

# THE REAL PRESENCE OF JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST

By: Jim Seghers

A few summers ago a large group of Protestant ministers from various denominations attended a meeting in the Midwest. Such a meeting is hardly unusual, but this meeting was very different. They were meeting with Marcus Grodi, a former Presbyterian Minister and the director of The Coming Home Network International, an organization that “provides fellowship, encouragement, and support for pastors and laymen of other traditions (Protestant, Orthodox, etc.) who are somewhere along the journey or have already converted to the Catholic Church.”<sup>1</sup> The powerful magnet that was drawing these ministers into the Catholic Church was the Eucharist. Once godly men recognize what the New Testament truly teaches on this subject their hearts are irresistibly pulled to their hidden Lord.

Around the same time a priest friend who is a pastor of a Catholic parish in Mississippi related a conversation he had with the Baptist pastor who served in the same city. The two men have a very cordial relationship. The pastor said with a twinkle in his eye: “You know, father, we Baptists interpret the Bible literally except, of course, John 6. These two occurrences speak volumes about the important subject of this essay, the Eucharist.

It is historically irrefutable the early Christian Church believed in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. The highly respected Protestant scholar, J.N.D. Kelly, writes, “In the third century the early Christian identification of the eucharistic bread and wine with the Lord’s body and blood continued unchanged, although a difference of approach can be detected.”<sup>2</sup> Focusing on the later doctrine of the Eucharist Kelly adds: “Eucharistic teaching, it should be understood at the outset, was in general unquestioningly realist, i.e. the consecrated bread and wine were taken to be, and were treated and designated as, the Savior’s body and blood.”<sup>3</sup> The Oxford scholar, Darwell Stone, corroborates Kelly’s statements: “Throughout the writings of the Fathers there is unbroken agreement that the consecrated bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ, and that the Eucharist is a sacrifice.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From the Home Page of the Coming Home Network web site at [www.chnetwork.org/](http://www.chnetwork.org/) The Coming Home Network International can be reached at P.O. Box 8290 Zaneville, OH 43702. Phone #'s (800) 664-5110 & (740) 450-1175, e-mail address: [info@chnetwork.org](mailto:info@chnetwork.org). As of 2/17/2004 there have been 492 clergy converts to the Catholic Church through the Coming Home Network representing 38 denominations: Episcopal is # 1 with 115, Baptist are # 2 with 60, and Methodist are # 3 with 49. In addition, as of the same date 371 additional clergy members from 32 denominations are journeying toward the Catholic Church: Lutheran is # 1 with 53, Methodist # 2 with 50, and Baptist # 3 with 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Early Christian Doctrine*, p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 440. Kelly is hardly alone in identifying the widespread belief in the early Church of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Reputable Protestant reference works also recognizes the historical reality of the universal belief of the real, physical presence of Jesus in the Eucharist: *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, F.C. Cross & E.A. Livingstone, eds., Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1983, pp. 475-476; and *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, J.D. Douglas editor, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, revised edition 1078, pp. 244-245 – a work that rejects the idea of transubstantiation.

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Communion*, p. 37 from *The Oxford Library of Practical Theology*.

The belief in the Real Presence was so widely held in the early Church that there are no citations from the Fathers that deny Jesus' true presence in the Eucharist. Expressing an opposing viewpoint the Protestant apologists, Geisler and MacKenzie, claim that "some" Church Fathers rejected the literal interpretation of the words of institution, "This is my body."<sup>5</sup> However, they failed to give a single patristic witness to confirm their assertion. There are, to be sure, passages in which the symbolism of the Eucharist is expressed, even stressed. However, as Kelly explains: "It must not be supposed, of course, that this 'symbolical' language implied that the bread and wine were regarded as mere pointers to, or tokens of, absent realities. Rather were they accepted as signs of realities which were somehow *actually present* through apprehended by faith alone."<sup>6</sup>

In his failed attempt to refute the belief in the true physical presence of Jesus in the Eucharist Bartholomew Brewer claims: "The idea of a corporal presence was vaguely held by some [of the Church Fathers], such as Ambrose..."<sup>7</sup> Brewer offers no citations to support his distortion of St. Ambrose's teaching on the Eucharist. Unfortunately, this kind of misrepresentation is not an exception. In refutation consider the following quotations from Ambrose's writings.

"'My flesh is truly food and My blood is truly drink.' You hear Him speak of His flesh, you hear Him speak of His blood, you know the sacred signs of the Lord's death; and do you worry about His divinity? Hear His words when He says: "A spirit has not flesh and bones.' As often as we receive the sacramental elements which through the mystery of the sacred prayer are transformed into the flesh and blood of the Lord, we proclaim the death of the Lord."<sup>8</sup>

"Christ is in that Sacrament, because it is the Body of Christ; yet, it is not on that account corporeal food, but spiritual. Whence also His Apostle says of the type: 'For our fathers ate spiritual food and drank spiritual drink.' For the body of God is a spiritual body."<sup>9</sup>

"You may perhaps say: 'My bread is ordinary.' But that bread is bread before the words of the Sacraments; where the consecration has entered in, the bread becomes the flesh of Christ. And let us add this: How can what is bread be the Body of Christ? By the consecration. The consecration takes place by certain words; but whose words? Those of the Lord Jesus. Like all the rest of the things said beforehand, they are said by the priest; praises are referred to God, prayer of petition is offered for the people, for kings, for other persons; but when the time comes for the confection of the venerable Sacrament, then the priest uses not his own words but the words of Christ. Therefore it is the word of Christ that confects this Sacrament."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Disagreements*, p. 263.

<sup>6</sup> *Early Christian Doctrine*, pp. 441-442, emphasis mine.

<sup>7</sup> "The Mystery of the Eucharist," p. 1, found on the Mission to Catholics International, Inc. web site.

<sup>8</sup> *The Faith* from William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. II, p. 153, # 1270.

<sup>9</sup> *The Mysteries*, from Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. II, p. 175, # 1334.

<sup>10</sup> *The Sacraments*, from Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. II, p. 175, # 1339.

“Before it be consecrated it is bread; but where the words of Christ come in, it is the Body of Christ. Finally, hear Him saying: ‘All of you take and eat of this; for this is My Body.’ And before the words of Christ the chalice is full of wine and water; but here the words of Christ have been operative it is made the Body of Christ, which redeems the people.”<sup>11</sup>

The formal break with the universal faith of Christians in the Real Presence from the time of the apostles occurred during the Protestant Reformation when Zwingli and Calvin rejected the belief in the real physical presence of Jesus in the Eucharist based on their subjective interpretation of the New Testament. Zwingli taught that the Eucharist was merely a symbol. Calvin argued that it was more than a symbol, but less than Jesus’ physical presence. He favored a “spiritual” presence without clearly defining what it meant or how this “spiritual” presence differed from God’s omnipresence. Luther, in contrast, defended the Real Presence until the end of his life.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Luther wrote:

*“Who, but the devil, hath granted such a license of wrestling the words of the holy Scripture? Who ever read in the Scriptures, that my body is the same as the sign of my body? Or, that is the same as it signifies? What language in the world ever spoke so? It is only then the devil, that imposeth upon us by these fanatical men. . . . Not one of the Fathers, though so numerous, ever spoke as the Sacramentarians: not one of them ever said, It is only bread and wine; or, the body and blood of Christ is not there present. Surely it is not credible, non possible, since they often speak, and repeat their sentiments, that they should never (if they thought so) not so much as once, say, or let slip these words: It is bread only; or the body of Christ is not there, especially it being of great importance, that men should not be deceived. Certainly in so many Fathers, and in so many writings, the negative might at least be found in one of them, had they thought the body and blood of Christ were not really present; but they are all of them unanimous.”*<sup>13</sup>

Common sense alone suggests that it is inconceivable that all Christians could be in error regarding the doctrine of the Eucharist for almost 1,600 years. Yet, that is the claim of those who follow Zwingli and Calvin in rejecting Jesus’ real presence in the Eucharist.

This essay will explore the Biblical foundation for the teaching of the Catholic Church, which affirms the ancient and unbroken belief in Jesus’ presence in the Eucharist: body, blood, soul and divinity – the whole glorified Jesus. Specifically, the following passages will be examined: Jn 6:1-71; the institution narratives in Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:19-20; and 1 Cor 11:23-26; 1 Cor 10:16-17; 1 Cor 11:27-32; and.

## JOHN 6:1-71

### Prologue (6:1-21)

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<sup>11</sup> *The Sacraments*, from Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. II, p. 175, # 1340.

<sup>12</sup> Luther believed in Jesus’ presence in the Eucharist, but he rejected the term *transubstantiation*.

<sup>13</sup> From *Luther’s Collected Works*, Wittenburg Edition, Vol. VII, p. 391.

Jesus performed two dramatic miracles that were intended to publically identify him as the Messiah, the prophet (6:14) like Moses (Deut 18:15-19).<sup>14</sup> These miracles form a preface that prepared the people to accept the bread of life discourse that followed. The dramatic events of the miracles followed Jesus' declaration, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe me" (Jn 5:46-47)? The first five books of the Old Testament were attributed to Mosaic authorship. In Gen 3:15 Jesus is foreseen as the "seed" of the "woman" who will definitively defeat Satan and redeem mankind. In Gen 49:10 he is presented as the universal king.

Jesus, the prophet like Moses, who will deliver his people from the bondage of sin, feeds 5,000 with barley loaves, the bread of the poor, and some fish (6:1-15). The mention of the barley loaves is reminiscent of the miracle performed by Elisa, who fed 100 men with 20 loaves of barley (2 Kgs 4:42-44). Just as Jesus is greater than Moses, the magnitude of his miracles show that he is greater than the prophets.

The wonder of the multiplication of loaves recalled the manna that fed the chosen people in the desert. It is the only miracle other than the Resurrection that is recorded in all four Gospels. Its connection with the earlier food miracle, the superabundance of wine at Cana (Jn 2:1-11) and the Eucharistic liturgy is unmistakable. Indeed, Jesus has "kept the good wine until now" (Jn 2:10).

The messianic theme is also seen in John's mention of the Passover (6:4), which forms a backdrop for this entire passage. This feast recalled Israel's deliverance from tyranny in Egypt. The climax of the Passover celebration was the liturgical meal when the lamb was eaten with unleavened bread. Earlier in John's Gospel Jesus was identified as the "Lamb of God" (Jn 1:29). Subsequently, the evangelist will recall Ex 12:46: "Not a bone of him shall be broken" (Jn 19:36). Jesus is the true unblemished Lamb foreshadowed in the Passover liturgy.

In performing the miracle of multiplication Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks and distributed them. The similarity of these gestures with Jesus' institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper is obvious (Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22-23; Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:23). This connection is also seen in the Greek verb *eucharisteo*, which is translated as "given thanks" (6:11). The English "eucharist" comes from this Greek word.

The crowds understand the messianic implications of the miracle and intend to make Jesus their king. However, Jesus had nothing to do with their political aspirations. He departed alone. In the evening Jesus joined his disciples by walking on water (6:16-21), his second dramatic miracle. In response to their fright he urged them not to be afraid and announced, "It is I" (6:20), an expression that can also be rendered, "I am" - *egō eimi*. This expression is particularly striking when compared to the Septuagint. This identical self-revelation was used when God revealed his holy name to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:14). Jesus applied these words to himself five times in John's Gospel

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<sup>14</sup> Jesus is also identified as the prophet like Moses in Jn 4:20-26 with the Samaritan woman, and in Jn 7:40.

