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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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Something to Consider: A Response to Francis Chan and His Romish View of the Lord's Supper

By Timothy F. Kauffman

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Through the prophet Malachi, the Lord condemned the unacceptable burnt offerings of the Jews, foretelling a day when “in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering...among the heathen” (*Malachi* 1:10-11). The apostles left instructions that sacrifices must and would continue under the New Covenant, but these new sacrifices would take the forms of “praise...the fruit of our lips giving thanks” (*Hebrews* 13:15), doing good works and sharing with others (*Hebrews* 13:16), “spiritual sacrifices” (*1 Peter* 2:5), providing for those in need (*Philippians* 4:18), and “your bodies a living sacrifice” (*Romans* 12:1). Such sacrifices are “holy” and “acceptable” (*Romans* 12:1, *1 Peter* 2:5) and well-pleasing to the Lord (*Philippians* 4:18, *Hebrews* 13:16). A new temple of living stones had been constructed so that these new sacrifices would continue (*1 Peter* 2:5).

The early church understood these apostolic instructions as a fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy, and included thank offerings—the Eucharist, *εὐχαριστία*—in the liturgy. The Sunday gathering was the venue for those offerings, as tithes of the harvest were collected and distributed to “orphans and widows and...all who are in need” (Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 67). According to Irenæus “the very oblations” of the Church consisted of the tithes of the Lord's people, and Christians “set aside

all their possessions for the Lord's purposes,” just as the widow had in the *Gospels* (*Mark* 12:42, *Luke* 21:2) (*Against Heresies*, 4, 18.2), “offering the first-fruits” to care for the needy (*Against Heresies*, 4, 18.4), hungry, thirsty, naked, and poor (*Against Heresies*, 4, 17.6). The sacrifice of *Malachi* 1:11 was fulfilled in thanksgiving, “a joyful noise,” “praise and prayer” (Athanasius, *Festal Letter*, 11) when we “take up our sacrifices, observing distribution to the poor” (*Festal Letter*, 45). What these early writers were describing is an offering of the first fruits with thanks. “The Eucharist and prayer.” *The tithe*.

On the day of their baptism, catechumens were at last eligible to contribute, and were thus instructed to bring their own Eucharist with them for the oblation (Hippolytus, *Anaphora*, 20)¹—bread, wine, oil, cheese, or olives (Hippolytus, *Anaphora*, 4, 5, 6)² or oxen, sheep, “a batch of dough,” and “a jar of wine or of oil” (*Didache*, 13). The purpose of “the Eucharist of the oblation” was to “share it with strangers” for which reason the Eucharist was to be brought “to the bishop for the entertainment of all strangers” (*Didascalía*, 9).³ The gift we offer to God is “our prayer and our Eucharist” (*Didascalía*, 11).⁴ Origen wrote that “we have a symbol of gratitude to

¹ *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, Burton Scott Easton, translator, 1934, 45.

² Easton, 35-37.

³ *The Didascalía Apostolorum in English*, Margaret Dunlop Gibson, M.R.A.S., LL.D. translator, 1903, 53.

⁴ *Didascalía*, 63.

God in the bread which we call the Eucharist” (*Against Celsus*, 8, 57). The Eucharist of the early church was in fact *the tithe* offered with prayers, *before the consecration*.

Early in the sub-apostolic church, the consecration was a simple recitation of Christ’s words—“this is my body, which is broken” (*1 Corinthians* 11:24) and “this is my blood...which is shed” (*Matthew* 26:28)—as attested by Justin (*First Apology*, 66), Irenæus (*Against Heresies*, 4, 17.5, 5, 2.3), Clement (*Paedagogus*, 2.2), and Tertullian (*Against Marcion*, 4, 40). It was common for bread from the Eucharist to be distributed into the hands of the recipient before the consecration was even spoken, as attested by all four Gospel accounts, and by Justin Martyr (*First Apology*, 65), Tertullian (*Against Marcion*, 4, 40), Origen (*Against Celsus*, 8, 33) and Cornelius, Bishop of Rome (Eusebius, *Church History*, 6, 43.18-19). Because the bread was still “the Eucharist” when it was distributed, having not yet been consecrated, the Supper was often called by the same name.

