate, and lead to what is perfect, as many as were to be sanctified. He, therefore, our God and Lord, though He was about to offer Himself once on the altar of the cross unto God the Father, by means of his death, there to operate an eternal redemption; nevertheless, because that His priesthood was not to be extinguished by His death, in the last supper, on the night in which He was betrayed,--that He might leave, to His own beloved Spouse

the Church, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that bloody sacrifice, once to be accomplished on the cross, might be represented, and the memory thereof remain even unto the end of the world, and its salutary virtue be applied to the remission of those sins which we daily commit,--declaring Himself constituted a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech, He offered up to God the Father His own body and blood under the species of bread and wine; and, under the symbols of those same things, He delivered (His own body and blood) to be received by His apostles, whom He then constituted priests of the New Testament; and by those words, Do this in commemoration of me, He commanded them and their successors in the priesthood, to offer (them); even as the Catholic Church has always understood and taught.

For, having celebrated the ancient Passover, which the multitude of the children of Israel immolated in memory of their going out of Egypt, He instituted the new Passover, (to wit) Himself to be immolated, under visible signs, by the Church through (the ministry of) priests, in memory of His own passage from this world unto the Father, when by the effusion of His own blood He redeemed us, and delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into his kingdom. And this is indeed that clean oblation, which cannot be defiled by any unworthiness, or malice of those that offer (it); which the Lord foretold by Malachias was to be offered in every place, clean to his name, which was to be great amongst the Gentiles; and which the apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, has not obscurely indicated, when he says, that they who are defiled by the participation of the table of devils, cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord; by the table, meaning in both places the altar. This, in fine, is that oblation which was prefigured by various types of sacrifices, during the period of nature, and of the law; in as much as it comprises all the good things signified by those sacrifices, as being the consummation and perfection of them all."

In regards to the sacrifice of the Mass being propitiatory, Trent says:

"And forasmuch as, in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross; the holy Synod teaches, that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory and that by means thereof this is effected, that we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid, if we draw nigh unto God, contrite and penitent, with a sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence. For the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof, and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins. For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different. The fruits indeed of which oblation, of that bloody one to wit, are received most plentifully through this unbloody one; so far is this (latter) from derogating in any way from that (former oblation). Wherefore, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ,

and who are not as yet fully purified, is it rightly offered, agreeably to a tradition of the apostles” (Session 22, chapter 2).

In his section on the Eucharistic sacrifice, Webster stumbles out of the gate by claiming:

“There are some present day Roman Catholic writers who deny that the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the mass is the re-sacrifice of Christ...”

All Catholics should deny that “the mass is the re-sacrifice of Christ” because that is not Catholic doctrine, as the quotes above show. Trent clearly states that Christ “...offer(s) Himself once on the altar of the cross unto God the Father, by means of his death, there to operate an eternal redemption.” And that in at the Last Supper he left “...His own beloved Spouse the Church, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that bloody sacrifice, *once to be accomplished on the cross, might be represented*, and the memory thereof remain even unto the end of the world...”

Webster is completely incorrect when he describes the Mass as “...*a distinct sacrifice in its own right*, he is referred to as the divine victim who *is again* offered and immolated as a propitiatory sacrifice, *just as* he was immolated on the cross” (Emphasis mine).

Nowhere in Trent - or any other official Catholic teaching - is the Mass referred to as a “distinct sacrifice in its own right.” That is Webster, not Trent. Nor is “the divine victim” said to be “...*again* offered and immolated as a propitiatory sacrifice, *just as* he was immolated on the cross” (emphasis mine).

Trent is very clear that Christ died *once* on Calvary for our sins. Christ does not die again for he cannot die again, as Paul says, “We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him” (Romans 9:9). Christ offered himself both at Calvary and at the Last Supper. The victim is the same. The body and blood offered are the same. The sacrifice is the same because the Last Supper and the Cross are two components of the same sacrifice.

Take as an illustration the Passover, which Jesus was celebrating when he instituted the Eucharist. The Passover has two components: The Passover lamb was immolated at twilight with the whole community present (Exodus 12:6) and that same lamb that was immolated was later is offered (or oblation) by the applying its blood to the door posts and the same sacrificial victim is eaten at the Passover meal (Exodus 12:7-10). The immolation and the later offering / meal are two components of the same sacrifice. The Passover meal is not a *distinct and separate sacrifice* from the immolation of the Lamb nor is the immolation of the Passover lamb a *distinct and separate sacrifice* from the Passover meal. Both are components of the same sacrifice and both were required to complete the Passover sacrifice.

In regards to Webster’s comment that the Mass is a “renewed slaying of Christ,” Webster has failed to notice that Trent said, “...He instituted the new Passover, (to wit) Himself to be immolated, *under visible signs*, by the Church...” Notice the qualification “under visible signs.” As we have noted throughout this paper, a sacrament has two aspects to it: a visible outward sign and points to an invisible reality. Since Christ died and suffered *once* on Calvary (as Trent affirmed), the immolation at Mass is not and cannot be a “renewed slaying of Christ.” What Trent is referring to is a *sacramental* immolation in which seen in the

outward visible signs of the sacrament and the actions of the priest. This sacramental immolation occurs when the bread and the wine are separately consecrated, which show forth symbolically a separation of the body and its blood. In other words, it signifies a death has occurred. Through this sacrament action, we proclaim Christ's death until he comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26). Since the outward signs point to the inner reality, the inward reality is the presence of Christ – our immolated Passover lamb, Christ – who is not suffering again, or dying again for our sins on Calvary, but who is risen, glorified, and interceding on our behalf to the Father – is substantially present.

This is the meaning of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, which Webster quotes:

“We may briefly reply that what is offered and consecrated by the priest is called a sacrifice and an immolation because it is a memorial and a representation of the true sacrifice and holy immolation made upon the altar of the cross. Christ died once, upon the cross, and there he was immolated in his own person; and yet every day he is immolated *sacramentally*, because *in the sacrament* there is a recalling of what was done once” (emphasis mine)

Notice the distinction between sacramental immolation and the one-time immolation on the cross. Everything in this paragraph is perfect faithful to Trent and the perennial Catholic teaching. For example, Trent (quoted above in this regard) said:

“...that He might leave to His beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that bloody *sacrifice once to be accomplished on the cross might be represented, the memory thereof remain even to the end of the world, and its salutary effects applied to the remission of those sins which we daily commit*, declaring Himself constituted a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech, offered up to God the Father His own body and blood under the form of bread and wine.” (emphasis mine)

Webster says that Trent had change the meaning of it being a sacramental commemoration and that Augustine “...did not view Christ as being physically present in the sacrament, nor the eucharist as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin. Augustine certainly did not teach that the sacrifice of the eucharist was the same as the sacrifice of Calvary.”

This is little more than an argument from silence. We shouldn't approach the early fathers with a hoop that we expect them to jump through. We can't make them answer our questions when they didn't address them. There's no doubt that Augustine did believe that the Mass was a true sacrifice and a sacramental immolation. For examples, he says:

“In the sacrament he is immolated for the people not only on every Paschal Solemnity but on every day; and a man would not be lying if, when asked, he were to reply that Christ is being immolated. For if sacraments had not a likeness to those things of which they are sacraments, they would not be sacraments at all; and they generally take the names of those same things by reason of this likeness” (*Letter 98:9*).

Also:

“For when he says in another book, which is called Ecclesiastes, ‘There is no good for a man except that he should eat and drink’ [Eccl. 2:24], what can he be more credibly understood to say [prophetically] than what belongs to the participation of this table which the Mediator of the New Testament himself, the priest after the order of Melchizedek, furnishes with his own body and blood? For that sacrifice has succeeded all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, which were slain as a shadow of what was to come... Because, instead of all these sacrifices and oblations, his Body is offered and is served up to the partakers of it” (*City of God*, 17:20).

Later, Webster writes:

“...the fact that the Council teaches that the mass is a propitiatory sacrifice for sin. It was at this point that the Reformers universally challenged the Roman teaching. They charged that if the mass were truly a propitiatory sacrifice then Christ must die, which contradicts the clear statement of Scripture that Christ died once for all and can never die again. And on the other hand, if Rome teaches that Christ does not die, its teaching that the mass is propitiatory for sin is false for it is not a true sacrifice. Vatican II says that the mass was instituted in order to perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice through time. But if his death was once-for-all it cannot be perpetuated through time. Christ can never die again. Propitiation was accomplished at Calvary.”