(6:20; 8:24, 58; 13:19; 18:6). He supports this right by commanding the laws of nature (6:19). This is in keeping with the God-man motif of John's Gospel, which opens with the eternal Word made flesh (Jn :1-18), not the baby in Bethlehem.

### **Bread of Life Discourse (6:22-71)**

From the Patristic age Christians have seen in the bread of life discourse Jesus' explicit affirmation of his real, physical presence in the Eucharist. However, with the denial of the Real Presence by some of the Reformers, this passage has become the focal point of heated debates. On the one side some Protestants claim that the discourse is merely an invitation to faith. Therefore they interpret the eating of the bread of life as a metaphor or symbol for believing in Jesus. Catholics have maintained for 2,000 years that the eating is the sacramental partaking of the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus. Part of the difficulty in properly interpreting John 6 lies in the text itself because John uses language that is sometimes symbolic and at other times quite literal.

#### *Protestant Objection*

The Protestant apologist James White sees a "dualistic symbolism throughout the discourse." He claims that "this duality has been missed by the Roman Catholic Church.... They, like the first-century listeners, cannot see past the symbol to the reality beyond."<sup>15</sup>

#### *Catholic Response*

The truth, or course, is quite the contrary. The Catholic Church has always recognized both the figurative and literal language used in John 6. Moreover, the Church knows when these distinctions start and when they stop, and it does not confuse the two. Robert Sungenis makes the interesting observation that opponents of the Real Presence like White exhibit Gnostic tendencies by devaluating matter, which is looked upon with suspicion and as unspiritual. In addition, they imply they possess a "secret knowledge," of spiritual things, the *gnosis*, that allows them "to determine such distinctions."<sup>16</sup>

### **Crowd Looking for Jesus (6: 22-24)**

The crowds depart from Tiberias by boat so they can find Jesus at Capernaum. The city of Tiberias was built by Herod Antipas and named in honor of the emperor Tiberias Caesar. The city was located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, which was also called the Lake of Gennesaret and the Sea of Tiberias.

### **The Crowd Finds Jesus (6:25-29)**

25 *When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"*

In calling Jesus "Rabbi," the modest title of a teacher (1:38), John indicates a significant lowering in the enthusiasm of the day before when they proclaimed Jesus to be "the prophet who is to come" (6:14), and determined to make him king.

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<sup>15</sup> *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, p. 169. It is insightful that Mr. White recognizes that those who heard Jesus' words, saw his gestures, and spoke fluently the same language understood their meaning in a way that contradicts his interpretation of those words.

<sup>16</sup> *Not By Bread Alone: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for the Eucharistic Sacrifice*, p. 170, note 147.

**26** *Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.*

Jesus points out that their motivation is merely natural. “Signs” are for unbelievers to lead them to faith (1 Cor 14:22). Ominously, their demand echoes that of the unbelieving temple authorities (Jn 2:18).

**27** *Do no labor [work] for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal.*

Jesus instructs the crowd that temporal goods or gaining an earthly advantage should not be their focal point. Jesus teaches that the real advantage is supernatural, “the food which endures to eternal life.” Only Jesus can give it, but he must be sought for himself. Subsequently, Jesus will reveal that he is this marvelous food. Jesus gives spiritual food because he is the Image that the Father has impressed on human nature. This idea is captured in the symbol of a signet ring imprinting in wax. There is an obvious parallel between the bodily and spiritual food contrasted here with the bodily and spiritual drink contrasted in chapter four (Jn 4:13). Material things are perishable by their very nature, just as spiritual things are eternal by their nature. Sinful men finds spiritual food distasteful or, at least, unattractive.

**28** *Then they said to him, “What must we do to be doing the works of God?”*

In other words, what does God desire us to do? How are we to behave to receive this “food which endures to eternal life.”

### **Preparation: The Invitation to Faith (6:29-47)**

**29** *Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”*

The emphasis in this verse is on “you,” that is, each individual. Faith is the prerequisite for a relationship with God. But why is supernatural faith stressed here? The crowd has already accepted Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah (6:14), and sought to make him their king. Jesus is aware that their “faith” is fleeting because it was rooted in the enthusiasm of the moment and focused on material advantages. Therefore he engages them in a dialogue that is carefully constructed to guide them to surrender to the gift of faith because he is about to reveal an astounding truth that can only be known by faith.

**30** *So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What of the multiplication of loaves that motivated them to make Jesus king? The fervor of the day before had diminished. Incredulity has taken its place. Paul points out that unbelieving “Jews demand signs” (1 Cor 1:22). Not only do the Jews ask for a sign, they tell Jesus what it must be.*

**31** *Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written [Neh 9:15], ‘He [Moses] gave them bread from heaven to eat’ (cf. Ex 16:15; Num 11: 7-9; Ps 78:25). The crowd demands that Jesus do something on the order of, but even greater, than*

Moses who fed the whole nation for years in the desert, not just providing a meal to a mere 5,000. This fits the evidence in later Jewish documents of the expectation “that the Messiah would come on Passover, and that the manna would begin to fall again on Passover”<sup>17</sup> Indeed, as Jesus will reveal, that hope was fulfilled in a most unexpected and marvelous way.

**32** *Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.*

Jesus corrects their superficial exegesis. Moses gave bread from the sky, but the Father gives “the true bread from heaven.” It is called the “true bread” because manna was a type<sup>18</sup> or foreshadowing of the supernatural bread which is Jesus himself - the Eucharist. Thus, in referring to the manna Paul says: “and all ate the same spiritual food” (1 Cor 10:3).

**33** *For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*

Jesus continues to redirect their attention away from an earthly focus to a spiritual understanding. The nature of this bread is supernatural, it “comes down from heaven.” Therefore its effect is supernatural. It *gives* life. It does not just *sustain* life like natural bread.

**34** *They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”*

Tragically, as we shall see, they are still thinking naturally. Raymond Brown illustrates the parallel between this interchange and Jesus’ dialogue with the Samaritan woman who says: “Sir, give me this water” (Jn 4:15)<sup>19</sup>.

| <b>Jn 6</b>   | <b>Jn 4</b>  |
|---|--|
| Q: 25 “Rabbi, when did you come here?”  | Q: 9 “How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?”   |
| A: 27 “You should not be working for perishable food.”  | A: 13 “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again.”  |
| Q: 30-1 “What sign are you going to perform for us to see? Our ancestors had manna to eat in the desert.”                     | Q: 11-2 “Where are you going to get this flowing water? Surely you don’t pretend to be greater than our ancestor Jacob who gave us this well?” |
| A: 32-3 “My Father gives you the real bread from heaven. For God’s bread comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” | A: 14 “The water that I shall give him will become within him a fountain of water leaping up unto eternal life.”                               |
| Reaction: 34 “Sir give us this bread all the  | Reaction: 15 “Sir, give me this water so that  |

<sup>17</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, Vol. I, p. 264.

<sup>18</sup> A *type* is a person, place or thing in the Old Testament that signifies a greater reality in the New Testament. Thus, Adam is a type of the greater fulfillment, Jesus Christ who is the anti-type.

<sup>19</sup> *The Gospel According to John*, Vol. I, p. 267.

**35** *Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.*

The complete revelation of Jesus reveals that he is “the bread of life” because he is the Word incarnate: “the Word was God . . . and in him was life” (Jn 1:1:1,4). However, that is reading a meaning into this verse that is not evident in the figurative words used here: “bread of life,” “hunger,” and “thirst.” This symbolic language is used in the Bible in a variety of ways. During the sermon on the mountain Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Mt 5:6). In Isaiah 55:1-2 God’s word is described as life-giving bread to be eaten. Later John will show that the life-giving bread is the Word who is God, Jesus himself, not just the word of God.

Jesus challenged the crowds to elevate their focus from Moses to himself. They respond requesting a sign greater than that performed by Moses. Jesus will answer that request in a stupendous manner that is beyond their imagination. Jesus is the life-giving food. He is not merely its dispenser. “Come, eat my bread; drink of the wine I have mixed” (Prov 9:5; also: Sir 15:3; Wisd 24:21).

At this juncture the interpretations of Catholics and some Protestants split into opposing camps. For example, the Protestant apologist, Robert Zins, centers his entire interpretation on the symbolic language of Jn 6:35. He claims that “the controlling verse of John 6 is verse 35.”<sup>20</sup> This statement exhibits the fatal flaw of his interpretative method. Zins begins with the preconceived idea that the Eucharist is merely symbolic. Then he arbitrarily selects this one verse that uses symbolic language to govern his entire interpretation of the chapter. Therefore all the verses that follow Jn 6:35 are only considered relevant to the degree that Mr. Zins can force them into his predetermined conclusion.

**36** *But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.*

In other words, Jesus asserts that their resistance to the grace prevents them from accepting his teaching. Faith and sacraments cannot be separated anymore than grace can be estranged from ones justification.

**37** *“All the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out.”*

Faith is always God’s gift (Eph 2:8). In accepting the gift of faith we become Christ’s. Those who are “cast out” cast themselves out by rejecting the gift of faith. Jesus rejects no one.

**38** *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.*

<sup>20</sup> *Romanism: The Relentless Roman Catholic Assault on the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 117.

Jesus expresses his love for the Father in terms of obedience. Jesus' human will is in perfect harmony and submission to the will of the Father. In the Bible obedience and the love are frequently used as synonymous.

**39** *and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day.*

Jesus rejects no one because it is the Father's will that all men be saved (1 Tim 2:4). However, each person has the capacity, called free will, to surrender to Jesus in faith or refuse to do so.

**40** *For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*

The Father ardently wants all men to have supernatural life. This is the mission of his beloved Son. "But to all who receive him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn 1:12-13).

#### **Reaction of Jesus' Listeners:**

**41** *The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven."*

Now that it is clear that Jesus is talking about spiritual food for which they have little if any interest, the unbelieving Jews began to murmur. The Greek word which is translated as "murmured" is consistently used in the Septuagint for the murmuring of Israel in the wilderness (Ex 16:2, 7, 8; 17:2-3; Num 11:1; also: Jude 16; 1 Cor 10:10; Phil 2:14). They are behaving with the same lack of faith as their forefathers.

**42** *They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"*

The expression "this Jesus" is derogatory. It finds a parallel in the rejection of Jesus found in the Synoptics (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3; Lk 4:22). They shift the focus to his human origin. Unwilling to accept the gift of faith, they remain rooted in materialistic thinking which prevents them from considering Jesus' supernatural meaning. Earlier John the Baptist observed: "he who is of the earth belongs to the earth" (Jn 3:31).

#### **Jesus responds:**

**43** *Jesus answered them, "Do not murmur among yourselves.*

Jesus checks their grumbling, and then he redirects their focus to the important issue.

**44** *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*

One can only come to Jesus through the gift of faith, which surpasses unaided human ability. Only grace can provide the assistance that is desperately needed.

**45** *It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God'. Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.*

Jesus' paraphrase of Isaiah (Is 54:13) foresees the time when God will restore, prosper and teach his chosen people. The Father draws his earthly children to himself by *revealing* and *teaching*. His ultimate revelation and lesson is the Son. "In many and various ways God spoke to our fathers through the prophets; in these last days he has spoken to us in his Son" (Heb 1:1). The Father's beckoning is effective because his grace empowers those who surrender to it to understanding what they hear. Regardless of the manner of God's call, two elements are essential for an effective response: God's grace and the free surrender to it.