Ignatius’ liturgy may therefore be summed up as follows: a Eucharistic offering of *prayers and a tithe* for the widow, the orphan, and the poor. Some of the bread taken from the still unconsecrated Eucharist is distributed to those present. Participants take the unconsecrated Eucharist in hand, and together pronounced the ancient consecration over it—“This is my body, broken.” The heretics who abstained from this were the Gnostics who cared neither for the physical needs of the poor, nor for the incarnation, and so refused to participate in the prayers and the Eucharistic tithe offering, unwilling as they were to take the bread in their hands and affirm the words of consecration spoken over it.

With that in mind, we now revisit Ignatius, including this time the preceding sentence that contextualizes his statement:

They have no regard for love; no care for the widow, or the orphan, or the oppressed; of the bond, or of the free; of the hungry, or of the thirsty. *They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins.* (*Smyrnæans*, 6-7).

The Roman apologist relies exclusively upon the italicized sentence, assuming incorrectly that “the Eucharist” from which the heretics abstain refers to the *consecrated* elements of the Supper. Thus, Ignatius’ words are taken to mean that the heretics did not acknowledge the “truth” of transubstantiation. Many a gullible Protestant has surrendered at this point, fearing to be counted among the heretics, and converted to Rome.

We owe it to Ignatius, however, to understand him in his native context, in the simplicity of his own sub-apostolic liturgy, in which “the Eucharist *and prayer*” from which the heretics abstained refers to the tithe for the widow, the orphan, and the oppressed, offered along with grateful prayers for created goods from the harvest. The offering occurred *prior to the consecration*, and—please note—the confession that the bread is Christ’s flesh which suffered, *is actually Ignatius’ reference to the consecration spoken after the Eucharist was distributed*: “This is My body, broken...”. Thus, Ignatius’ words are properly understood to mean that the heretics did not participate in the tithe offerings and prayer, because they had no regard for the poor, and refused to recite the consecration, because they had no regard for Christ’s body.

In sum, if we read Ignatius through the lens of a medieval liturgy, in which “the Eucharist” refers to the Supper, then he appears to affirm Rome’s precious doctrine of transubstantiation, and the heretics are they who refuse to affirm the “real presence.” But if we read him in his own context, in which his first reference to “the Eucharist and prayer” refers to the *tithe* offered with prayers of thanksgiving (*εὐχαριστίας*), and his second reference to “the Eucharist” refers to unconsecrated bread taken from the tithe and distributed for the Supper, then the heretics are they who refuse to provide for the poor and refuse as well to join in the corporate recitation of Jesus’ consecratory words. This is consistent with the early liturgy⁵ and is essentially the same liturgy evangelical Protestants

⁵ Compare Irenæus in which *the bread becomes the Eucharist* when it is tithed (*Against Heresies* IV.18.5), and then *the Eucharist becomes the body and blood of Christ* when it is consecrated (*Against Heresies* V.2.3). See also Tertullian who chastises those who skipped the *sacrificial offerings of the Eucharist*, and only showed up for *the Supper* (*On Prayer*, 19).

celebrate today: after the offertory, bread and wine are distributed, and taking them in our hands, we affirm corporately that Jesus had a real body that suffered, real blood that was shed.

The Misconstrued "Evidence" from Cyprian of Carthage (253 AD)

In his explanation of the ancient liturgy, Cyprian insisted, "the Lord's passion is the sacrifice which we offer" (*Epistle 62, 17*). From a medieval perspective, Cyprian appears to advocate for a liturgical offering of the literal body and blood of Christ, but as noted above, in the same epistle, he also insisted that Christ's disciples could not drink the blood of Christ until after the cross. That being the case, in Cyprian's mind Jesus could not have had His own blood in the cup the night before he died. How then could Cyprian literally offer "the Lord's passion" sacrificially while maintaining that Christ's blood was not really in the cup?

The answer is found in Cyprian's tendency to combine the concept of "offer" and "commemorate," as seen in his letters.* In Cyprian's mind, "to offer" the passion of a martyr or the good work of a brother was "to celebrate" or "to commemorate," and memorialize the martyr's death or the brother's labors with a sacrificial offering. We "offer sacrifices for them" to "celebrate the[ir] passions...in the annual commemoration" (*Epistle 33, 3*). On the anniversaries of their deaths "we...celebrate their commemoration among the memorials of the martyrs...and there are celebrated here by us *oblations and sacrifices for their commemorations...*" (*Epistle 36, 2*). The martyr "which affords an example to the brotherhood both of courage and of faith, *ought to be offered up* when the brethren are present" (*Epistle 57, 4*). Out of gratitude for the generosity of their brethren, and "in return for their good work," the needy were encouraged to "present them in your sacrifices and prayers," and "to remember [them] in your supplications and prayers" (*Epistle 59, 4*).