There are several ways to address this misunderstanding. First, we must ask whether Webster is saying that this is impossible for God? God can do all that is not a contradiction. He was able to make the same loaves of bread present simultaneously in over five thousand locations. Certainly, God can do this if he wills.

Second, sacrifice consisted of three components: the consecration (immolation), offering (oblation), and communion. The first two are required and the third may be required depending on the kind of sacrifice made. The consecration is where the victim is made sacred, usually through the ritual slaying of the victim (although in grain and other offerings something is done to it such as oil or salt is added). We will call his immolation. Christ was consecrated (immolated) on the cross in Calvary. The second component is the offering (or oblation). The victim needs to be presented before God, so that God may accept it as sacred or reject it as profane. The best-known way of offering or oblation is when part of the victim is burnt. The idea is that part of the victim is presented before God as sweet-smelling smoke.⁸

The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that Christ’s offering or oblation occurs in the Holy of Holies in heaven where Christ, our High Priest, enters in with his own flesh and blood.⁹ Or as Revelation 5:6 puts it:

⁸ Exodus 19:18, 25, 41; Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9; 3:5, 16; 6:8, 14; 8:21, 23:13, 18; 26:31; Number 15:3, 7, 10, 13, 14, 24, 18:17, 28:6, etc.

⁹ Hebrews 7:27-28; 8:1-3, 9:11-14; 10:12.

“Then I saw standing in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders, a Lamb standing as though it had been slain.”

The lamb (Christ) is seen in heaven as an immolated lamb. He is not bleeding, suffering, or dying again. Nevertheless, the wounds of the cross remain in his glorified body (John 20:24-29) enabling him to present the immolation of the cross to the Father on our behalf. Although the immolation took place on the cross in time, the offering of the immolated victim (the oblation) takes place in heaven. They are two components of the same sacrifice despite taking place at different times, places, and manners.

Another example, is that of the day of Atonement sacrifice. In this sacrifice, the victim is immolated outside of the Temple and the High Priest brings the blood of the victim into the Holy of Holies and sprinkles the blood on the altar (i.e., oblation). By doing so, the immolation of the victim outside the temple is made present before God within the Temple. Again, one sacrifice with two components that occur in different times, places, and with different actions.

In the Mass, that same glorified victim – as we have seen in Revelation 5:6 and in the Epistle of Hebrews – who offers himself before the Father on our behalf is made present. And if the immolated victim and offering of Christ was a true propitiatory sacrifice, then it stands to reason that the Mass is also a propitiatory sacrifice.

As Trent said, “He offered up to God the Father His own body and blood under the species of bread and wine; and, under the symbols of those same things, He delivered (His own body and blood) to be received by His apostles, whom He then constituted priests of the New Testament.”

Through the Mass, therefore, the same victim, priest, and sacrifice are made present. The immolation being made sacramentally by the separate consecration of the bread and of the wine, signifying death.

MORE TO THE SACRIFICE

Webster goes on to state that the early Church fathers did not interpret Malachi 1:11 in a Catholic fashion and that a majority of Fathers did not accept the eucharistic sacrifice as Catholics understand it.

We essentially have the same problem here as we did with the Catholic teaching on the Eucharist. Webster is artificially restricting the Catholic teaching on the sacrifice of the Mass to only what is said at Trent. Now, this is fine but Trent focused its decrees on reaffirming what Protestants had denied. There is a lot more to the teaching of the Church in this regard than what was given at Trent. Indeed, Webster would have done better including the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Vatican II and others. It's true that he does mention Vatican II in passing, but only to reaffirm what Trent said. His apologetic, therefore, is brittle because it defines the Catholic position in a very focused and restricted sense and then proposes because the Fathers had more to say on the subject in addition to [but not contrary to] what has been stated Trent it is at odds with the majority of the Church Fathers.

For example, the sacrifice of the Mass is where we oblate or offer ourselves to the Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit. As Vatican II said:

"They should be instructed by God's word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's body; *they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim*, not only through the hands of the priest, but also *with him*, they should learn also *to offer themselves; through Christ the Mediator*, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all (*Constitution on the Divine Liturgy*, Chapter 2, 48)(Emphasis mine).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1368, likewise teaches:

"The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church. The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire. She unites herself to his intercession with the Father for all men. In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value. Christ's sacrifice present on the altar makes it possible for all generations of Christians to be united with his offering. (Emphasis theirs)

Paragraph 1330 adds further information:

"The memorial of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection. The Holy Sacrifice, because it makes present the one sacrifice of Christ the Savior and includes the Church's offering. The terms *holy sacrifice of the Mass, "sacrifice of praise," spiritual sacrifice, pure and holy sacrifice* are also used, since it completes and surpasses all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. (Emphasis theirs)

Notice that this paragraph says the exact opposite of what Webster says. The Sacrifice of the Mass "makes present the once sacrifice of Christ" and it "includes the Church offering." In other words, it is the sacrificial offering of Christ, both Head and Body. It also shows that it is completely Catholic to refer to the Sacrifice of the Mass as a "spiritual sacrifice" and a "sacrifice of praise" because it completes and surpasses all of the sacrifices of the Old Covenant."

In regards to the Mass being the "sacrifice of praise" paragraph 1361 teaches:

"The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of praise by which the Church sings the glory of God in the name of all creation. This sacrifice of praise is possible only through Christ: he unites the faithful to his person, to his praise, and to his intercession, so that the sacrifice of praise to the Father is offered through Christ and with him, to be accepted in him."

One way to look at it is this: We are so united to Christ that we are immolated (made sacred) as sacrifices. There is a myriad of texts that say as much:

- Luke 9:23, "Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (also Matthew 16:24 and Mark 8:34).
- Luke 14:27, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

- Roman 8:13, "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."
- Romans 8:16-17, "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him."
- Galatians 2:19-20, "For through the law I died to the law, that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me."
- Galatians 5:24-25, "Now those who belong to Christ (Jesus) have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit."
- Colossians 3:5-6, "Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry. Because of these the wrath of God is coming (upon the disobedient)."
- Colossians 1:24, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church..."
- 1 Peter 4:1-2, "Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same attitude (for whoever suffers in the flesh has broken with sin), so as not to spend what remains of one's life in the flesh on human desires, but on the will of God."
- Romans 8:35, "What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? As it is written: "For your sake we are being slain all the day; we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered."

This is what we said as a consecration, or what we called an immolation. Now are these immolations different and distinct from the immolation of Christ during his passion and death on the cross. If you look closely at these passages, you'll see that the answer is no. The immolation occurs in virtue of our union with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Christ's death is lived out in us. The immolation of Christ, our Head, is lived out in the immolation the Body. But here is a problem for Webster and all Protestants as well. Paul tells us:

Romans 12:1-2, "*I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect*" (Emphasis mine).

Protestants agree with all the passages mentioned above, but Paul urges Christians to "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice." In fact, none other than R. C. Sproul affirms this:

"But *there is still a New Testament sacrificial system*. It is not a sacrifice that we give in order to make an atonement, but a sacrifice that we give because an atonement has been made for us. God does not ask us to bring in our livestock and burn it on the altar; he asks us to give ourselves, to put ourselves *alive* on the altar. *To be a Christian means to live a life of sacrifice, a life of presentation, making a gift of ourselves to God*" (R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: Romans, 12:1*) (emphasis mine).

But where do we present our immolation before the Father in heaven? We said earlier that sacrifices need a victim which is immolated (consecrated - made holy) and oblation (offered or presented) before God. In the Old Testament, oblation was done by pouring out wine upon the earth, or the burning of a portion or all of a victim as in a holocaust offer, or by the sprinkling of blood before the presence of God in the Holy of Holies. Most Protestants I've spoken to say that they "offer themselves" through prayer. But the problem here is that is a "separate and distinct" offering Christ's offering. This is a big problem for Protestants since there is only one offering, that of Christ. The Mass is the solution. It is at the Mass that we, the body of Christ, offer our lives as living sacrifices and present them in, with, and through Christ. Therefore, it is a "holy and pleasing to God" because it is Christ who offers us to the Father in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1372 states – quoting St. Augustine – it is in the Mass that Christ, the Head, offers our sacrifices, as the Body, as an offering to the Father:

“St. Augustine admirably summed up this doctrine that moves us to an ever more complete participation in our Redeemer's sacrifice which we celebrate in the Eucharist:

This wholly redeemed city, the assembly and society of the saints, is offered to God as a universal sacrifice by the high priest who in the form of a slave went so far as to offer himself for us in his Passion, to make us the Body of so great a head... Such is the sacrifice of Christians: "we who are many are one Body in Christ" The Church continues to reproduce this sacrifice in the sacrament of the altar so well-known to believers wherein it is evident to them that in what she offers she herself is offered." (Emphasis mine)

Truthfully, we haven't even scratched the surface. But clearly there is much more to the Church understanding and teaching on the Eucharist than just transubstantiation and the Mass as a propitiation.