**46** *Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father.*

Jesus continues his careful instruction. Less anyone has the mistaken idea that one must hear and learn from the Father through a vision, Jesus adds: We *hear*, but he *sees*. Jesus' knowledge of the Father is *direct* - perfect vision. "No one knows the Father except the Son" (Mt 11:27). Our knowledge of the Father in contrast is *indirect*.

**Jesus Advances His Instruction:**

**47** *Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.*

After quieting their grumbling (6: 43), Jesus calls the Jews to surrender to faith (6: 44-47). Then in verse 48 he will make certain that the crowd understands the precise meaning of his earlier statement, "I am the bread of life" (6:35). He will pronounce specifically what they are to believe by clarifying the meaning of the symbolic language he has employed up to this point. Verse 47, then, marks the division that separates the symbolic from the literal language of John 6.

This division between the symbolism of verses 35-47 and the literalism of verses 48-58 is not arbitrarily forced on the text to fit Catholic theology. Rather, it is evident in the parallel construction of the two passages, as well as in the graphic, literal language used beginning with verse 50.

|   | Symbolic<br>(35-47) | Literal<br>(48-58) |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|
| Declaration that Jesus is the bread from heaven                           | 35                  | 48                 |
| Dispute with the Jews   | 41-42               | 52                 |
| Jesus' rebuke   | 43-46               | 53-57              |
| He who believes & eats has divine life, and is rewarded with eternal life | 47                  | 58                 |

**Invitation to the Eucharist (6:48-58)**

**48** *I am the bread of life.*

This reaffirmation of his earlier declaration (Jn 6:35) is very powerful. The emphasis as before is stressed: "*I myself* am the bread of life." It is followed by the repeated call to eat his flesh in language that is so explicit and graphic that one can only deny its clear meaning by doing violence to the text. Jesus follows the repeated declaration that he is "the bread of life" by making a contrast between manna and "the bread of life".

**49** *Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.*

The conclusion is evident. Everything operates according to its nature. The manna, which was natural food, sustained life for a time but it lacked the potency to give eternal life. In the historical reference to “your fathers,” Jesus reminded the crowd that their earlier resistance to faith imitates the behavior of their ancestors who “murmured in their tents, and did not obey the voice of the Lord” (Ps 105:25; cf. 1 Cor 10:10). Indeed, it was because of their hard heartedness that only Joshua and Caleb of their generation entered the Promised Land. The implication is obvious. If those hearing Jesus refuse to believe, the calamity that will befall them will be far worse than dying in the desert, because supernatural life and death are at stake. So, Jesus continues.

**50** *This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die.*

Jesus has identified himself as “bread of life” (6:35, 48), and “the bread which came down from heaven” (6:41). He now affirms that this incorruptible heavenly bread bestows life-giving properties to those who *eat* it. The introduction of the word “eat” significantly shifts the language of the discourse from the symbolic to the literal.

**51** *I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.”*

In acknowledging for the third time (6:35, 48) that he is the living bread, Jesus also reaffirms his own heavenly origin (Jn 6:38) and his power as the source of supernatural life. The revelation of the Eucharist is breath taking! Jesus is not only the living bread in his divinity, as the Word, but in his *flesh*. It is important to note that Jesus said, “*is* my flesh.” The word “is” does not mean “signifies” my flesh.

The use of the word “flesh,” *sarx* in Greek, beginning in verse 52 and continuing through verse 58 is quite graphic. It means real flesh and is the closest possible Greek rendering of the Aramaic *bisra*, which also designates real flesh. The use of *sarx* aptly captures Jesus’ literal meaning; whereas the more generic word *sōma*, “body,” could be interpreted in a symbolic sense as, for example, in English a *body* of water. John also used the word *sarx* when he wrote, “And the Word became *flesh*” (Jn 1:14) to stress that the Son of God assumed a real human body.

#### *Protestant Objection*

The Protestant apologists *Eric Svendsen* attempts to blunt the connection between John 6 and the words of consecration at the Last Supper by pointing out that *sarx* is used in John 6, but *soma* is used in the Last Supper narratives.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Catholic Response*

Svendsen ignores the fact that the New Testament often uses the words *sarx* and *soma* interchangeably (Rom 7:24-25; 8:13; 1 Cor 6:16; 10:17-18; 2 Cor 4:10-11; Eph 5:28-30; Col 2:23). However, the use of the more graphic *sarx* in Jn 6 clearly stresses that the

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<sup>21</sup> *Evangelical Answers: A Critique of Current Roman Catholic Apologetics*, pp. 247-248.

bread of heaven is literally Jesus' physical body. The use of *soma* at the Last Supper does not negate the same reality because it means "body". *Soma* is simply less graphic than *sarx*. Finally, Mr. Svendsen fails to consider that the words "*and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh*" closely resembles Luke's institution formula: "This is my body, which is given for you" (Lk 22:19).

The Greek word that is used here and earlier in John 6:49 & 50 for "eat" is the verb *phago*. It is a general word for eat. Robert Sungenis points out that it is used 98 times in the New Testament, but "only in one, possible two, instances it is used symbolically, cf., John 4:32-34; 1 Corinthians 10:3, except in the latter case the manna and water were physically eaten and drunk by the Israelites, so that St. Paul may be calling them; spiritual' only because the manna and water were given directly from heaven."<sup>22</sup>

The use of *phago* in verse 49 can only refer to the real physical eating of manna in the desert. Here in verse 51 it is used for eating "the living bread which came down from heaven," which is Jesus' "flesh." Since in its first use in verse 49 *phago* refers to physical eating there is nothing in the text in verse 51, or in any of the earlier verses of this discourse, to suggest that Jesus means a symbolic, but not a real eating. To claim otherwise is reading a meaning in the passage that is not supported by either the text or the context. Certainly, the Jews that heard Jesus' words understood that Jesus meant a real and not symbolic eating as is evident by their hostile reaction.

The use of the future tense, "I shall give," looks both to Jesus' passion and death as well as the celebration of the Eucharist which makes the participant present to the awesome event of Calvary. In the Eucharist Jesus satisfies the inner hunger of starving humanity. Thus, St. Augustine wrote, "Our hearts are made for you, O Lord, and in you only can it find rest."<sup>23</sup>

### **Quarreling**

**52** *The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'how can this man give us his flesh to eat?'*

The Jews clearly understand that Jesus was speaking literally. This is critical to the proper interpretation of the passage, because they spoke the same language and heard his emphasis and saw his expressions. The English words they "disputed among themselves" does not adequately capture the heated reaction of the crowd. The Greek suggests an angry dispute. They erupted in "open contention."<sup>24</sup> How can Jesus' flesh be eaten as food? Humanly speaking this made no sense to the crowd. It sounded like *cannibalism*. Cannibalism, the eating of a human corpse, was completely repugnant to Jews and strictly forbidden (Deut 28:53).

### *Protestant Objection*

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<sup>22</sup> *Not By Bread Alone*, p. 185, note 166.

<sup>23</sup> *Confessions*.

<sup>24</sup> Vincent, *Word Studies of the New Testament*, Vol. II, p. 152.

Lorraine Boettner makes the same argument that the Jews raised and Jesus rejected.<sup>25</sup>

### *Catholic Response*

The Eucharist is truly the substance of Christ's body and blood, soul and divinity - his whole self. However, the flesh the Jews were invited to eat was not Jesus' mortal flesh that was before them and certainly not his corpse - cannibalism, but his glorified flesh. Jesus earlier identified himself as the "living bread" (Jn 6:51). He was speaking literally and sacramentally – a reality that can only be perceived in faith. Nevertheless, Jesus is truly present in that sacramental form. In the Blessed Eucharist we literally eat the flesh of Jesus, but we do not eat it sensibly because we feast on the *substance* of Jesus' glorified body. With our senses we taste and touch the *accidents* (the exterior reality) of bread and wine. Jesus makes it abundantly clear in John 6 that he is revealing a mystery which requires faith not human rationalization.

Their *quarreling* is another indication that they are thinking merely as carnal men (1 Cor 3:3) because they have not surrendered to the gift of faith. Once again the parallel between these Jews and their forefathers in the desert is striking. "The people spoke against God and against Moses, . . . we detest this miserable food" (Num 21:5). There is also an obvious parallel between the earlier eagerness to make Jesus king and the angry response here with the acclamation Jesus received on Palm Sunday and the cries, "Crucify him" on Good Friday.

### **Jesus Addresses Their Objection:**

**53** So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly [Amen, amen], I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you will have no life in you.

Jesus intervenes to stop their quarreling. However, he does not explain away the literalness of his earlier statement in verses 51 and 52. Indeed, quite the opposite is true. Jesus stretches their lagging faith. Instead of giving a symbolic interpretation of his words, Jesus emphatically expands their literalness by emphasizing the reality of eating. In this manner he challenges them to submit their human reason to the demands of faith by raising the ante. In effect he is saying: You think it is impossible and even repulsive to eat my flesh; but I am telling you that it is not only possible but *necessary* if you want to have supernatural life.

Not only does Jesus fail to solve their difficulty with a figurative explanation by repeating the command "eat his flesh," he adds to their lack of comprehension with the graphic expression "and drink his blood." This is particularly forceful in lieu of the absolute Jewish restrictions about eating anything with blood (Gen 9:4; Lev 3:17; 17:10, 14; Deut 12:16, 23; 1 Sam 14:31-33; Acts 15:20). "The Hebrew idiom 'flesh and blood' means the whole man."<sup>26</sup> Jesus' meaning is quite literal.

### *Protestant Objection*

Svendsen rejects the idea that Jn 6 is a reference to the Eucharist with the following argument. "If one insists that John 6 is a reference to the Eucharist, then the inescapable

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<sup>25</sup> *Roman Catholicism*, p. 176.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, *The Gospel of John*, Vol. II, p. 282.

conclusion according to this passage is that anyone who does not partake of the Eucharist does not have eternal life. Christ states unequivocally that ‘unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you’.<sup>27</sup>

### *Catholic Response*

However, Svendsen fails to recognize that Jesus is speaking about those who *deliberately* refuse to obey his teaching (Jn 6:36, 63-66, 70), not those who are ignorant of it. The Catholic Church teaches that God’s mercy even operates beyond his Sacraments, so they do not bind the ignorant.<sup>28</sup>

**54** “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

In addition to the necessity of eating his flesh, Jesus stresses its *usefulness*. He makes two points. First, eating his flesh and drinking his blood produces unending spiritual life. Secondly, Jesus will bring about the bodily resurrection of those who feast on him. “For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor 15:21).

What is particularly striking in verse 54 is the substitution of the Greek word, *phago*, the generic word for “eat” that has been used up to this point with the more graphic word, *trogein* (from the verb *trogo*), which means: “munching,” “chewing,” or “gnawing.” It is the only Greek word used in the New Testament for mastication. This usage heightens the realism of eating Jesus’ flesh and blood. Thus, the literal translation would read: “He who physically eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.” This switch in vocabulary eliminates the possibility of a figurative interpretation. *Trogo* is always used in the literal sense both in the Greek Bible and in all other Greek literature.<sup>29</sup>

Even the Protestant historical-critical scholar, Rudolph Bultmann, recognized the significance of John’s use of *trogo*. He writes: “It is a matter of real eating and not simply of some sort of spiritual participation.”<sup>30</sup>

All the uses of *trogo* in John 6 are present participles, which indicate that the eating must be continual. This usage is in contrast to the aorist indicative of *phago* in verse 58, which describes the eating of the manna as a past discontinued event.