* No doubt influenced by an ancient Latin rendering of Tobit 12:12, in which "I brought the remembrance of your prayer" (*ἐγὼ προσήγαγον τὸ μνημόσυνον τῆς προσευχῆς*) in Greek is rendered "I offered the remembrance of your prayer" (*ego obtuli memoriam orationis*) in Latin. See *Treatise 4, 33* (Migne, *PL*, 4:540) and *Treatise 7, 10* (Migne, *PL*, 4:588-589).

Contrarily, the brother who died in disobedience would not be so memorialized: "no offering should be made for him, nor any sacrifice be celebrated for his repose" (*Epistle 65, 2*).

All of these illustrate Cyprian's propensity for conflating "offer" and "commemorate," implying that he was "offering" in the sacrifices that which he was really only "commemorating" in them, be it the good works of the brethren, the passions of the martyrs on their anniversaries, or the crucifixion itself. The immediate context of his wording makes the very point: "we make mention of His passion in all sacrifices," and "we offer the cup in commemoration of the Lord and of His passion" (*Epistle 62, 17*). Cyprian's admonition in *Epistle 62*—"the Lord's passion is the sacrifice which we offer"—is therefore understood in the same sense that the passion of the martyr is "offered up" in the sacrifices, or the labors of the saints are "presented" in the offerings. Cyprian had not offered "the Lord's passion" at all. He had merely commemorated it, both in the Eucharist offerings before the consecration, and in the Supper that immediately followed it, just as Evangelicals do today.

The Redacted "Evidence" from Irenæus of Lyons (190 AD)

In a commonly accepted translation of Irenæus' voluminous work, *Against Heresies*, he appears to affirm an ancient liturgical offering of "flesh and spirit" to the Father in the Eucharist because the bread takes on a heavenly reality at the consecration, ostensibly becoming the real body and blood of Christ:

For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit. For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation (*ἐπικλῦσιν*, *epiclusin*) of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity. (*Against Heresies*, 4, 18.5)

By these words Irenæus appears to describe a Eucharist offering in which the bread and wine consist of “two realities” at the invocation, attesting to “the union of the flesh and spirit,” and an offering of the literal body and blood of Christ to the Father. If Irenæus had actually written that, we suppose the Roman apologist might very well have proved the ancient origins of his medieval liturgy. But the words do not belong to Irenæus. What the translators have presented to us is a carefully crafted redaction, intended to create the impression that the medieval liturgy is much older than it really is. Again, a little history will serve us well.

The context of Irenæus’ statement on “the fellowship and union of the flesh and spirit” was not *the Supper*, but the *tithe*, an offering of created food to the Father. The heretics believed spiritual things and created things could not interact, and so denied both that Jesus had taken on a body and that His Father had created the world. But something had changed since Ignatius’ day, and the Gnostics were no longer abstaining “from the Eucharist and from prayer.” They were now imitating the Christian liturgy, offering created food in their tithes to the Father, something Irenæus found to be inconsistent and appalling (4, 18.4). His refutation focused entirely on Jesus’ interaction with created food. Jesus had thanked His Father for created food, proving that His Father had created it (3, 11.5). Christ’s hunger for created food proved “that He was a real and substantial man” before the crucifixion (5, 21.2), and His promise to eat created food again proved that He remained incarnate thereafter, “for to drink of that which flows from the vine pertains to flesh, and not spirit” (5, 33.1). The Gnostics were therefore doubly inconsistent to offer created food in their tithes to the Father Who (they claimed) had not created it, in imitation of Jesus Who (they claimed) did not need it and would not have thanked Him for it. Christians, on the other hand, knew very well that they were offering to God the things He Himself had created, anticipating the day when they would eat and drink again with His Son, thereby “announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and spirit” with their tithes (4, 18.5). It was not *the consecrated food of the Supper*, but rather the *unconsecrated food of the Eucharist*, that affirmed both truths and refuted the heretics. The student who reads Irenæus through

a medieval lens will miss that subtlety and conclude, invalidly, that Irenæus affirmed the union of flesh and spirit, and therefore the real presence of Christ, by offering *consecrated food* to the Father.