Let's now look at Webster and the early Church Fathers.

THE DIDACHE

Webster says: “The *Didache* seems to refer to the eucharist as the *believer's* sacrifice, reflecting the idea of self-giving to the Lord through an offering of praise and thanksgiving for the finished work of Jesus Christ. There is no mention of its being a propitiatory sacrifice.”

The Didache says:

"On the Lord's Day of the Lord gather together, break bread and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure" (14, 1)

Webster says that it is the "believer's sacrifice." As you can see, the Eucharist is being described here. It is said to be "your sacrifice" because it is the Eucharistic sacrifice which is being offered *by us*. Sacrifice is linked to breaking bread and giving thanks (Greek, *eucharistēsate*). There is also a secondary sense that we are being offered in the Eucharist in union, through Him, with Him, and in Him, through the power of the Holy Spirit (as we have seen above). Both interpretations are perfectly Catholic.

1 CLEMENT

Roman apologists have often appealed to Clement of Rome as a support for their sacrificial interpretation of the eucharist but this is done as a result of a mistranslation. Keating, for example, gives a translation of 1 Clement 44 where Clement mention those 'from the episcopate who blamelessly and holily have offered its Sacrifices'. The problem with this translation is that Clement does not use the word 'sacrifices' in his original letter but the word 'gifts'. The appeal to Clement of Rome is an empty one.

Webster is correct. It does say that these bishops blamelessly and devoutly "offered the gifts" (Greek, *prosenkontas ta dōra*). He's wrong, however, by assuming that because 1 Clement did not use the word "sacrifice" that this is not a reference to sacrifice. The word translated "offer" in Greek means to present something or bring something. It also means "to offer [a sacrifice]." According to the standard Protestant Greek Lexicon, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*:

"Almost the only use of the word in the post-apost[olic]. fathers is for "to sacrifice," "to bring offerings," cf. esp. where OT texts are quoted or there is ref. to OT sacrifices related in some way to the NT message."

For example, TDNT says:

"Whereas in typology of this kind we tend to have no more than the views of individual writers, the referring of the idea of sacrifice to the eucharist determines the self-understanding of the Chr. community in its full breadth. Did., 14 sees in the Sunday eucharist a fulfillment of Mal. 1:11 ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ καὶ χρόνῳ προσφέρει μοι θυσίαν καθάραν. The function of bishops which 1 Cl., 44, 4 describes with προσενεγκόντας τὰ δῶρα also has in view, or at least includes, the celebration of the eucharist."¹⁰

Therefore, the word "to offer," according to this standard work, means "to offer sacrifice." This fits well with its New Testament use where "to offer gifts" is likewise used in the context of sacrifice. For example, Matthew 5:23 says, "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift (*prosphere to dōron sou*)" and Hebrews 5:1, "Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts (*prospherē dōra*) and sacrifices (*thysias*) for sins." Given the context and the use of both these words, I would have to agree with the TDNT that 1 Clement is speaking about the bishops "offering sacrifices" when it says "offering gifts." Therefore, the Eucharist is a sacrifice.

JUSTINE MARTYR

Webster says, "Justin Martyr believed the eucharist was a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which commemorated the death of Christ by a Church which now counted Gentiles among its members." and he references *Dialogue with Trypho*, 117.

¹⁰ TDNT, 9, 68.

"Accordingly, God, anticipating all the sacrifices which we offer through this name, and which Jesus the Christ enjoined us to offer, i.e., in the Eucharist of the bread and the cup, and which are presented by Christians in all places throughout the world, bears witness that they are well-pleasing to Him. But He utterly rejects those presented by you and by those priests of yours, saying, 'And I will not accept your sacrifices at your hands; for from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is glorified among the Gentiles (He says); but you profane it.' Malachi 1:10-12. Yet even now, in your love of contention, you assert that God does not accept the sacrifices of those who dwelt then in Jerusalem, and were called Israelites; but says that He is pleased with the prayers of the individuals of that nation then dispersed, and calls their prayers sacrifices. Now, that prayers and giving of thanks, when offered by worthy men, are the only perfect and well-pleasing sacrifices to God, I also admit. For such alone Christians have undertaken to offer, and in the remembrance effected by their solid and liquid food, whereby the suffering of the Son of God which He endured is brought to mind, whose name the high priests of your nation and your teachers have caused to be profaned and blasphemed over all the earth. "

No where in this section does Justin speak of "...a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which commemorated the death of Christ..." Rather he says, "...God, anticipating all the sacrifices which we offer through this name, and which Jesus the Christ enjoined us to offer, i.e., in the Eucharist of the bread and the cup..." and he applies it to the prophesy in Malachi 1:11, which spoke of the gentiles around the world would "bring sacrifice to my name, and a pure offering" while God no longer accepts the sacrifices of the Jews. There's nothing about a "spiritual" here. Justin's opponent, Trypho, responds that God is pleased by the Jews' prayers and they call these prayers "sacrifices." Justin agrees that God is pleased by the prayers and thanksgiving of worthy men. In regards to Christians, he says: "For such alone Christians have undertaken to offer, and in the remembrance (Greek, *anamnēsei*) effected by their solid and liquid food, whereby the suffering of the Son of God which He endured is brought to mind." As we mentioned earlier, "remembrance" is an action that bring attention to a sacrifice that is being offered. The Eucharistic sacrifice replaced the Jewish sacrifices being a well-pleasing prayer to God.

IRENÆUS OF LYONS

According to Webster: "Irenaeus also referred to Malachi's prophecy and characterized the eucharist as a thank-offering to God. He maintained that the real sacrifice intended within it was the prayers of true believers, which came from pure hearts wholly yielded to God and undefiled by sin."

Let's begin with what is correct. In this section of *Against Heresies* (book 4, 17), Irenaeus explains at length how the Old Testament sacrifices were meant to be the outward signs of an inward sacrifice of faith and obedience. God desires mercy, not sacrifice. All of this Catholics whole-hearted believe. We too ought to offer the Eucharist with a humble and contrite heart. In regards to the Eucharist, Irenaeus wrote:

"Again, giving directions to His disciples to offer to God the first-fruits of His own, created things — not as if He stood in need of them, but that they might be themselves neither unfruitful nor ungrateful — He took that created thing, bread, and gave thanks, and said,

"This is My body.," etc. And the cup likewise, which is part of that creation to which we belong, He confessed to be His blood, and taught *the new oblation of the new covenant*; which the Church receiving from the apostles, offers to God throughout all the world, to Him who gives us as the means of subsistence the first-fruits of His own gifts in the New Testament, concerning which Malachi, among the twelve prophets, thus spoke beforehand: "I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord Omnipotent, and I will not accept sacrifice at your hands. For from the rising of the sun, unto the going down [of the same], My name is glorified among the Gentiles, *and in every place* incense is offered to My name, *and a pure sacrifice*; for great is My name among the Gentiles, says the Lord Omnipotent;" Malachi 1:10-11 — indicating in the plainest manner, by these words, that the former people [the Jews] shall indeed cease to make offerings to God, but that in every place *sacrifice shall be offered to Him*, and that a pure one; and His name is glorified among the Gentiles. (Book 4, 17, 5) (Emphasis mine).

I'm not sure where Webster got the idea of the Eucharist as a thank offering. The word Eucharist means "thanksgiving." But a thank offering in the Old Testament was known as a "todah" was a sacrifice. Irenaeus does refer to the Eucharist in terms of offering to God his first fruits. This too is a sacrifice. it's interesting that he would chose these words because the Old Testament first fruit offering was made up of grain and wine. But Paul also describes Christ as the first fruit as well in 1 Corinthians 15:20, "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

TERTULLIAN

Webster continues: "Similarly, Tertullian argued that the true sacrifices offered to God were not of a carnal, physical kind, but the spiritual sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart before God."