A comparative study of the use of *trogo* in the New Testament expands the rich meaning John is trying to convey. The word is not used to stress the crude sense of chewing or gnawing, but rather to indicate real intimate dining. For example in John 13:18 the word *trogo* is used to emphasize the magnitude of Judas’ betrayal. “He who *ate* [*trogo*] my bread has lifted his heel against me.” The NIV brings out the subtlety of the Greek in its

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<sup>27</sup> *Evangelical Answers*, p. 248.

<sup>28</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 1247.

<sup>29</sup> Walter, Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*; Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*; Brown, *The Gospel of John*, Vol. I, p. 283.

<sup>30</sup> *The Gospel of John*, p. 236.

translation, “He who *shares* my bread has lifted up his heel against me.”<sup>31</sup> Here (6:54) “Jesus is insisting on the genuine value of his flesh and blood as food and drink.”<sup>32</sup>

**55** *For my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed.*”

Having addressed the necessity (6:53) and the usefulness (6:54) of the heavenly food, Jesus now stresses the *truth* of his claim; less anyone mistake his statement in figurative or metaphorical manner. “Indeed” is an inadequate translation of the Greek word *alethos*, which means “truly” or “really.” In conjunction with the preceding verse Jesus is affirming the literal meaning of his words, namely, that his flesh is *real* food and his blood is *read* drink.

**56** *“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”*

Jesus continued his instruction by supporting his claim that the food of his body has the power to give eternal life. In verse 56 Jesus stressed the unity or oneness between himself and those who feast on his flesh. Again Jesus used the graphic verb *trogo*.

The oneness of this eating is *physical* in its *inception* as we take Christ into our bodies, but it is *supernatural* in its *effects* as Jesus absorbs us into his nature. John develops this theme more fully in chapter 15, which will be discussed later.

**57** *“As the living Father sent me [made me incarnate], and I live because of the Father, so he who eats [trogo] me will live because of me.”*

The transforming unity that comes from abiding in Christ (6:56) leads to Jesus’ second point, the eating of his flesh gives eternal life, personally. The individuality of this decision to commune with Jesus is stressed in the Greek text (*akeinos*): “He who eats” affirms, *even that one* “will live because of me.” Jesus receives life from the Father because of their oneness. Similarly, those who are united to Jesus receive eternal life from their unity with him.

**58** *“This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats [trogein] this bread will live forever.”*

Jesus concluded the discourse by summarizing the difference between manna and the living bread of his flesh with the reemphasis that it gives everlasting life. The expression “will live forever” only occurs three times in the Bible, twice in John’s Gospel (6:51, 58) and once in Genesis 3:22. The passage in Genesis refers to the Tree of Life, which gave immortality. However, it will be the bread from heaven, Jesus’ body and blood – the eternal tree of life - that will deliver true immortality.

### *Protestant Objection*

Svendsen attempts to undermine the clear meaning of John 6 by equating “eating” with “believing in” Jesus.<sup>33</sup> The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* takes a similar position. It claims that eating the living bread is a figure of speech meaning “believing in Jesus,” like the figures of coming to him (v. 35), listening to him (v. 45), and seeing him (v. 40).

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<sup>31</sup> *Not By Bread Alone*, p. 184, note 163.

<sup>32</sup> Brown, *The Gospel of John*, Vol. I, p. 283.

<sup>33</sup> *Evangelical Answers*, pp. 244-245.

### *Catholic Response*

These opinions are pure conjecture that have no foundation in the text. Clearly, the explicit use of the graphic language in verses 48-58 effectively refutes their hypothesis. There is, for example, neither a contextual basis nor any etymological support that suggests John 6 uses *phago* in a symbolic sense prior to the crucial verses (6:54-58), much less can a symbolic sense be supported by the more graphic language within those verses, for example, “he who eats (from *trogo*) my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life” (6:54).

**59** *This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.*

This verse concludes the formal discourse. What follows are the repercussion from Jesus’ teaching.

### **Reaction of the Disciples**

**60** *Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, “this is a hard saying: who can listen to it?”*

Up to this point in John’s narrative the focus has been on the crowd, identified as the Jews. Now there occurs a striking shift to an inner group, the *disciples*. Their statement: “this is a hard saying” conveys the ideas that it is *offensive, intolerable, incredible, fantastic* and *impossible*. These disciples are utterly incredulous. Something is hard when it is difficult to penetrate. A truth it is said to be *hard* when its understanding is resisted by the intellect or when its acceptance is resisted the will, that is, when we cannot understand it or when we don’t want to yield to. The mystery of the Eucharist is “hard” in both ways. The statement, “Who can listen to it?” is the rationalization of the unbeliever.

**61** *But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciple murmured at it, said to them, “Do you take offense at this?”*

John’s use of the word “murmured” is a further indication that the disciples lack faith because it reflects the lack of faith of the Jews in the desert. Furthermore, Jesus is fully aware that they are experiencing a crisis. The Greek word that is translated as “take offense” is *skandalizo* from which we get the English word scandalize. It means to be a *stumbling block*, something to trip over. The disciples like the crowds want to understand so they can believe. They understood it backwards. They must believe so they can begin to understand. Jesus’ words were an entrapment to them because their resistance to faith only permitted them to understand the Lord’s statement about eating his flesh and drinking his blood in a *material* way, as if they were called to literally chew his flesh in a cannibalistic manner, just like eating the flesh of an animal.

**62** *“Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?”*

Earlier Jesus announced that he descended from heaven (6: 35, 50). Yet, the multitude refused to believe him in spite of the miracles they witnessed. Would they believe him if they saw Jesus “ascending where he was before?” Jesus did ascend to the Father before witnesses (Acts 1:9). However his crucifixion remained a “stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles” (1 Cor 1:23) in spite of his Resurrection and Ascension.

**63** “It is the spirit that give life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

Jesus explained the spiritual source needed to accept his words by contrasting it with the merely material understanding of his faithless disciples. Miracles are signs, but even these wonders do not make a person believe. “It is the spirit that gives life,” that is, they can only understand spiritual realities by the power of the Spirit, because the Spirit is the source of that life by which one understands through the insight of faith. Believing Jesus’ words is reasonable, but it is never reasoned. Jesus used a similar expression later in John’s gospel to show the unreliability of unaided human judgment: “You judge according to the flesh” (Jn 8:15-16). Similarly, Jesus instructed Nicodemus: “No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn 3:5). St. Paul stated the same truth when he affirmed: “It is the Spirit who tells mysteries” (1 Cor 14:2).

Thus Jesus adds: “the flesh,” that is, unaided human capabilities, “is of no avail.” Merely human thinking, just like merely human activity, is profitless in eternity. As St. Paul says: “If you live according to the flesh you will die” (Rom 8:13). In contrast Jesus concludes, “the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” The utterances of the Divine Word are creative. Jesus always effects what he speaks.

#### *Protestant Objections Based on Jn 6:63*

Some Protestant commentators have seized this verse to reject the literal meaning of Jesus’ words in John 6.

1. *Geisler and MacKenzie* claim: “Jesus rebuked their [literal] understanding, at least implicitly, when he said later in the same discourse, ‘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 6:63). To borrow a phrase from Paul, Jesus’ words are to be ‘judged spiritually’ (1 Cor 2:14; cf. Matt 16:17), not in a gross physical sense.”<sup>34</sup>

#### *Catholic Response*

These Protestant apologists fall into the trap of equating spirit or spiritual with symbolic. In the Bible the word Spirit (*pneuma*) is contrasted to what is corporeal or material. For example: “God is spirit” (Jn 4:24), and “Are not all angels spirits” (Heb 1:14). There is not one example in the Bible where the word spirit means metaphorical or symbolic. Geisler and MacKenzie read a meaning into John 6 that the text does not support. In Sacred Scripture what is spirit or spiritual is considered more real than mere material reality.

Furthermore, these apologists misrepresent 1 Cor 2:14. Paul does not use the expression “judged spiritually” to distinguish literal interpretations from symbolic. Rather, he contrasts the spiritual man filled with the Holy Spirit, the man of dynamic faith, who understands God’s generous gifts with the merely natural unspiritual man who does not receive nor understand God’s gifts.

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<sup>34</sup> *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, p. 262.

2. *William D. Webster* alleges: “This discourse could not refer to the Lord’s Supper for Christ had not instituted that ordinance at the time he gave this teaching. He is not here speaking of the eucharist, but of his sacrifice on Calvary.”<sup>35</sup>

*Catholic Response*

Upon reading this passage my 15 year-old daughter immediately perceived the fallacy of Webster’s logic. If Jesus could not have referred to the Lord’s Supper because it had not yet occurred, neither could he have referred to Calvary because it also had not yet occurred.

3. *Zwingli* argued in his debate against Luther that Jesus’ words, “the flesh is of no avail,” refers to Jesus’ flesh. In this way, it is claimed, Jesus attempted to clarify their misunderstanding the disciples who were taking him literally.

*Catholic Response*

Jesus could not speak about his flesh being of no avail because his body was hypostatically united to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Such an interpretation clearly contradicts Heb 10:10, which affirms: “And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the *body* [*somatos* from *soma*] of Jesus Christ once for all.” If Jesus’ flesh is of no avail, his suffering on Calvary would be meaningless. Jesus makes the point in Jn 6:63 that natural human judgment, unaided by God’s grace, is unreliable. In other words *our* flesh, unaided human nature, is of no avail. Jesus makes a similar statement to the Pharisees: “You judge according to the flesh (*sarx*), I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone that judge but I and he who sent me” (Jn 8:15-16).

**64** “*But there are some of you who do not believe.*”

Having prepared the disciples to be open to God’s grace, Jesus went to the heart of the issue. He explains why they do not understand. Their crisis is caused by their *unbelief*, not the *hardness* of what Jesus has said. Then John inserts a clarification:

*For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that should betray him.*

John provides two poignant lessons. First, Jesus was both in control of the situation and fully aware of what his disciples were saying and thinking. Jesus knew the human heart. As John clarified in Chapter 2: “but Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man” (Jn 2:24-25). Secondly, John reveals the stumbling block that led to Judas’ betrayal, namely, his rejection of the Eucharist! That is a sobering thought.

**65** *And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”*

Jesus now emphasizes the real cause of their unbelief, which is their lack of submission to God’s grace. We can’t come to Jesus either in faith or in the Eucharist unless God

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<sup>35</sup> *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, p. 130.

grants that grace, and unless we surrender to it. To receive that gift of faith one need only ask; but how did these doubting disciples respond?

**66** *After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him.*

This is a sad, tragic example of human stubbornness in resisting grace. This is the only instance in the New Testament where disciples break with Jesus over a doctrinal issue. John's words heighten this frightful reality. He didn't say the disciples simply *left* Jesus, but rather that they "*drew back*," that is, turned their backs against him.

It is noteworthy that Jesus doesn't call his disciples back by explaining away their difficulty with a symbolic explanation of eating his flesh and drinking his blood. It is unmistakable that he meant exactly what he said. Mysteries can only be accepted through faith. Thus, Jesus sadly let them go without another word. He respected the freedom the Father gave them.