The context of Irenæus’ statement on the “two realities” was also the *tithe offering*, not the *Supper*. He had spent the preceding chapter proving that the prophecy of an offering of “a pure sacrifice” by the Gentiles (*Malachi* 1:11) had been fulfilled in the tithe offerings of the Church (4, 17.5), and arrived at the obvious conclusion: “We are bound, therefore, to offer to God the first-fruits of His creation” (4, 18.1). The heart of Irenæus’ argument was the teaching of the prophet who said the Lord summons the tithe to Himself (*Malachi* 3:10). Because the first-fruits of the earth were set aside “for the Lord’s purposes” (4, 18.2), offered to Him on a heavenly altar (4, 18.6), they took on a heavenly reality the moment they were *summoned by Him*, becoming the tithe offering, which is to say, *becoming the Eucharist*. In truth, what Irenæus wrote was not that the bread took on a heavenly reality *when it received the invocation*, but rather that it took on a heavenly reality *when it received the summons*, that is, *when it became a tithe*: “For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives *the summons* (ἐκκλησιν, *ecclusin*)⁶ of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly....”⁸

Until the 18th century, Irenæus’ original work had been lost to history, and *Against Heresies* was only available in a poor Latin transcription in which the bread was alleged to change when it received the “*invocationem Dei*,”⁷ that is, “the invocation of God.” In 1743, Irenæus’ Greek entered circulation and corrected that Latin transcription error. It would be a gross understatement to say the correction was unwelcome. Translators and scholars were confronted with the fact that Irenæus had not written “*ἐπικλυσιν του Θεού*” (invocation of God)

⁶ Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, (PG hereafter), 1856-1857, 85 volumes, Volume 7, Column 1028.

⁸ See *A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, Anterior to the Division of the East and West*, Volume 42, *Five Books of S. Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons Against Heresies*, Rev. John Keble, M.A., translator, James Parker & Col., 1872, 361.

⁷ *Divi Irenæi Græci Scriptoris*, Nicolai Gallasi, editor, 1700, 264.

in reference to the Supper as they had expected, but rather had written “ἐκκλησιν του Θεού” (summons of God) in reference to the tithe. A “real” change in the nature of the bread at the moment it becomes a tithe offering upended the medieval liturgy in which the bread is alleged to undergo a “real” change at the consecration. Scholars assured themselves that the difference was negligible and “ἐπικλυσιν (epiclusin)” must surely be what Irenæus had meant.⁸

To bring Irenæus’ Greek back into conformity with the errant Latin, and thus back into conformity with the medieval liturgy, translators discretely substituted “ἐπικλυσιν (epiclusin),” or “invocation,” where Irenæus had written “ἐκκλησιν (ecclesin)” or “summons.”⁹ That illicit redaction is now widely accepted as authoritative by the translators, profoundly changing the meaning of Irenæus’ simple words, “we offer to Him *His own*.” If Irenæus is read in his native context, the words mean precisely what we would expect: “we offer to Him His own [created food]” in the tithe, *prior to the consecration*. The earthly bread takes on a heavenly reality because it is set aside to feed the poor. However, if we accept the illicit redaction, Irenæus is made to say “we offer to Him His own [Son]” in the Supper, *after the consecration*, and the earthly bread takes on a heavenly reality because it becomes Christ’s body, backloading into Irenæus’ 2nd century tithe offering a medieval sacrifice of the “real presence” of the body and blood of Christ.

The effect of such an abusive treatment of Irenæus is profoundly damaging to history and to the apostolic liturgy of the early Church. Harnack’s rejection of the figurative language of the ancient writers, for example, is founded upon that illicit redaction, from which he argues that the figurative, symbolic language of antiquity cannot possibly mean what it appears to say:

⁸ *Sancti Patris Irenæi Scripta Anecdota, Græca & Latine*, Grabe, Johannes Ernesti, editor (Hagæ Comitum et Francofurti ad Moenum, 1743, preface 13.

⁹ See James Beaven, M.A., *An Account of the Life and Writings of S. Irenæus*, 1841, 184; Migne (1857), *PG*, 7: 1028n, where he substitutes “ἐπικλυσιν” as the “preferred” reading; Harvey, W. Wigan (1857), 205n-206, “ἐπικλυσιν is evidently the reading followed by the [Latin] translator, and is that which the sense requires.”