The reference given is from Tertullian's work, *Answer to the Jews*. Here Tertullian is speaking about the abolition of the Old Covenant sacrifices (carnal sacrifice) and the replace of the new spiritual sacrifices, sacrifices of praise, are offered to God with contrite hearts. But the "sacrifice of praise" is more than just an ad hoc praise and worship session. A sacrifice of praise is a todah sacrifice, a thanksgiving offering. The thanksgiving offering consists of:

"When anyone makes a peace offering in thanksgiving, together with his thanksgiving sacrifice he shall offer unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes made of fine flour mixed with oil and well kneaded. His offering shall also include loaves of leavened bread along with the victim of his peace offering for thanksgiving" (Leviticus 7:12-13).

The todah offering consisted in bread and wine and a victim. Even when the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of Christians continuously offering a "sacrifice of praise" it was preceded by a reference to a sacrificial altar. "*We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.* The bodies of the animals whose blood the high priest brings into the sanctuary as a sin offering are burned outside the camp. Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood" (Hebrew 13:10-12).

Webster continues: "Origen and Clement of Alexandria stressed this same theme: that the real meaning of the eucharistic sacrifice was as a memorial or commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ which demanded the self-surrender of the soul to God. It was a sacrifice because it involved the prayers and praise of God's people; the self-surrender of themselves to God from broken and contrite hearts; and the giving of material offerings to the poor. There is absolutely no mention of the eucharist as the literal and renewed sacrifice of Christ as a propitiatory sin-offering."

Since this response is already too lengthy, I will only comment on Origen. Here Webster is dead wrong. Consider the following quote from Origen and see whether he believed the Eucharist was a sacrificial offering.

"According to the text there seems to be "a remembrance before the Lord" of the twelve tribes of Israel in the twelve loaves, and the precept is given that without ceasing these "twelve loaves are placed in the sight of the Lord," so that also the memory of the twelve tribes is always to be held before him, by which, as it were, a certain entreaty and supplication is seen to be done through these things for each of them. But an intercession of this kind is quite small and poor enough.

For how much does it accomplish as a propitiation when the fruits of each tribe must be considered through a loaf and the works through the fruits? (3) But if these things are referred to the greatness of the mystery, you will find this "remembrance" to have the effect of a great propitiation. If you return to that "loaf which descends from heaven and gives life to this world," that showbread "whom God set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood" and if you turn your attention to that "remembrance" about which the Lord says, "Do this in remembrance of me," you will find that this is the only "remembrance" which makes God gracious to men (Origen, Homilies on Leviticus, 13.3.2-3)

EUSEBIUS

Webster says: "Eusebius also explicitly states that the fulfilment of the prophecy of Malachi of a pure and bloodless sacrifice was to be found in the prayers and thanksgiving of true Christians throughout the world from contrite hearts."

Again, he nevertheless does see the Eucharist is a sacrifice. We need to give an extended quote from Eusebius in order to see this amidst all of his nuances:

"Since then according to the witness of the prophets the great and precious ransom has been found... the propitiation for the whole world, the life given for the life of all men, the pure offering for every stain and sin, the Lamb of God, the holy sheep dear to God, the Lamb that was foretold, by Whose inspired and mystic teaching all we Gentiles have procured the forgiveness of our former sins, and such Jews as hope in Him are freed from the curse of Moses, daily celebrating His memorial. His memorial, the remembrance of His Body and Blood, and are admitted to a greater sacrifice than that of the ancient law,

we do not reckon it right to fall back upon the first beggarly elements, which are symbols and likenesses *but do not contain the truth itself*... For what is there that the Offering for the whole world could not effect, the Life given for the life of sinners, Who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a lamb to the sacrifice, and all this for us and on our behalf? And this was why those ancient men of God, *as they had not yet the reality*, held fast to their symbols ... And we, *who have received both the truth, and the archetypes of the early copies* through the mysterious dispensation of Christ, can have no further need for the things of old.

He then that was alone of those who ever existed, the Word of God, before all worlds, and High Priest of every creature that has mind and reason, separated One of like passions with us, as a sheep or lamb from the human flock, branded on Him all our sins, and fastened on Him as well the curse that was adjudged by Moses' law...for our sins, bonds, insults, contumelies, scourging, and shameful blows, and the crowning trophy of the Cross. And after all this *when He had offered such a wondrous offering and choice victim to the Father*, and sacrificed for the salvation of us all, *He delivered a memorial to us to offer to God continually instead of a sacrifice*....This also the wondrous David inspired by the Holy Spirit to foresee the future, foretold in these words: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me |, and heard my calling | And he brought me up out of a pit of misery |, and from miry clay |. And he set my feet on a rock | and ordered my steps aright |. And he hath put a new song in my mouth |, a hymn to our God. And he shews clearly what "the new song" is when he goes on to say:

"Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not |; but a body hast thou prepared me |; whole burnt-offering, and sin offering thou didst take no pleasure in |. Then said I, Lo, I come: | in the volume of the book it is written of me |, to do thy will, O God, I desired. |"

And he adds: "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation." He plainly teaches that *in place of the ancient sacrifices* and whole burnt-offerings the incarnate presence of Christ that was prepared was offered...As we have received *a memorial of this offering which we celebrate on a table by means of symbols of His Body and saving Blood according to the laws of the new covenant*, we are taught again by the prophet David to say:

"*Thou hast prepared a table before me* in the face of my persecutors |. Thou hast anointed my head with oil |, and thy cup cheers me as the strongest (wine). |"

Here it is plainly the mystic Chrism *and the holy Sacrifices of Christ's Table* that are meant, *by which we are taught to offer to Almighty God through our great High Priest all through our life the celebration of our sacrifices, bloodless, reasonable, and well-pleasing to Him*. And this very thing the great prophet Isaiah wonderfully foreknew by the Holy Spirit, and foretold. And he therefore says thus:

“O Lord, my God, I will glorify thee, I will hymn thy name, for thou hast done marvellous things.”

And he goes on to explain what these things so truly “wonderful” are:

“And the Lord of Sabaoth shall make a feast for all the nations. They shall drink joy, they shall drink wine, they shall be anointed with myrrh (on this mountain). Impart thou all these things to the nations. For this is God’s counsel upon all the nations.”

These were Isaiah’s “wonders,” the promise of the anointing with ointment of a good smell, and with myrrh made not to Israel but to all nations. Whence not unnaturally through the chrism of myrrh they gained the name of Christians. But he also prophesies the “wine of joy” to the nations, *darkly alluding to the sacrament of the new covenant of Christ, which is now openly celebrated among the nations*. And these unembodied and spiritual sacrifices the oracle of the prophet also proclaims, in a certain place:

“Offer to God the sacrifice of praise, and give the Highest thy vows: And call upon me in the day of thy affliction, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”

And again: “The lifting up of my hands is an evening sacrifice.” And once more: “The sacrifice of God is a contrite spirit.”

And so all these predictions of immemorial prophecy are being fulfilled at this present time through the teaching of our Saviour among all nations. Truth bears witness with the prophetic voice with which God, rejecting the Mosaic sacrifices, foretells that the future lies with us:

“Wherefore from the rising of the sun unto the setting my name shall be glorified among the nations. And in every place incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering.”

We sacrifice, therefore, to Almighty God a sacrifice of praise. We sacrifice the divine and holy and sacred offering. We sacrifice anew according to the new covenant the pure sacrifice. But the sacrifice to God is called “a contrite heart.” “A humble and a contrite heart thou wilt not despise.” Yes, and we offer the incense of the prophet, in every place bringing to Him the sweet-smelling fruit of the sincere Word of God, offering it in our prayers to Him. This yet another prophet teaches, who says: “Let my prayer be as incense in thy sight...” (emphasis mine).

Here Webster would say, “Yes. It is just a sacrifice of praise, not an actual sacrifice!” But Eusebius continues:

“So, then, *we sacrifice and offer incense*: On the one hand when we celebrate the Memorial of His great Sacrifice according to the Mysteries He delivered to us, *and bring to God the Eucharist for our salvation with holy hymns and prayers*; while on the other we consecrate ourselves to Him alone and to the Word His High Priest, devoted to Him in

body and soul. Therefore we are careful to keep our bodies pure and undefiled from all evil, and we bring our hearts purified from every passion and stain of sin, and worship Him with sincere thoughts, real intention, and true beliefs. For these are more acceptable to Him, so we are taught, than a multitude of sacrifices offered with blood and smoke and fat." (emphasis mine) (Eusebius, *Demonstration of the Gospel*, 1, 10).