There are two examples in the New Testament when Jesus speaks about food in a figurative way and the disciples mistakenly take him literally. However, in each instance Jesus makes it very clear that he is speaking metaphorically by clarifying his true meaning. Jesus does not do that in John 6 because he intended his words to be understood literally. In *Mt 16:5-12* Jesus warns about the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. When the disciples misunderstood his meaning Jesus responded: "How is it that you fail to perceive that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (*Mt 16:11-12*). In *Jn 4:31-34* the disciples were confused when Jesus said "I have food to eat of which you do not know" (*Jn 4:31*). However, Jesus made his meaning clear when he subsequently informed them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me" (*Jn 4:34*).

#### *Protestant Objection*

Robert Zins attempts to deflect the significance that Jesus did not explain to his disciples he was speaking symbolically when he writes: "We are reminded that when our Lord said, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,' (John 2:19) the Jews were quite sure that He was referring to the Temple and took Him quite literally and were disgusted! To our knowledge, the Lord did not correct their crass literalism. Those who thought Jesus was teaching a physical eating of Him were missing the entire point!"<sup>36</sup>

#### *Catholic Response*

Although Mr. Zins' expression "crass literalism" is cited in his interpretation of Jn 2:19 it is obviously aimed at the "physical eating" of the following sentence. What Zins fails to point out are the significant differences between the disciples understanding in Jn 6, the misunderstanding of Jesus' symbolic use of food in *Mt 16:5-12* and *Jn 4:31-34*, and the passage he cites (*Jn 2:19*). In *Jn 2:19* Jesus is speaking literally not symbolically. His body is a temple, indeed *the* Temple. "After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. They believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken" (*Jn 2:22*). Jesus' real body, the true Temple, rose from the dead not a symbolic

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<sup>36</sup> *Romanism*, p. 118.

body. Furthermore, in Jn 6, Mt 16:5-12 and Jn 4:31-34 Jesus was instructing disciples who were disposed to believe him. Even in Jn 6:66 John provides the information that “*many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him,*” but not all. However, in Jn 2:22 Jesus was confronted by disbelieving Jews who were angry because he drove the moneychangers and the animals out of the temple. They were not disposed to listen to Jesus’ clarification of their misinterpretation of his meaning in contrast to the disciples who did understand the meaning of his words after the Resurrection.

### **Reaction of the Apostles**

After exploring the hostility of the crowd and the abandonment of the disciples, the focus shifts to the apostles.

*67 Jesus said to the twelve, “will you also go away?”*

One can almost hear the profound hurt in his voice as Jesus examined his apostles. Jesus gives no explanation or defense of his graphic statement that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood.

*68 Simon Peter answered him “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life;”*

Peter speaks for the twelve. His trusting response shows his loyalty, which is a model of how all should respond to Jesus’ teaching. He acclaimed Jesus’ greatness in proclaiming him “Lord.” He acknowledged their dependence on Jesus with the words, “to whom shall we go.” Lastly, Peter declared their surrender to Jesus’ teaching by saying, “you have the words of eternal life.” Peter echoes Jesus’ instruction in Chapter 3 when Jesus announced, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life” (Jn 3:36), which is also reflected in Jesus’ lesson to the crowd in verse 47: “He who believes has eternal life.”

*69 “and we have believed, and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.”*

Peter concluded his wonderful response by collectively professing the faith of the apostles. The crowd and the unfaithful disciples wanted to understand so they could believe. They had it backwards. The apostles believed then they began to understand.

*70 Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil (cf. v. 64)?”*

In his greathearted response, Peter proclaimed, “we have believed” speaking for all the apostles. However, Jesus, who knew the secrets of hearts, gave an ominous clarification: “one of you is a devil.”

*71 He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was to betray him.*

John identifies Judas to eliminate any uncertainty about Jesus’ meaning. At the Last Supper John provides the information that “Satan entered into” Judas (Jn 13:27). Judas had become a tool of the devil. When Judas “went out” from Christ On Holy Thursday, it was indeed “night” (Jn 13: 30). There is no doubt that John connects Judas’ betrayal of Jesus with his rejection of Jesus’ instruction on the Eucharist.

### **Additional Objections to the Catholic Interpretation of John 6**

### 1. *It's Impossible*

Loraine Boettner claims: "It is impossible that the attributes or sensible properties of bread and wine should remain if the substance has changed"<sup>37</sup> A similar argument is made by those who claim it is impossible that Jesus is simultaneously physically present in thousands of hosts while also in heaven.

#### *Catholic Response*

It is frivolous to limit the things God can do by human understanding or belief. What is impossible to man is easily possible to God. He just says it, and it happens. To the unbeliever, the Catholic teaching that there is one God who has three divine Persons also appears impossible. Indeed, it also seems impossible that God could die on a cross. How is it possible that Jesus could have two complete natures, one divine and the other human? How is it possible that the eternal Son of God could be in heaven and also hanging on a cross. These are mysteries, not impossibilities.

### 2. *Argument from the "I am" Statements*

Mr. Boettner claims that Jesus is speaking figuratively when he says, "I am the bread" (Jn 6:35), just as he is speaking metaphorically when he says: "I am the gate - other translations have "door" (Jn 10:7, 9), or "I am the vine" (Jn 15:1, 5)."<sup>38</sup>

*Geisler and MacKenzie* make a similar objection. "He [Jesus] said, 'I am the door'... and 'I am the vine,' .. and Roman Catholic scholars do not take these statements literally, even though they come from the same book that records 'This is my Body'! It is therefore, not necessary to take Jesus literally when he said 'this is my body' or 'eat my flesh.' Jesus often spoke in graphic parables and figures, as he himself said (Matt 13:10-11). As we shall see, these can be understood from the context."<sup>39</sup>

#### *Catholic Response*

The above Protestant apologists make reference to the "I am" saying in John's Gospel listed below.

#### **"I am sayings"**

1. bread of life - Jn 6:35, 51
2. light of the world - Jn 8:12; 9:5
3. gate to the sheep - Jn 10:7, 9
4. good shepherd - Jn 10:11, 14
5. resurrection and the life - Jn 11:25
6. way, truth, and the life - Jn 14:6
7. true vine - Jn 15:1, 5

<sup>37</sup> *Roman Catholicism*, p. 178.

<sup>38</sup> *Roman Catholicism*, p. 177.

<sup>39</sup> *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, p. 262.

When Biblical passages are torn from their context they can deliver bizarre interpretations, for example, in Matthew 27:5 we are informed that Judas “hanged himself,” and in Luke 10:37 Jesus commands: “Go and do likewise.” These quotations are accurate, but pasting them together in this manner is ridiculous.

Jesus didn’t say, as Boettner claims, I am bread, but “*I am the bread of life*” (Jn 6:35), which employs symbolic language. However, Jesus explained the meaning of that figure of speech when he said, “I am the living bread... and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my *flesh*” (6:51), which is literally true, just as it is literally true when Jesus says, “*I am the resurrection and life*” (Jn 11:25). Passages must be interpreted in their context. The shift to the literal language of John 6:48-58 makes it is clear that Jesus is speaking about his real flesh and blood, which is exactly how Jesus’ audience understood him. Not only did Jesus not correct their understanding, but he also permitted disciples to abandon him because they correctly understood and rejected his literal meaning.

When Jesus said “I am the door or gate” it was clear from the context that he was speaking metaphorically. Thus, no one questioned him by saying: “How can he be a door? Does he think he is made of wood?”

The argument offered by Geisler and MacKenzie that one should give a symbolic meaning to the literal passages of John 6 because Jesus “often spoke in graphic parables and figures” is a fatally flawed principle of hermeneutics. What is to prevent interpreters for using this same ill-conceived argument to give a symbolic and not a literal meaning to the raising of Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11:38-44) and Jesus’ own Resurrection (Jn 20:1-29)? Ultimately, this approach to Biblical interpretation undermines the reliability of the Bible.

### 3. *Empirical Argument*

*James McCarthy* is a former Catholic who now operates a ministry to “save” Catholics. He makes the following statement: “there is not even the slightest indication that either the bread or the wine changes at the Last Supper. The same is true at the Mass today. The bread and wine before and after the consecration look exactly alike. Furthermore, they smell, taste, and feel the same. In fact, all empirical evidence supports the interpretation that they do not change at all.”<sup>40</sup>

*Geisler and MacKenzie* state: “Philosophically, it [transubstantiation] is an empirically unknowable event in the empirical world, and theologically, it is a matter of pure faith. Catholics must simply believe what the teaching magisterium tells them, namely, that the host is really Jesus’ body, even though their senses tell them otherwise.... When God himself appears in a finite form it is an obvious miraculous appearance that one knows clearly is not a normal event. That is, there are supernatural manifestations, voices, prophecies, or unusual events of nature connected with it (cf. Exod. 3:1-6). The Mass has no such events associated with it. Indeed, nowhere in the New Testament are the normal words for miracle (sign, wonder, power) used of the communion. There is absolutely no

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<sup>40</sup> *The Gospel According to Rome*, p. 133.

evidence that it is anything but a natural event with natural elements on which Christ places special spiritual blessings (and/or presence) as we “remember” his death (1 Cor11:25).”<sup>41</sup>

### *Catholic Response*

The facts that McCarthy presents are true. However, his conclusion is utterly false. Faith does not depend on “empirical evidence.” Indeed, the supernatural virtue of faith illuminates truths that are by their very nature beyond empirical evidence. Where is the empirical evidence supporting the Virgin Birth, angels, the existence of the Holy Spirit, heaven and hell? What is the empirical evidence that God is a Trinity of Persons or that Jesus is God? What is the empirical evidences that Jesus actually forgave sins? Indeed, what is the empirical evidence that sin even exists? The empirical argument made by McCarthy, Geisler and MacKenzie to reject the Eucharist can be used to reject the entire Christian faith. Geisler and MacKenzie are correct in this respect; belief in the Eucharist is indeed “a matter of pure faith.”

It is also true that the infallible teaching of the magisterium gives Catholics certain knowledge of the truths of the Christian faith, for example, the canon of the Bible, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, justification, the inspiration of Scripture, and the Blessed Trinity.

Furthermore, the argument that transubstantiation is impossible because it is beyond the grasp of our senses or even contradicts the experience of our senses is foolish, because it confines what is possible to the limitations of human experience. The god that can fit into human experience is no god at all!

Lastly, it is not true as Geisler and MacKenzie claim that “when God himself appears in a finite form it is an obvious miraculous appearance that one knows clearly is not a normal event.” It was obvious to everyone that Jesus was fully human. It was not observable that Jesus was God.

4. *William Barkley* begins his discussion of Jn 6:51-59 by saying, “To most of us this is a very difficult passage. It speaks in language and moves in a world of ideas which are quite strange to us and which may seem even fantastic and grotesque.”<sup>42</sup> He then gives a superficial treatment of ancient animal sacrifices and Mystery Religions.<sup>43</sup> This introduction prepares the reader to accept the following conclusion:

“We must remember that those ancient people know all about the striving, the longing, the dreaming for identity with their god and for the bliss of taking him into themselves. They would not read phrases like eating Christ’s body and drinking his blood with crude and shocked literalism. They would know something of that ineffable experience of

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<sup>41</sup> *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, pp. 265-266.

<sup>42</sup> *Gospel of John*, Vol. I, p. 221.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 221-222.

union, closer than any earthly union, of which these words speak. This is language that the ancient world could understand - and so can we”<sup>44</sup>

#### *Catholic Response*

Mr. Barkley does not identify “those ancient people,” and he makes statements that are unsupported by any data. Furthermore, his claim that “ancient people ... would not read phrases like eating Christ’s body and drinking his blood with crude and shocked literalism conflicts directly with the text of John 6, which affirms that Jesus’ listeners did understand his words in a literal sense. Yet, they understood the subtleties of the language Jesus spoke, had the advantages of hearing his inflections of emphasis and seeing his facial expressions. Barkley simply dismisses the literal interpretation of Jesus’ words without even investigating the text. These unfounded claims are designed to prepare the reader for what Mr. Barkley alleges next.