Accordingly, the distinction of a symbolic and realistic conception of the Supper is altogether to be rejected; ... The anti-Gnostic Fathers acknowledged that the consecrated food consisted of two things, an earthly (the elements) and a heavenly (the real body of Christ). They thus saw in the sacrament a guarantee of the union between spirit and flesh, which the gnostics denied.¹⁰

It is evident that Harnack’s objection to the nonliteral interpretation of the early liturgy is based entirely on a redacted version of Irenæus’ Greek. Yet the unredacted original shows that Irenæus had the “real” change occurring *prior to the consecration* and knew absolutely nothing of the “real” presence of Christ in the Supper. It is sad to say, but the shameful centuries-long academic revision of Irenæus is illustrative of the ivory tower echo chamber in which the early liturgy is analyzed, digested, and transformed before it is regurgitated for our consumption. We have noted that Schaff relied on Nyssa (4th century) to reinterpret Irenæus (2nd century); Harvey used Basil (4th century) to overturn Justin (2nd century) and therewith to embrace the intentional translation error in Irenæus; Stone justified his own rejection of the ancient, symbolic, figurative language based on Harnack’s conclusion;¹¹ and Kelly acknowledged that he, too, is “deeply indebted” to him.¹² And yet Harnack’s conclusion rests entirely upon a lie.

Once the fog of academia has been cleared away, Irenæus acknowledges what is essentially a Protestant evangelical liturgy: the Eucharist (thanksgiving) tithe is offered “in a pure mind, and in faith without hypocrisy, in well-grounded hope, in fervent love,” and “so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist” as a meal with that same disposition, “are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity” (4, 18.4). The tithe of our first fruits is offered in faith, hope, and love, and then when the bread is consecrated, it is

¹⁰ Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Volume 2, translated from the 3rd German edition, Neil Buchanan, translator, 1896, 145.

¹¹ Darwell Stone, *A History of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*, Volume 1, 1909, 30.

¹² J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th edition. 2000, vi.

received with that same faith, hope, and love, with an eye toward the promised resurrection. There is no transubstantiation involved in the Supper Jesus instituted, neither in the Scriptures nor in Irenæus' rendition of it. And certainly, no liturgical sacrifice of the "real presence" of Christ to the Father.

Something to Consider

Given the centuries-long systematic attempt by scholars and translators to subordinate the ancient, Biblical, apostolic liturgy to the superstitious, medieval liturgy of Rome, Francis Chan can be forgiven for not knowing better. The deception for which he has fallen is as subtle as it is expansive. The myth of a universal belief in the "real" literal presence of Christ in the Supper—from the Apostolic era through the Reformation—has achieved legitimacy and notoriety solely on account of its frequent repetition by each successive generation of scholars. Its validity is maintained in an echo chamber located in the penthouse of an ivory tower that has long since lost touch with the original writings upon which it was allegedly based, and is substantiated with corrupted evidence tainted by the scholars themselves. They used that tainted evidence to corroborate their own conclusions and interpret the rest of the data that they have not yet tainted, convincing themselves and others that the ancient liturgy was really the same as the medieval monstrosity that prevailed in the dark ages. They revised, redacted and rewrote the ancient liturgy to make it comply with their preconceptions and conform it to an illicit, unbiblical medieval liturgy of Rome's imagination. By this means, for well over a thousand years, they have read both an offering and a meal of Christ's "real," "literal" body and blood back into the writings of the early Christians who insisted emphatically, to the contrary, that they were neither offering Christ's body and blood, nor "literally" eating it. The real evidence, long since discarded by its custodians, cries out to us from the base of the ivory tower, asking for another hearing, and that the case be remanded to a more reputable court. For three hundred years the early writers insisted, repeatedly, that they received in the Supper the body and blood of Christ by faith, digesting with their minds what the symbols suggested to their senses. For a millennium, the obvious idolatry of kneeling before

the "real presence" in the elements had not even entered their minds. The bread and wine they consecrated and consumed with their believing brethren as they proclaimed "the Lord's death till he come" (*1 Corinthians* 11:26), were but symbols, figures, types, metaphors, enigmas, similitudes, antitypes, allegories, icons, images or likenesses of the real body and blood of Christ, received in the heart by faith, not with the mouth. And that, dear Francis, is "something to consider."