Our sacrifice of praise is that we "bring to God the Eucharist for our salvation with holy hymns and prayers, while on the other [hand] we consecrate ourselves to Him alone and to the Word His High Priest, devoted to Him in body and soul." We bring to God the Eucharist for our salvation? What does he think the Eucharist is? The offering of Christ, head and body? Hmm.

Notice also how Eusebius does not separate the Eucharist from the liturgy. When both are considered the "sacrifice of praise" fits in perfectly since we celebrate the sacrifice of the Eucharist with prayers and hymns to God.

Eusebius understands Malachi 1:11 to be a prophecy that God would no longer accept the bloody Old Covenant sacrifices offered in the temple in Jerusalem, but it will be replaced with a pure unbloody sacrifice of the New Covenant offered with prayers and hymns and contrite hearts. This is why he said, "... when He [Christ] had offered such a wondrous offering and choice victim to the Father, and sacrificed for the salvation of us all, He delivered a memorial *to us to offer to God continually* instead of a [bloody Old Covenant] sacrifice."

AUGUSTINE

Webster claims that Augustine is completely on the side that the Lord's Supper was a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (which it was) and a commemoration of Christ passion (which it was). But it was more than that. The Lord Supper was a real sacrificial offering given to us through which we offer ourselves to God. But according to Webster:

"The eucharist [for Augustine] is simply a sacramental way of remembering Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. The sacrament is called a sacrifice only because it is identified with Calvary as a memorial or commemoration of that unique sacrifice. It was not Christ who was offered in this memorial but the Church, who offered herself to God through Christ as a living sacrifice from a broken and a contrite heart."

This as we have seen and will see is completely wrong. In addition to the quotes we have seen consider these:

"Christ is both the Priest, offering Himself, and Himself the Victim. He willed that the sacramental sign of *this* should be *the daily Sacrifice of the Church*, who, since *the Church is His body and He the Head*, learns to offer herself through Him." (*City of God* 10:20)

Hold on. Didn't Webster just say that "It was not Christ who was offered in his memorial"? How then can we offer ourselves "through Him" if he is not the one being offered?

"Was not Christ immolated only once in His very Person? In the Sacrament, nevertheless, He is immolated for the people not only on every Easter Solemnity but on every day; and a man would not be lying if, when asked, he were to reply that Christ is being [sacramentally] immolated" (*Letters* 98:9).¹¹

Webster concludes: "Though the early Church generally viewed the eucharist in spiritual terms, the concept began to emerge of a literal sacrifice in the eucharist."

But we have found the opposite to be the case. He believes the Eucharistic sacrifice "...had its beginnings with the third century North African bishop and martyr, Cyprian. ... Thus, the eucharist as a sacrifice began also to be looked upon, by some, as a means of propitiating God for sins committed after baptism." But we have already seen evidence of this belief predates Cyprian. We will, therefore, skip over what he says about Cyprian.

TURNING TO SCRIPTURE

Webster changes gears and turns his attention to Scripture:

"The starting point for both interpretations (material and spiritual) of the eucharist was Scripture. Only in a detailed analysis of what Scripture has to say about the nature of Christ's sacrifice, and how believers are to commemorate this sacrifice, can we come to a definitive understanding."

He begins by correctly noting that Jesus died only once:

"The author of Hebrews insists that Christ *cannot be sacrificed daily*, that his body is offered 'once-for-all' and that because this once-for-all sacrifice has brought complete forgiveness of sin there is no longer any requirement for an offering or sacrifice for sin. All that the animal sacrifices and human priesthood signified in the Old Testament, Christ has fulfilled. Consequently, God has abolished the priesthood *and all sacrifices*" (emphasis mine).

¹¹ In inserted the word "sacramentally" because in this context Augustine is speaking about the sacramental immolation of Christ in the Mass. Here is a fuller quotation: "But no one is so foolish as to accuse us of falsehood when we use these phrases, for this reason, that we give such names to these days on the ground of a likeness between them and the days on which the events referred to actually transpired, the day being called the day of that event, although it is not the very day on which the event took place, but one corresponding to it by the revolution of the same time of the year, and the event itself being said to take place on that day, because, although it really took place long before, it is on that day sacramentally celebrated. Was not Christ once for all offered up in His own person as a sacrifice? And yet, is He not likewise offered up in the sacrament as a sacrifice, not only in the special solemnities of Easter, but also daily among our congregations; so that the man who, being questioned, answers that He is offered as a sacrifice in that ordinance, declares what is strictly true? For *if sacraments had not some points of real resemblance to the things of which they are the sacraments, they would not be sacraments at all*. In most cases, moreover, they do in virtue of this likeness bear the names of the realities which they resemble."

No one says that Christ is “sacrificed daily.” Rather, the once-for-all sacrifice is made present and we enter into this one-for-all sacrifice in the Mass daily. It’s not two sacrifices but one. As for the rest, Webster has overstated the case. God didn’t abolish the priesthood, even according to Protestant theology. Christ is the eternal High Priest, so there can be no successors. We are a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9) sometimes called the *common priesthood*. And there are elders (*presbyters* = priests), who offer the sacraments of the New Covenant.

If Webster means that Christ abolished, by fulfilling, all bloody Old Testament sacrifices, he is correct. However, if he means that Christ all sacrifices other than his sacrifice on the cross, he has erred. As we have seen in Romans 12:1, all Christians are commanded to offer their bodies as living sacrifices and even Webster would concede that we ought to offer a sacrifice of praise and of contrite hearts.

Webster continues:

“This presents the Roman Catholic Church with a dilemma. Scripture teaches that Christ’s body and his sacrifice were offered *once*. Rome teaches that his body and sacrifice are offered *over and over again* in transubstantiation and the repetition of each mass. The Church attempts to get around this problem by claiming that the sacrifice of the mass is not a different sacrifice from that of Calvary but the same sacrifice perpetuated through time. Because God is beyond time the sacrifice of the cross is always present with him, and therefore the sacrifice of the mass is the same sacrifice as that of Calvary. This logic is a semantic smoke-screen: the sacrifice of the cross was an historic space-time event which occurred once and can never be repeated. The application of the Lord’s sacrifice goes on through time in terms of the Holy Spirit bringing men to receive the benefits of his finished work, and the commemoration of his sacrifice goes on through time, but the sacrifice itself cannot be perpetuated. Indeed, the principal theme of the book of Hebrews is that there are no more sacrifices for sin of any kind whatsoever.”

There is really no dilemma, but a misunderstanding of sacrifice. Webster thinks that Christ’s death on the cross alone is a sacrifice. It isn’t. It may be an immolation, but unless the immolation is presented before God in an oblation, it’s not a sacrifice. It’s an execution. What makes it a sacrifice is the oblation, or offering where the immolated victim is presented to the Father. Hebrews says that this takes place in the holy of holies in heaven, where he presents his glorified crucified body before the Father and intercedes for us. According to Webster’s thinking, this should be impossible since the sacrifice of the cross was a onetime sacrifice that took place in time-space never to be repeated. Of course, it isn’t repeated. They are just different components of the one sacrifice. Put simply: the immolation of the cross happened in time, once-for-all. The oblation – which is a necessarily component of sacrifice – happens in heaven. At the Last Supper, Christ established a new Passover sacrifice, which makes present himself – the glorified immolated victim – and his oblation in heaven. At the Last Supper, when Christ consecrates the bread and wine separately, he performs a sacramental immolation. Through the outward signs of the sacrament, it shows that a victim is immolated just as Christ appearing before the throne in heaven in Revelation 5 as a slain lamb, showing forth that an immolation *had* occurred.

It's worth going through Christ's words at the institution of the Last Supper to see how it contains sacrificial language.

1 Cor. 11:23–26	Mark 14:22–25	Matthew 26:26–29	Luke 22:14–20
<p>the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, 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 the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.</p>	<p>While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'</p>	<p>While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'</p>	<p>Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.'</p> <p>Then he took a loaf of 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 he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'</p>

When Christ instituted the Eucharist, he not only established a sacrament where he the immolated victim is made present, but it also is an oblation that is occurring.

"This is my body... which is given for you... This is my blood... which is poured out for the many."