“It may be well that we should remember that here John is doing what he so often does. *He is not giving, or trying to give, the actual words of Jesus.* He has been thinking for seventy years of what Jesus said; and now, led by the Holy Spirit, he is giving the *inner significance* of his words. It is not the words that he reports; that would merely have been a feat of memory. *It is the essential meaning of the words; that is the guidance of the Holy Spirit.*

#### *Catholic Response*

Here again Mr. Barkley makes unsubstantiated claims. Where does the Bible claim that John “*is not giving, or trying to give, the actual words of Jesus?* Where does the Bible teach that the Holy Spirit is only “*giving the inner significance of his words?*” Where does the Bible affirm that only *the essential meaning of the words; that is the guidance of the Holy Spirit?* In an effort to undermine the clear meaning of Sacred Scripture, Barkley dilutes the historicity and inspiration John’s Gospel. This is the evil fruit of *sola scriptura*.

#### **Summary**

The overwhelming evidence based on the explicit language of verses 48, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58 and the graphic vocabulary for flesh (*sarx*) and the substitution of *trogo* for *phago* (eat) leads to the certain conclusion that Jesus meant exactly what his words said. This conclusion is also supported by the understanding of those who heard Jesus. The revelation of the Eucharist is the only doctrinal issue over which disciples broke with Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus not only doesn’t ease their difficulty with a symbolic explanation. Finally, the rejection of the Eucharist is connected with satanic influences and Judas’ betrayal (6: 64, 70-71).

There is one final argument that refutes figurative interpretations of John 6:48-58. If one claims that Jesus is using symbolic language in these critical verses, they obviously must be interpreted according to the idiomatic usage of these expressions found in the Bible. Does the Bible ever use the words “eat the flesh” or “drink the blood” in a symbolic way? Yes it does. However, in every metaphorical use these words have the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 222-223.

meaning “persecute,” “slaughter,” “murder,” “do violence,” or “assault.” Raymond Brown points out that in the Aramaic tradition transmitted through Syriac, the “eater of flesh” was the title of the devil.”<sup>45</sup> Below are examples of the Bible’s symbolic use of *eat the flesh* and *drink the blood*.

#### **Eat the Flesh:**

*Ps 27:2* “When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes came upon me to *eat my flesh*, they stumbled and fell” (KJV).

*Zech 11:9* “and let those that are left *devour the flesh* of one another.”

*Micah 3:3* “[the unjust leaders of Israel] who eat the flesh of my people.”

*Job 19:22* “Why do you, like God, pursue me? Why are you not *satisfied with my flesh?*”

*Ecc 4:5* “The fool folds his hands, and *eats his own flesh.*”

*Is 9:20* “each *devours his neighbor’s flesh.*”

*Rev 17:16* “they will make her desolate and naked, and *devour her flesh* and burn her up with fire”

#### **Drink the Blood:**

*Jer 46:10* “The sword shall devour and be sated and *drink its fill of their blood.*”

*2 Sam 23:17* “Shall I *drink the blood* of the men who went at the risk of their lives?”

*Rev 16:6* “For men have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them *blood to drink.*”

*Rev 17:6* “And I saw the women, *drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs* of Jesus.”

#### **Eat the Flesh and Drink the Blood:**

*Is 49:26* “I will make your *oppressors eat their own flesh*, and they shall be *drunk with their own blood* as with wine.”

*Ez 39:17-18* “Assemble and come, gather from all sides to the sacrificial feast which I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast upon the mountains of Israel, and you shall *eat flesh* and *drink blood*. You shall *eat the flesh* of the mighty, and *drink the blood* of the princes of the earth.”

Therefore, if one maintains that Jesus is using figurative language, for example, in John 6:53 it must be interpreted to capture the symbolic Biblical use of the words *eat the flesh* and *drink the blood*. Thus Jesus is saying: “Very truly, I tell you, unless you persecute (eat my flesh) the son of man and attack (drink my blood) him, you have no life in you.” This is nonsense!

## **TRANSUBSTANTIATION**

The word “transubstantiation” is the theological term invented to explain the mystery that takes place at the words of the consecration. It is a compound of two Latin words: *trans*, which means “change,” and *substantia*, which means “substance.” Therefore the word means “a change of substance.” The *substance* of a thing refers to its inner nature, that which gives its uniqueness. The *accidents* of a thing refers to those external qualities that

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<sup>45</sup> *The Gospel of John*, Vol. I, p. 284.

are subject to the senses. Consider water. Water's substance remains unchanged even when its accidents are greatly altered. In its liquid form it is identified as water. As a gas it is identified as steam. As a solid it is identified as ice. Yet, because the substance remains unchanged, steam and ice are just water. In the miracle of transubstantiation the substance of bread, which we can call *breadness*, changes into the substance of the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus. However, the accidents, the appearance of bread and wine, those things that can be tasted, touched smelled, all remain the same.

Although the term transubstantiation was codified at the Council of Trent in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to explain the change that takes place at the moment of the consecration, the use of the word in Catholic theology has a much earlier history. It was first used by Hildebert of Tours (c. 1079). Pope Innocent III used the word in 1202, which led to its use at two ecumenical councils: Fourth Lateran (1215) and Lyons (1274). In the East it was preceded by the Greek term *metaousios*, which means, "change of substance."<sup>46</sup>

## REFLECTION

Up to this point the focus of this essay has centered on the reality of Jesus' real physical presence in the Eucharist. However, there is another important dimension of this mystery that needs to be explored. Covenant is the great theme that runs through the entire Bible. Scripture describes the covenant in terms of *family bond* and *marriage*. The covenant is that marvelous expression of God's love by which he makes us his family.

The Book of Hosea depicts the troubled relationship of the prophet and his unfaithful wife Gomer. Hosea uses his marital trials to symbolize the broken wedded relationship of Yahweh with his people. Just as Gomer rejects Hosea's love so did Israel abandon the Lord. However, God remained faithful because his love is everlasting. The Assyrians will chastise Israel, but the Heavenly Bridegroom will seek her out.

John the Baptist identifies Jesus in as the bridegroom (Jn 3:29). When instructing husbands to love their wives, Paul used the love of the heavenly bridegroom for the Church as their model: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and *gave himself up for her*" (Eph 5:25). The sacrificial language Paul used, "gave himself up for her," is significant.

There are three Greek words for love. *Eros*, which is never used in the Bible, means physical and emotional attraction. It feels like love, but *eros* lacks the essential two qualities that meet the standard for genuine love. *Eros* is the fool's gold of love, which explains why so many marriages self-destruct. They were built on *eros*. *Phileo*, the second Greek word for love is the authentic article because it does encompass the vital elements of self-sacrifice and commitment. The highest form of love is *agapao* in Greek. The difference between *phileo* and *agapao* is significant because *agapao* embraces total self-sacrifice and total commitment. Jesus loves with the love of *agapao*. Husbands are called to love with the same kind of love, total self-giving and total commitment.

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<sup>46</sup> *Not By Bread Alone*, p. 141, note 120.

Married couples physically express this committed self-donation in that beautiful act by which they become one flesh (Gen 2:24). In the intimacy of sexual intercourse, spouses' communion themselves as they dispose themselves to cooperate with God in the creation of human life. In their openness to life in the gift of themselves, married couples mirror both the infinite self-donating committed love of the Blessed Trinity, and the total self-sacrifice of Jesus for the Church.

John develops the motif of Christ's marital relationship with his bride, the Church, in the opening word of the Book of Revelation, *apokalupsis*, which means, "revealing" or "unveiling." The *apokalupsis* or unveiling referred to the consummation of Jewish wedding. On the seventh and last day of the wedding feast the bride and groom would be carried by the guests as a king and queen to the wedding chamber. The guests would respectfully withdraw. Curtains would be drawn and doors would be closed. Then the unveiling would take place – and the two would become one flesh.

John skillfully opens the Book of Revelation with this imagery as a subtle way of preparing the reader for the climactic event of the Apocalypse, the wedding feast of the Lamb, which describes Jesus' eternal marriage banquet with the Church. What, then, is the consummation rite of the divine bridegroom with his bride by which we become one flesh with Christ? It is Communion, the reception of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist we receive Jesus into our bodies under the appearance of bread and wine, but he transforms us into himself.

This is the significance of the "abide" language in Jn 6:56: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood *abides* in me, and I in him." The transforming power of the Eucharist is developed in John chapter 15 where Jesus uses the language of lovers. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (Jn 15:1-2). Jesus draws on the metaphor of a vineyard, which the Old Testament frequently used as a symbol of the Hebrew people.<sup>47</sup> The fifth chapter of Isaiah opens with the poignant Song of the Vineyard (Is 5:1-7): "Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard" (Is 5:1). Subsequently, Isaiah foresaw the messianic restoration when God's chosen people would bud forth in fruitfulness: "In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots, and fill the whole world with fruit" (Is 27:6).

The "abide" language of Jn 6:56 becomes the center piece of Jn 15:4-10 where the word is used 10 times:

*Abide* in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it *abide* in the vine, neither can you, unless you *abide* in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who *abides* in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not *abide* in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you *abide* in me, and my words *abide* in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to

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<sup>47</sup> Is 5:1-7; 27; 2-6; Ps 80; Hos 10:1; 14:7; Jer 2:21; 6:9; Ezek 15:1-6; 17:5-10; 19:10-14.

be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; *abide* in my love. If you keep my commandment, you will *abide* in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and *abide* in his love."

It is in the Eucharist that Jesus most perfectly "abides" in us and we in him. The Eucharistic dimension of John 15 is also evident when this passage is compared to John 6.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Jn 15:1</i><br>"I am the true vine."   | <i>Jn 6:51</i><br>"I am the living bread."   |
| <i>Jn 15:5</i><br>"He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me" you can do nothing." | <i>Jn 6:56-57</i><br>"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him... so he who eats me will live because of me." |
| <i>Jn 15:13</i><br>"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."                         | <i>Jn 6:51</i><br>"and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."  |

Jesus concludes the metaphor of the vine and the branches with the demand: "This I command you, to love one another" (Jn 15:17). It is common today to hear love portrayed with words aglow with romanticism and passion. However, the essential component of sacrifice is often overlooked. Yet, the sacrificial element of love is developed in both Jn 6 and Jn 15 because sacrifice reveals the transforming power of the Eucharist in our lives.

Jesus forewarned: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you... A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you" (Jn 15:18, 20). After Paul encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, Jesus sent Ananias to Paul. Ananias was reluctant. He said: "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to thy saints at Jerusalem" (Acts 9:13). Jesus replied to Ananias: "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). It's a breathtaking blessing to be God's "chosen instrument!" Indeed, it is the awesome calling of every Christian, although the specific work to which each is called differs. However, what is often overlooked is the last part of verse 15: "for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" (Acts 9:15).

Paul understood the connection between the Christian vocation and sacrifice. He began the chapter in his letter to the Ephesians where he instructs husbands to love their wives with the following instruction: "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live to love, as Christ loved us and *gave himself up for us*, a fragrant *offering* and *sacrifice* to God" (Eph 5:1-2). In his letter to the Galatians he wrote: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

The completion of the Christian journey at the marriage feast of the Lamb in paradise always passes through Calvary. Before we can fully become like our glorified Lord, we must first image our crucified Lord. Thus, Paul would write: “But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal 6:14). In uniting us to himself, Jesus also unites us to his passion, so we can surrender to the trials and difficulties in our lives. In the abiding presence of Jesus in the Eucharist we are transformed to become eucharist. This powerful transforming reality was well understood in the early Church.

On his journey to his death in arena at Rome Ignatius of Antioch pleaded with the Christians in Rome: “do not be ‘unseasonably kind’ to me”<sup>48</sup> His great fear is that they might prevent his martyrdom. “Let me be food for the wild beasts, through whom I can reach God. I am God’s *wheat*, and I am being ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I might prove to be *pure bread*... Pray to the Lord on my behalf, that through these instruments [the teeth of the beasts] I might prove to be *a sacrifice to God*.”<sup>49</sup> The connection is even more stunning in the description of Polycarp’s martyrdom.

When he was commanded by the magistrate to revile Christ, Polycarp replied: “For eighty-six years I have been his servant, and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?”<sup>50</sup> When the threat of wild beasts failed to move the martyr the proconsul determined to have Polycarp burned at the stake. The eyewitness account of his noble death describes his martyrdom as a eucharistic sacrifice. After Polycarp’s clothes were removed he was bound to the stake. His appearance was “like a splendid *ram* chosen from a great flock for a *sacrifice*, a *burnt offering* prepared and acceptable to God.”<sup>51</sup> Then Polycarp offered a prayer that mirrors the Eucharistic prayers used at Mass. He said in part: “I bless you because you have considered me worthy of this day and hour, that I might receive a place among the number of the martyrs in the *cup of your Christ*, to the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and of body, in the incorruptibility of the Holy Spirit. May I be receiver among them in your presence today, as a rich and acceptable *sacrifice*, as you have prepared and revealed beforehand, and have now accomplished, you who are the undeceiving and true God.”<sup>52</sup>

When he ended his prayer with the “Amen” the fire was lit. “And as a mighty flame blazed up, we saw a miracle (we, that is, to whom it was given to see), and we have been preserved in order that we might tell the rest what happened. For the fire, taking the shape of a arch, like the sail of a ship filled by the wind, completely surrounded the body of the martyr; and it was there in the middle, not like flesh burning but *like bread baking* or like gold and silver being refined in a furnace. For we also perceived a very fragrant odor, as if it were the scent of incense or some other precious spice.”

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<sup>48</sup> “Letter to Rome,” *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 103.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> “The Martyrdom of Polycarp,” *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 139.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

Most of us will not receive the blessing to lay down our life for Christ. However, in the daily struggle against selfishness and disordered passions, which impedes our ability to surrender to God and love others, we experience a martyrdom of a bloodless kind. Thus St. Paul wrote: “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal 5:24). This statement concludes Paul’s contrast of the “works of the flesh” and “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:19-23).

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| <p><i>Works of the flesh</i><br/>Gal 5:19-21<br/>“immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like”</p> | <p><i>Fruit of the Spirit</i><br/>Gal 5:22-23<br/>“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”</p> |
| <p>Paul is explicit: those who live by the works of the flesh “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:21).</p>   |  |

Where do we receive the capability to daily take up our cross and follow Christ (Lk 9:23; 14:27; Mt 10:38; 16:24; Mk 8:34; 10:21)? It is found in the reception of the Eucharist where Jesus transforms us into himself. God’s love for us is so great that he hid his divinity to redeem us. The marvel is that in the Eucharist his love abounds so wonderfully that he hides both his divinity and his humanity in order to become physical one with us. In receiving Christ we are changed and become eucharist. May we all surrender to Christ so profoundly that we can each truly say with St. Paul: “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21).

### THE INSTITUTION NARRATIVES

**Mt 26:26-28**

“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

**Mk 14:22-24**

“And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many’.”

**Lk 22:19-20**

“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’.”

**1 Cor 11:23-26**

“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, ‘this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me’.”

A recent President of the United States incurred a great deal of notoriety for his failed attempt to parse away the literal meaning of the verb *is*. With the introduction of Luther’s principle of individual interpretation of the Bible in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, called *sola scriptura*, passages of Scripture were subjected to outlandish interpretations that bore little relationship to the sacred text and the Christian faith that had been faithfully passed on for 1,500 years. One example of the confusion that followed is evidenced in Christopher Rasperger’s work published in 1577, *200 Interpretations of the Words: This is My Body*.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising to find that some contemporary Protestant apologists strive to explain away the clear meaning of the institution narratives.

#### *Protestant Objection*

1. Robert Zins makes the following claims: “In the first place, the word ‘is’ would do too much if it did what the Catholics think it must do for them. This *is My Body* would have to make the bread the actual body of Jesus and it would no longer have the properties of bread. I would be his body. The Romanist skirts this issue by saying the bread is Christ in its essence but retains the characteristics of bread in its outward appearance. We ask how any serious Greek exegete can swallow this use of the Greek *estin* (is)! Where is the Greek language ever used in this manner?”<sup>54</sup>

#### *Catholic Response*

There are several flaws to Mr. Zins’ reasoning. First, Catholic exegetes do not claim that the Greek word *estin* (is) provides a Biblical definition for transubstantiation. However, when Jesus holds bread in his hands and then says in relationship to what is in his hands: “This is my body,” Christians should accept the clear meaning of his words. What was bread is now his body. Transubstantiation is merely the apt theological term formulated to explain this marvelous change that takes place. This is precisely Zins’ real objection, he claims the words, “this is my body,” are too literal and he refuses to accept the miracle. Therefore he reinterprets the words of Jesus in the following manner: “This [bread] is [symbolizes] my body.”

Zins, like all those who reject the words of institution, are faced with the undeniable reality that five inspired writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul used words that can only mean the bread has changed into the body of Christ. Not one of these inspired authors employed symbolic language. Therefore those who deny the real physical presence of Jesus after the words of consecration need to substantiate their claim based on the inspired text. However, when the inspired Greek words are analyzed the Catholic understanding is reinforced and the Protestant symbolism crumbles. There is no

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<sup>53</sup> *Not By Bread Alone*, p. 146, note 122.

<sup>54</sup> *Romanism*, pp. 124-125.

linguistic basis for claiming that “is” in the institution narratives means “symbolizes” or that “this” refers to the bread.

Matthew, Mark and Luke use exactly the same Greek words for “This is my body”.

|              |              |            |             |              |
|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| <i>Touto</i> | <i>estin</i> | <i>to</i>  | <i>soma</i> | <i>mou</i>   |
| <i>This</i>  | <i>is</i>    | <i>the</i> | <i>body</i> | <i>of me</i> |
| neuter       |              |            | neuter      |              |

When the text is examined in relationship to Greek grammar employed in the passage, the meaning becomes very clear. *Touto* (this) is a neuter demonstrative adjective. It can't refer to bread, which is a masculine noun. Instead, it clearly refers to *soma* (body), which is a nominative neuter noun. Therefore the only possible translation in English is: “This [substance] is my body.”

Paul uses somewhat different Greek words:

|              |              |              |            |             |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| <i>Touto</i> | <i>mou</i>   | <i>estin</i> | <i>to</i>  | <i>soma</i> |
| <i>This</i>  | <i>of me</i> | <i>is</i>    | <i>the</i> | <i>body</i> |

Once again, however, the meaning is very clear. Paul's positioning of *mou* (of me) strengthens the meaning of *touto* (this). The text is so clear that Jesus is speaking about his body that it is so reflected in most English translations.<sup>55</sup>

2. Mr. Zins offers another objection. “Secondly, the word ‘is’ is used by Jesus to define the New Covenant in His blood. ‘This cup [is] (*estin* supplied) the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you’ (Luke 19:20),<sup>56</sup> No one in the Romanist community wants to say the cup is actually the New Covenant. Obviously it is a figure for the New Covenant. Likewise, Paul in 1 Corinthians says, ‘This cup is the new testament in my blood’ (1 Corinthians 11:25). Here, too, the ‘is’ *estin* is used in a figure representing the spiritual truth of a New Covenant having been inaugurated.”<sup>57</sup>

### *Catholic Response*

Mr. Zins misrepresents the figure of speech used in these passages by shifting the emphasis from “cup” to “is” (*estin*), which is lacking in the Greek text of both passages. Both Luke and Paul employed a figure of speech called synecdoche. Synecdoche is the metaphorical substitution of a part for the whole (*hand* for *sailor*), the whole for a part (the *law* for *policeman*), the specific for the general (*cutthroat* for *assassin*), the general for the specific (*thief* for *pickpocket*), or the material for the thing made from it (*steel* for *sword*).

Synecdoche is used in other New Testament passages with the word *cup*. For example in Mt: 20:22-23 Jesus used the word “cup” in his discussion with the mother and the sons of Zebedee to refer to his suffering. Subsequently, Matthew used the word “cup” as a

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<sup>55</sup> See, for example: *Revised Standard Version*, *New Revised Standard Version*, *New International Version*, *New American Version*, *King James Version*, *New King James Version*, and the *New Jerusalem Version*.

<sup>56</sup> This is an apparent typographical error. Zins probably means to cite Lk 22:20.

<sup>57</sup> *Romanism*, p. 125.

substitution for Jesus' suffering in the agony of Gethsemane (Mt 26:39). In 1 Cor 10:16, Paul used the word "cup" as a substitution for the "blood of Christ." Five verses later Paul used the word "cup" as a substitution for drinking the content of the cup (1 Cor 10:21).

In the two passages that Mr. Zins targets his objection (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25), it is clear from the context of the passages that "cup" is substituted for the content of the cup, Christ's blood. Thus even the figure of speech used in these texts with the word "cup" refutes the very reality Zins denies, namely, that the words of institution changes the wine into the blood of Christ.

Zins is correct when he states that Catholic exegetes do not "say the cup is actually the New Covenant." The reason is simple. Catholic scholars harmonize the potential ambiguity of Lk 22:20 and 1 Cor 11:25 with the clear meaning of Matthew's quotation: "This is my blood *of the covenant*" (Mt 26:28) where the use of the genitive in Greek gives the precise meaning of Jesus' words.

### **Fruit of the Vine Objection**

#### **Mt 26:29**

"I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

#### **Mk 14:25**

"Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

#### **Lk 22:18**

"For I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

#### *Protestant Objection*

James White writes: "Furthermore, we see that even after the supposed 'consecration,' the Lord, and Paul<sup>58</sup> after Him, continue to refer to the elements as bread and wine, not as the body or blood of Christ! When Jesus refers to the cup, He says, 'I will not drink again of this *fruit of the vine* from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29). One can picture the Lord Jesus, still holding the cup, and referring to it as He speaks. But what does He say? Does He say it is literally blood? No, He says it is the fruit of the vine. And then He says He will not drink of it again until he would drink it with the disciples in His father's kingdom. Does this mean that Jesus will still be transubstantiating wine into His blood in the kingdom of God? We are looking at the text very closely, very literally, but that is what is demanded by the Roman position. If we are forced to take 'this is My blood' as literally as the Roman Catholic Church insists, we must point out the contradictions and errors that come as a result of this method of interpretation."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> This is most likely a reference to 1 Cor 11:26, which White does not identify here but discusses specifically in the next paragraph, *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, p 175.