The Greek says, "which is given" (*didomenon*) and "which is poured out" (*ekchynnomenon*). Both these words are participles. Translators usually translate these words in the future tense (i.e., "will be given for you" or "will be poured out for you") because they think that it is referring to the crucifixion which did not yet take place. But the verb is in the present, which means these words should be translated in the present as in "which is currently being given for you" and "which is currently being poured out for you." That is Christ's words show that the Eucharist is an ongoing oblation. Matthew 26 says that the blood is currently being poured out "for the forgiveness of sins." In other words, it is an oblation that forgives sins.

We should also note that the pouring out of blood is a way of presenting a sacrifice before God, in other words an oblation. For example, Leviticus 4:7 says:

“The priest shall also put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense which is before the LORD in the meeting tent. The rest of the bullock’s blood he shall pour out [*encheō*] at the base of the altar of holocausts which is at the entrance of the meeting tent.”

Not only is Christ’s blood being obliterated in the Eucharist, but this oblation is for the “forgiveness of sins.”

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood”

The phrase “the new covenant in my blood” [*hē kainē diathēkē estin en tō emō haimatī*] harkens back to the sacrifice offered by Moses at the inauguration of the Old Covenant. Exodus 24:8, “Then he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant [*to haima tēs diathēkēs*] which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words of his.” Notice that the sprinkling of blood served as the offering (oblation) of the sacrifice.

“Do this...”

Jesus command “Do this” is interesting. The word “do” [Greek, *poieō*] can be either “perform this action” or it can mean “offer” as in “offer a sacrifice.” The context determines whether it should be translated “perform this” or “offer this.” Since Christ is giving this command in the context of the Passover feast (which is a sacrificial feast), it should be translated “offer this.”

“In remembrance of me”

We already spoken about “remembrance” [Greek, *anamnesin*]. This word is used five times in the Greek OT. Once to remember something (Wisdom 16:6). The other instances are show that an *anamnesin* is something that calls attention to a sacrifice being made:

It is used in the prescript for Psalms 37 and 69, which were sung during sacrifices.

Numbers 10:10, “On your days of celebration, your festivals, and your new-moon feasts, you shall blow the trumpets over your holocausts and your peace offerings; *this will serve as a reminder of you before your God*. I, the LORD, am your God” (emphasis mine).

The blowing of the trumpet is an *anamnesis* of their holocaust and peace offerings “before your God.” In other words, it is an oblation in that it calls God’s attention to a sacrifice being made.

The last instance is in Leviticus 24:7:

“On each pile put some pure frankincense, which shall serve as an oblation to the LORD, a token offering for the bread.”

Here the incense is placed on the Showbread in the Holy Place. The Showbread were twelve loaves of bread (mentioned earlier by Origen). This was a continuous sacrifice in the Temple. The bread was

presented before God through the incense that was burnt on them. The incense calls God's attention to the bread that is being offered.

Since Christ calls the Eucharist his "anamnesis" the offering of the Eucharist calls God's attention to a sacrifice being offered.

The Passover sacrifice also connects Jesus' death on the cross with Jesus' new Passover Meal at the Last Supper. John 19 describes Christ's crucifixion in terms of the immolation of a Passover lamb. For example, Jesus is given wine on a sprig of hyssop (John 19:29). Hyssop was used at the first Passover meal to spread the blood of the lamb on the doorposts (Exodus 12:22). John also notes that Christ's legs were not broken in order to fulfill the Scripture "...not a bone of it shall be broken" (John 19:36). This quote comes from the legal stipulation that the Passover lamb could not have any broken bones (Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12). But if Christ is the Passover lamb immolated on Calvary, where is the sacrificial feast where we eat the lamb? Obviously, it is the Eucharistic feast. But notice that just as the Passover sacrifice includes the immolation and oblation of the Passover lamb *and* the sacrifice feast all constitutes one sacrifice even though they happen at different times and places, so too the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass. All the components are intrinsically linked together without any "time-space" difficulties.

Webster says:

"Scripture teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ has not only made a once-for-all-time atonement, but that his historical death on the cross is a complete atonement. He has completely satisfied God's justice: the debt due to man's sin has been fully paid and therefore all those who come to God through Jesus Christ are wholly free from condemnation. No further expiation for sin can ever be needed. The biblical view is that cleansing and forgiveness for sin are found in the blood of Jesus Christ alone, and never in the works or sufferings of man, for the law demands death as a penalty for sin. The significance of the reference to blood with respect to the work of Christ is that it signifies his life has been given over in death on our behalf and as a payment for our sin. It is because a full atonement has been made that a full forgiveness can be offered."

There's a difference between redemption being accomplished and redemption being applied. Webster is right that atonement is made and God is fully satisfied by the offering of Christ. But his blood still needs to be applied to us. By being radically united to Christ through faith and baptism, we become Christ's body and his passion and death is lived out in us so that his resurrection will be lived out in us. "...always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:10). Christ pays for our sins, not by crediting our account with his infinite merits only, but by making us righteous so that "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 6:14).

Webster then gives a series of proof texts:

The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

The context of this passage shows that the blood of Christ continues to be applied to us throughout time. It wasn't a one-time event. The full verse reads:

“But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin.”

If we “walk in the light” THEN we have fellowship with one another and the blood Jesus, shed two thousand years ago on Calvary, cleanses us. Notice this is conditional. What if we don't “walk in the light as he is in the light?” This chapter contains several “if...then” statements some of which concern the forgiveness of post-baptismal sins of believers as we have seen in 1 John 1:7. For example, verse 9 says: “If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing.” Just as these verses are not talking about our initial justification where all our past sins are forgiven but the cleansing of post-baptismal sins. The sacrifice of Mass does not apply to initial justification (making it a kind of second atonement, as Webster suggests), but the forgiveness of post-baptismal sins.

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).

There is no doubt that we have redemption in Him through His blood and the forgiveness of our trespasses. But the question is how Christ set up for us to access the redemption and forgiveness.

Webster says:

“Scripture nowhere teaches that men must suffer temporal punishment for their own sins to render satisfaction to God, either in this life or in the life to come. All punishment for sin was borne by Christ. This is why the Word of God declares that ‘There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus’ (Rom. 8:1).”

This is one of those paragraphs that has many ambiguities that could easily mislead people as to what Catholics believe. There are also different ways one could go about responding to it. For example, the word satisfaction has different meanings and uses for Catholic and Protestants. Protestants think of satisfaction as dealing with the atonement, if not exclusively about Christ's atoning sacrifice. Therefore, it is not applied to anything we do. In Catholic theology, the term has a broader use. It means simply giving back what is due. At the risk of oversimplifying things for the sake of space, it applies to *the redeemed* (Christians who have been saved by Christ's blood) who subsequently sin. That sin interrupts the process of (actual) sanctification. Christ makes up for this shortfall in sanctification by allowing us to suffer with him work penitential works of suffering love.

Webster comment that *all* punishment for sin is borne by Christ is too ambiguous to be helpful. In terms of eternal punishment, this is true. But in terms of temporal punishment, this too is alleviated by Christ but in virtue of our union with him as members of his body. This is clearly seen in Romans 8. For those who are “in Christ Jesus” there is not condemnation (eternal punishment). However, this does not mean that the Christian does not suffer in regards to sanctification “For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Roman 8:13). Putting to

death the deeds of the body is nothing other than our struggle for actual sanctification. This battle is done, not by ourselves, but by the Spirit who dwells in us. It is this same Spirit that give us adoption as sons. As Romans 8:16-17 says:

“The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, *if only we suffer with him* so that we may also be glorified with him” (Emphasis mine).

He continues: “God certainly disciplines believers for sin, but this has nothing to do with making atonement or expiation. In the discipline of his children God’s action is remedial, not punitive; it flows from love, not wrath (see Heb. 12:4-13).”

Here we see that Webster simply doesn’t understand Catholic theology for what else is could temporal punishment be other than God’s discipline for us as children? We believe the same thing. In fact, we go one step further by saying that it is Christ in us who enables us to endure this loving discipline of God in a way that makes us more like him and have value in the eyes of God. The fact that he can say, “this has nothing to do with making atonement or expiation” is perfectly Catholic. Unfortunately, he misunderstands what Catholics believe so badly that he thinks this is a refutation of what we believe.

Webster continues:

“Scripture does speak of a eucharistic sacrifice. The word ‘eucharist’ literally means ‘thanksgiving’ and the New Testament frequently enjoins believers to offer this kind of sacrifice of praise: ‘Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of the lips that give thanks to His name’ (Heb. 13:15). This is the true eucharistic sacrifice. Scripture also speaks of other sacrifices the believer is to offer to God — our goods to meet the needs of others, and ourselves in total surrender to God (Heb. 13:16; Rom. 12:1). These are all true sacrifices in the New Testament but they have nothing to do with the expiation of sin.”