<sup>59</sup> *The Catholic Controversy*, pp. 174-175.

### *Catholic Response*

It is generally accepted that the words “fruit of the vine” refers to wine, not grape juice. In the accounts of Matthew (Mt 26:28) and Mark (Mk 14:24) this expression occurs after the words of institution. Therefore Mr. White argues that these words points to the reality that only wine was in the cup over which Jesus said, “This is my blood.”

However, the Greek construction of “this is my body,” *touto estin to soma mou*, in the Synoptic Gospels compels the literal meaning of Jesus words. It’s truly his body. Mr. White’s interpretation implies that Jesus contradicts this earlier statement when he speaks about drinking “the fruit of the vine.” However, there is another explanation that is more plausible because it does not imply that Jesus contradicts himself.

Both institution accounts begin with the statement “while they were eating” (Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22). Furthermore, the words of institution are spoken in the context of Jesus imminent sacrifice on Calvary: “for this is my blood of the covenant, which is *poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins*” (Mt 26:28); “This is my blood of the covenant, which is *poured out for many*” (Mk 14:24). Therefore, it is logical to assume that Jesus is saying he will not dine with them again, drink of the fruit of the vine, until after his death and Resurrection, but he is not speaking of the Eucharist.

This interpretation becomes most persuasive when the short almost identical institution narratives of Matthew and Mark are reconciled with the more detailed version found in Luke’s Gospel, which Mr. White ignored. Luke records that the Eucharistic celebration occurred during a Passover meal (Lk 22:13-16). It was during this Passover meal that Jesus said: “I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divided it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Lk 22:15-18). Then after the Passover meal is completed Jesus changes bread and wine into his body and blood using the same sacrificial language found in accounts of Matthew and Mark (Lk 22:19-20).

Jesus inaugurated the kingdom of God with his Resurrection (Lk 23:42; Acts 1:3; Col 1:13; 4:11), which completed the work of our redemption. However, Peter attests that they “ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead” (Acts 10:41).

### **1 CORINTHIANS 10:16-17**

*“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we also are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”*

In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul addresses the serious problem of idolatry that was still practiced by some of the Corinthian Christians. In verses 1-5 he cites God’s displeasure and punishment of the Hebrew people in the desert. Then in verses 6-13 he warns them about the seriousness of idolatry and reassures them that God gives them the strength to remain faithful.

Paul continues his urging against idolatry in verses 14-15: “Therefore, my beloved, shun the worship of idols. I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say.” At this point Paul goes to the heart of his argument by demonstrating the absurdity of participating in idol worship and receiving the Eucharist. “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing [*koinonia* - fellowship, communion] *in the blood of Christ*? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing [*koinonia*] *in the body of Christ*? Because there is one bread, we also are many *are one body*, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:16-17).

The words “blood of Christ” and “body of Christ” in verses 16-17 are clearly used literally. There is nothing in the passage to indicate a symbolic meaning. This literal understanding is underscored in the next verses where Paul compares sharing, eating and drinking, in the Eucharist with the real eating that occurred at idolatrous sacrifices (1 Cor 10:18-21).

Paul also teaches that communion/fellowship [*koinonia*] in the body and blood of Christ by the reception of the Eucharist is the basis for the Church’s unique unity with the members of his Church who form one body with him. Therefore, if one interprets the word “the blood of Christ” and the “body of Christ” as mere symbols, one must also give a metaphorical meaning to the Mystical Body (1 Cor 12:12-30; Rom 12:4-5; Mt 25:40; Acts 9:4; Lk 10:10), which is also reduced to a mere symbol.

#### *Protestant Objection*

James McCarthy objects: “The bread represents Christ’s body, broken for us on the cross. The wine represents His blood, poured out for our sins. Partaking of each is a public declaration of faith in His finished work of salvation. It is saying, ‘I have a share in Christ’s body and blood. He gave His life for me’ (see 1 Corinthians 10:16). When believers partake of one loaf together, they are also witnessing to their unity in Christ as His body (1 Corinthians 10:17).”<sup>60</sup>

#### *Catholic Response*

Mr. McCarthy’s explanation bristles with difficulties. The inspired word of Sacred Scripture never claims that the bread and wine *represent* Christ’s body and blood. On the contrary, it affirms that the bread and wine *becomes* Christ’s body and blood. If the Eucharist is merely a symbol, as McCarthy claims, how can he claim that in Communion we “have a share in Christ’s body and blood?” Furthermore, the text does not state communicates are “witnessing to their unity in Christ as His body,” it affirms that it is a “sharing” in the body and blood of Christ as even McCarthy admits.

### **1 CORINTHIANS 11:27-30**

*27 - Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.*

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<sup>60</sup> *Gospel According to Rome*, pp. 137-138.

The key phrase in Greek is: “*enokos* (guilty) *estai* (will be) *tou* (of the) *somatos* (body) *kai* (and) *tou* (of the) *haimatos* (blood) *tou* (of the) *kuriou* (Lord).” These words express violence to the person of Christ as if one was guilty of his murder. This statement makes no sense unless Paul is confirming that the Eucharist is literally the body and blood of the Lord. If the Eucharist were merely a symbol, Paul could say the unworthy reception of the Eucharist is profaning the *image* of the Lord, but not his body and blood.

28 - *Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*

The word “examine,” *dokimazo* in Greek carries the meaning “to prove” or “to scrutinize,” “to discover if something is genuine or not, like precious metals,” “to deem worthy.” Why is a careful examination necessary for a mere symbol?

29 - *For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment [krima - damnation, condemnation] upon himself.*

The Greek word translated as “discerning” is *diakrino*. The word means “to judge,” “to separate,” “to withdraw from.” The Greek word of “judgment” is *krima*, which means “damnation,” “condemnation.” This is very strong language that makes no sense if Paul is speaking about a mere symbol.

30 - *That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.*

It is inconceivable that God would render such severe punishments for disrespect to a mere symbol. Indeed, there is no other instance in the New Testament where a death is a common penalty for sin much less for the misuse of a symbol.

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

Protestants hold that the Bible is the only infallible authority in matters of faith and practice. Therefore they reject both Sacred Tradition as a source of divine revelation and the authority of the Church as the infallible interpreter of God’s revelation. The reality is that Tradition provides a vital compliment to the teachings of Sacred Scripture as well an invaluable source that guides the Catholic Church in its doctrinal definitions. This is equally true for those doctrines that are accepted by Christians like the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation of Jesus Christ as well as disputed doctrines like the Eucharist.

In the introduction to this essay the overwhelming evidence that the early Church believed that the Eucharist was truly the body and blood of Jesus was affirmed by J.N.D. Kelly.<sup>61</sup> There were simply no challenges in the early Church to this ancient belief. Robert Sungenis devotes an entire section in his scholarly discussion of the Eucharist to the witness of the Fathers. He cites their works and provides an insightful commentary on their statements.<sup>62</sup> He also quotes contemporary Protestant scholars who affirm the real physical presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and its sacrificial character.

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<sup>61</sup> *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 221, 440.

<sup>62</sup> *Not By Bread Alone*, pp.195-296.

*J. de Watteville* attests: “It is undeniable ... that the writings of the first centuries present the Eucharist as a sacrificial rite.”<sup>63</sup> Regin Prenter, a Lutheran scholar refers to the Eucharist as “the sacrificial meal of fulfillment.... In this sense we must insist, not only that the Eucharist is a true sacrifice, but even that it is the eternal presence of the sacrifice of Calvary in the Church.... The body and blood really present are nothing else than the body and blood which were offered on Calvary.... The miracle is that the sacrifice of Calvary has not been past, but remains eternally present....”<sup>64</sup> The Baptist scholar, Neville Clarke, arguing for “sacrifice” and “communion,” writes that the “altar and table are inevitable and necessarily one.”<sup>65</sup>

The highly acclaimed scholar, Jaroslav Pelikan, writes: “the doctrine of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist... did not become the subject of controversy until the ninth century. The definitive and precise formulation of the crucial doctrinal issues concerning the Eucharist had to wait that controversy and others that followed even later [16<sup>th</sup> century]. This does not mean at all, however, that the church did not yet have a doctrine of the Eucharist; it does mean that the statements of its doctrine must be sought in polemical and dogmatic treatises devoted to sacramental theology. It means also that the effort to cross-examine the Fathers of the second and third century about where they stood in the controversies of the ninth and sixteenth century is both silly and futile.”<sup>66</sup>

John 6 is the primary focus of this treatise. The Biblical support for the Catholic understanding of that important chapter is very strong. Nevertheless, it would be a great blessing if we could ask John to expound on the controversial passages. That is not possible, but we have the next best thing in the writings of St. Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of St. John.

Ignatius was the third bishop of Antioch in Syria. He was taught by John the Evangelist and was a friend of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who also died a martyr’s death. Ignatius’ extraordinary letters were written under difficult circumstances. He was arrested in Antioch during the reign of the emperor Trajan (98-117) and sent to Rome for execution in the custody of ten soldiers he refers to as “leopards.” Ignatius received the martyr’s crown when he was devoured by the beasts in Rome’s arena. The historian Eusebius dates the composition of Ignatius’ letters between the years 107-108. Because of his close ties with the apostles, particularly John, Ignatius’ statements about the Eucharist is an important witness to the belief of the apostolic Church that aids in the interpretation of John 6.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Not By Bread Alone*, p. 421 citing *Le Sacrifice dans les Textes eucharistiques des premiers siècles*, p. 199; quoted in *Sin, Redemption and Sacrifice* by Lyonnet and Sabourin, p. 190.

<sup>64</sup> *Not By Bread Alone*, p. 421 taken from Michael Davies, *Liturgical Shipwreck* quoting Regin Prenter’s *Skabelse og Genloesning*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 531-533.

<sup>65</sup> *Not By Bread Alone*, p. 421 found in *Liturgical Renewal in the Christian Churches* edited by Michael Taylor, “Word and Sacrament in Protestant Worship,” by Richardson, pp. 48-50.

<sup>66</sup> *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol. I, pp. 166-167.

<sup>67</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, Edited and Revised by Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 79-82; Sungenis, *Not By Faith Alone*, p. 274.

“Continue to gather together, each and every one of you, collectively and individually by name, in grace, in one faith and one Jesus Christ, who physically was a descendant of David, who is Son of man and Son of God, in order that you may obey the bishop and the presbytery with an undisturbed mind, *breaking one bread*, which is the *medicine of immortality*, the antidote we take in order not to die but *to live forever in Jesus Christ*.”<sup>68</sup>

“I take no pleasure in corruptible food or the pleasures of this life. I want the bread of God, which *is the flesh of Christ* who is of the seed of David; and for drink I want *his blood*, which is incorruptible love.”<sup>69</sup>

“Take care, therefore, to participate in one *Eucharist* for there is *one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and one cup which leads to unity through his *blood*; there is one altar, just as there is one bishop, together with the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants, in order that whatever you do, you do in accordance with God.”

“Now note well those who hold *heretical opinions* about the grace of Jesus Christ which came to us; note how contrary they are to the mind of God. They have no concern for love, none for the widow, none for the orphan, none for the oppressed, none for the prisoner or the one released, none for the hungry or thirsty. They abstain from the Eucharist and prayer, because they refuse to acknowledge that *the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ*.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> “Letter to the Ephesians,” Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>69</sup> “Letter to the Romans,” Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 105, emphasis mine.

<sup>70</sup> “Letter to the Smyrneans, Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 110, emphasis mine.