Webster quotes extensively from Darwell Stone. In that book, Stone goes through – item by item - all the different words and phrases in the Institution Narratives at the Last Supper and shows – somewhat imperfectly - how Christ established the Eucharist as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. Either Webster skipped over this material or he chose to not accept it. We’ve already recounted this point:

- 1) The Eucharist was established in the context of the sacrificial feast of Passover.
- 2) Christ’s words “...which is given for you” and “which is poured out” are present participles showing that an offering or oblation *is occurring* in this act.
- 3) The phrase “the blood of the covenant” harkens back to Moses’ words concerning the blood of the sacrifices that inaugurated the Old Covenant (Exodus 24:8).
- 4) “Do this” can mean “offer this” when used in the context of a sacrifice and since the Passover meal is a sacrificial meal, it ought to be rendered “Offer this.”

- 5) The word translated “remembrance” is rarely used for simply remembering something. More often, in the Greek Old Testament, it refers to something that calls God’s attention to a sacrificing being offered.

We could also add to this list the fact that the Eucharist means “thanksgiving” as in a “thanksgiving sacrifice” (or *todah offering*). These are sacrifices offered in thanksgiving to God. For example, Jonah, while in the belly of the whale, vowed to make a *todah* sacrifice in the Temple if he was delivered (Jonah 2:3-10, also see Jeremiah 33:11, Amos 4:5). *Todahs* are true sacrifices and true sacrifices of praise. The Passover fits the description of a *todah* sacrifice, so does the Eucharist.¹²

Webster’s characterization of the Eucharist as a sacrifice *merely* as that of praise is simplistic and ignores the much fuller description Scripture gives us concerning the Eucharist.

He continues:

“If, as we have seen, there is no more sacrifice for sin — what is the meaning of the Lord’s Supper? The Supper was established by the Lord Jesus as a memorial of thanksgiving and praise for his atoning sacrifice by which believers were to commune with him spiritually and also to proclaim his death until he comes again. The bread and wine, as Augustine points out, were given as figures or visible symbols of his body and blood and therefore are figurative expressions of his self-sacrifice. They are visible reminders to his people of what he has done on their behalf.”

We’ve seen that Webster has failed to show this and he ignores Augustine’s teaching about how the outward signs and symbols are *efficacious signs* that bring about what they signify (i.e., the “divine thing” or the *res divinas*).

He continues: “When the Lord says, ‘This is my body’, he is speaking figuratively and not literally. In fact, in Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25 and Luke 22:16,18, Christ refers to the wine after consecration as the ‘fruit of the vine’, indicating that it was still wine. Twice, in 1 Corinthians 11:23-27, Paul refers to the consecrated bread as ‘bread’.”

So....? Catholics today refer to the Eucharist in terms of its outward appearance. What’s important is what Christ said they were when he instituted the Eucharist. He didn’t say “this bread is my body” but “This is my body” as if the bread did not exist. The same with the wine. “This cup...is my blood.” By these words we know that it is no longer common bread and wine, but Christ’s body and blood. This is the view of the fathers, despite Webster’s effort to prove the contrary.

Webster says: “When Jesus refers to himself as the bread of life and says that men must eat his flesh and drink his blood, he makes it clear that his words were to be interpreted spiritually and figuratively: ‘The flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life’ (*John 6:63*).”

¹² For more information, see Timothy Gray’s article here: <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/religion-and-philosophy/apologetics/from-jewish-passover-to-christian-eucharist-the-story-of-the-todah.html>.

Here Webster, like nearly every Protestant today, interprets this verse out of context. It is said after Jesus asks a rhetorical question: “Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” (John 6:61-63).

First, does *what* shock you? It is his words “you must eat my flesh and drink my blood....for my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.”

Second, Jesus asks “What if you see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?” The rhetorical question assumes that if they did see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before, what he said would not shock you. In other words, if you really knew who Jesus is you’d know that Christ could give my flesh and blood as true food and true drink.

Here is an illustration: If I gave you a check for a million dollars, you would probably have doubts whether you could actually cash the check. But if I said to you, “What if you saw me going into the bank with my deposit yesterday.” The question would imply that if you saw me going into the bank to deposit a large amount of money, you’d know that the check I gave you would clear. Jesus is essentially saying the same thing. If we truly believed that he was the Son of Man who came from the throne of God, we know that he could do what he said.

The next line logically follows: “It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” He is not dismissing his own words as symbolic.¹³ Rather, he is saying that what he said cannot be accomplished by mere human effort, but rather it is through the power of God (the spirit) that this will be done.

In summary, as we mentioned before, the Bread of Life discourse in John 6 highlights the Eucharist as the “Mystery of Faith.” Jesus’ words are only possible if he is “the holy one of God.” (John 6:69). It is our faith in Christ that enables us to accept him at his word since the only way we know about the Eucharistic change is that he told us about it. When the fathers approached John 6 according to its spiritual sense, they focused on faith in Christ, which is its underlying theme.

But this is the spiritual sense, if their interpretation was read (as many Protestants do) as being the literal sense (i.e., flesh and blood being a metaphor for faith) then we end up with a very strained (if not incoherent) metaphor. I say incoherent because if eating his flesh and drinking his blood equals having

¹³ Webster should have known, since Karl Keating points this out, that the word “spirit” in the New Testament does not mean symbolic. In fact, if you go back through the NT and replace every instance of “spirit” with “symbol” you’d end up with some very heretical interpretations. Jesus, in the Gospel of John, uses the words “flesh” and “spirit” to signify the things of the earth versus the things done by heavenly power in John 3:6, for example, when he says, “What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit.”

faith then when he says “the flesh profits nothing” that must mean that faith profits nothing and if “spirit” means symbolic then the spirit only symbolically give life, which is incoherent.

Webster denies that this discourse is referring to the Eucharist. But there are several reasons to suspect otherwise. First, John 6 begins with the miracle of the loaves in which Jesus “take” “breaks” “gives thanks” and gives it to his disciples (the same words used in the institution narratives of the Eucharist). Second, the discourse take place, John tells, near the time of the Passover feast, which was when Jesus established the Eucharist. Third, the only other area where Christ tells someone to eat his body and drink his blood is in the institution narratives. Surely, these three points cannot be a mere coincidence?

Webster attempts to dismiss the force of Jesus’ language in John 6 by pointing out other “vivid” language Jesus used: “Christ often used very vivid language to impress spiritual truth upon men’s minds. When speaking with Nicodemus he tells him that he must be ‘born again’. He refers to himself as a ‘vine’ and believers as ‘branches’.”

I don’t know how “vivid” these examples are compared to John 6. Being “born again” or “born from above” doesn’t strike me as very jarring and the analogy of a vine and the branches was a familiar one used in the OT (Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15; Psalm 80:9-16). Moreover, being “born again” isn’t a metaphor but a description of an invisible reality – we are truly regenerated.

He likewise appeals to Matthew 5:29-30 where Jesus says:

“And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.”

But this is a typical instance of hyperbole. But is Jesus really using hyperbole in John 6? I don’t think so. In Matthew 5:29-30 there was no reaction to Christ’s words because they understood them to be hyperbolic. However, there was a reaction to Christ’s words in John 6 and Jesus never bothers to correct them. Instead, he asks, rhetorically, “What if you see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?” And he turns to his apostles as asked, “Do you also want to leave?”

Webster says, “Christ is obviously using starkly realistic language to convey an important spiritual truth: the necessity for radical repentance from sin.”

I’ve read John 6 more than a dozen of times, perhaps a hundred or so. I never noticed a single instance where he even hints at “the necessity for a racial repentance from sin.” In fact, I don’t believe it even uses the word “repent” in the entire chapter.

He continues:

“He speaks in physical terms but we are not meant to take his words in a literal, physical sense. Precisely the same is true with his teaching in John 6 and his words at the institution of the Lord’s Supper. To

interpret all his words in those passages literally would adopt an interpretation which directly contradicts the teaching of Scripture.”

The sting of Christ’s words is taken away when one realizes that he is referring to the Eucharist, a sacrament, in which it is perfectly lawful to consume.

Webster says, “Jesus himself teaches us that the Church is to observe the Supper ‘in remembrance of me’. The word remembrance is the Greek word which literally means a memorial.”

Although possible, we have already shown that *anamnesis* is used only once in the Old Testament (in the deuterocanonical book of Wisdom) to mean merely remembering something. It is used more frequently as a sign that calls God’s attention *to an oblation being offered*.

Next, Mr. Webster fumbles badly when he writes:

“The Supper is no altar of sacrifice, but a table of remembrance, a place of spiritual communion with the Saviour by his Spirit. To teach that Christ has instituted a means whereby his sacrifice can be perpetuated through time is to contradict the plain teaching of Scripture.”

Wrong Mr. Webster. The Eucharistic table is an altar, as 1 Corinthians 11:19-21 says:

“So what am I saying? That meat sacrificed to idols is anything? Or that an idol is anything? No, I mean that what they sacrifice, (they sacrifice) to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to become participants with demons. *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord* and also the cup of demons. *You cannot partake of the table of the Lord* and of the table of demons” (emphasis mine).

Notice the parallelism. Paul contrasts the “cup of demons” and the “cup of the Lord” and the “table of demons” and the “table of the Lord.” The context clearly shows that Paul is contrasting two sacrifices. Pagan sacrifices where they drink of the sacrificial sup that was from the pagan altar (table) and the “cup of the Lord” (i.e., the Eucharistic cup) that also is the sacrificial product of an altar (table). Table means sacrificial altar and if the parallel is a true one than the Eucharist is a sacrifice performed on an altar.

In case this seems dubious to you, notice that the phrase “table of the Lord” (Greek, *trapezēs kyriou*) is used twice in Malachi 1:6-12 to refer to the Jewish sacrificial altar:

“A son honors his father, and a servant fears his master; If then I am a father, where is the honor due to me? And if I am a master, where is the reverence due to me? — So says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise his name. But you ask, “How have we despised your name?” By offering polluted food *on my altar!* Then you ask, “How have we polluted it?” By saying *the table of the LORD* [Greek, *trapeza kyriou*] may be slighted! When you offer a blind animal for sacrifice, is this not evil? When you offer the lame or the sick, is it not evil? Present it to your governor; see if he will accept it, or welcome you, says the LORD of hosts. So now if you implore God for mercy on us, when you have

done the like Will he welcome any of you? says the LORD of hosts. Oh, that one among you would shut the temple gates to keep you from kindling fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts; neither will I accept any sacrifice from your hands, For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name is great among the nations; And everywhere they bring sacrifice to my name, and a pure offering; For great is my name among the nations, says the LORD of hosts. But you behave profanely toward me by thinking *the LORD'S table* [Greek, *trapeza kyriou*] and its offering may be polluted, and its food slighted" (emphasis mine).

The "table of the lord" is literally a sacrificial altar where sacrifices are made. By pairing "the cup of the Lord" and the "Table of the Lord" Paul shows that the Eucharist is an actual literal sacrificial offering, just as the pagan sacrifices on their "table" is an actual literal sacrificial offering, only theirs is to demons and ours to God. But how could Paul possibly make this parallel if the Eucharist is merely a symbol and nothing more than hymns and prayers of thanksgiving to God?

Webster then says that the Passover was "... an annual feast established by God in which the Jews would remember the night in which the angel of death 'passed over' those families which had applied the blood of the lamb to their door-posts (*Exod. 12:1-13*). 'Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance' (*Exod. 12:14*). This was a 'memorial' to a specific act of God in redeeming his people from bondage and death. The 'memorial' served to bring to remembrance an important event. It did not repeat the event but kept it vivid in the memory through a physical representation."

Although Mr. Webster never states it – probably because it is too obvious – both the original Passover and subsequent Passovers are sacrificial feasts. So, if Jesus our Passover [lamb] has been sacrificed then the feast we celebrate includes that lamb.

Moreover, the word used in Exodus 12:14 translated "memorial" is not the same word used by Christ in the Last Supper. Exodus uses the word *mnēmosynon* (Hebrew, *l'zik·kā·rôn'*), which means "to remember." But Christ uses a different word, *anamnesis*, which we have spoke about above. It is true that the Passover was a remembering (*mnēmosynon*) of the exodus, but we have seen with the very words that Jesus used during the institution of the Eucharist that his body and blood is made present.

Webster says: "Just as God instituted a memorial of remembrance of redemption in the Old Testament, he has done the same in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 5:7 states, 'For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.' His death is an accomplished fact. Now we are called, not to a sacrifice, but to a feast: 'Let us therefore celebrate the feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (*1 Cor. 5:8*)."

It seems to me that the author can sense the problem with trying to make the Eucharist into a mere memorial when he states that the Passover is "a memorial of remembrance of redemption." A "memorial of remembrance"? If remembrance is synonymous with memorial, then this would mean that they remember remembering, which is redundant.

What Webster fails to understand is that the sacrifice of the lamb and the feast are two necessary components of one and the same sacrifice. The Passover is one of those sacrifices where three things are necessarily, the immolation of the lamb, the oblation of the lamb's blood, and you have to eat the lamb. Webster correctly notes that Paul says that Jesus our Passover lamb has been slain. This was done once for all, but for some reason he fails to notice that we must "eat the lamb." The feast is a sacrificial feast. If any one of the three components were missing, you would not have a Passover. Lamb shaped cookies that remind us of a lamb that was slain long ago wouldn't suffice. You need to eat the Passover lamb of the feast. Catholics do this. Protestants don't.

In the Mass, which is the New Passover, the lamb of God - who was slain on the cross, rose from the dead, and reigns in glory - is made present and we consume him.

Webster continues by explaining: "When Christ states that the bread is to be eaten and the wine drunk in *remembrance* of him, he is employing the same language as that of the Old Testament memorial in reference to the Passover. The Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice, it is the commemoration of a sacrifice."

No. Paul says "let us celebrate the [Passover] feast." He didn't say, "Let's commemorate and remember a Passover lamb that had been slain centuries ago" or "Let's celebrate a commemoration of the Passover feast." He says: "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed.... let's celebrate the feast..." The Lord's Supper is just as much of a sacrificial feast as the Passover feast.

Here Webster is missing a very basic fact. The very same Passover lamb that was slain earlier is presented on the table and eaten during the feast. The Passover isn't a feast that remembers the lamb that was slain last year or last decade or the last millennium. If the Mass is the feast and Christ is the Passover lamb then the two are connected as two parts of the same sacrifice just as the slaying of the Passover lamb and the eating of the lamb are two parts of the same sacrifice. This is the teaching of the Church, Scripture, and the fathers.

He concludes: "The Roman Catholic teaching of the eucharist contradicts Scripture and it cannot be validated by the unanimous consent of the Fathers. To teach men to put trust in the eucharist as a sacrificial event is to undermine the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is to deny the sufficiency of his once-for-all sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. To suggest in any way that men must rely upon anything but Christ and his cross as God's means for dealing with sin is to lead men to a false trust and a false gospel."

Webster claims that although many fathers held to Trent's view of the Real Presence and transubstantiation, some held different views. We've seen, however, that this is not the case. Either his interpretation of these fathers who supposedly held different view were ill-founded (and they didn't contradict Trent) or their heretical views on Christ (i.e., Eusebius) affected how they understood the Eucharist, but this could hardly be helpful to Webster's thesis. Marcion didn't hold to Trent's view of the Eucharist because he didn't believe Christ was consubstantial with our humanity. But what does this prove? Nothing really. Nor does Eusebius pose a problem. He shows that some early fathers interpreted John 6 differently than Catholics, but failed to notice that they were interpreting it, not according to the literal historical sense, but according to the spiritual sense. And if the spiritual sense meant that eating flesh and drinking blood was "faith" then what is the literal sense? Webster faired even worse in regards

to the Eucharistic sacrifice. He failed to interact with Christ's words of institution, even though there was a discussion of them in Darwell Stone's book (which he used as a source). He also failed to appreciate throughout his paper the complexities of the Catholic position both in regards to Christ's real presence and the sacrifice of the Mass. Because of this much of what he presents as somehow countering Catholicism actually fits well with its teachings. Perhaps the biggest problem for Webster is his misunderstanding of Catholic theology in general. As a Catholic, I can't recognize Catholic teaching in what he claims we believe. I found it odd that he brushed off as an artful dodges statements from the Church that contradicted what he believed the Church teaches.

At best, Webster proved that his understanding (or better misunderstanding) of the Eucharist and the Mass isn't Protestant. But he didn't show that what the Church actually teaches is against Scripture or out of line with the early fathers.