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## Eucharist and Parousia

The Fundamental Basis of the Interpretation  
of the Real Presence

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The Presence of the Lord in the Eucharist has always provided theology with testing questions, but today even more than in the past, not a few people find difficulty in believing in such a presence.

The appraisal that follows is not so much a result of the recent discussions among theologians, but has been prompted rather by impressions gained on a pastoral level and under a variety of different circumstances. In itself, though, it makes no bones about remaining theologically based, for the difficulties are essentially theological ones. It sets out to define the basis for all interpretation of the Eucharist, in the hope of being able to help overcome ambiguities which, at pastoral level, are often harmful.<sup>2</sup>

1. See the biographical note in *Lumen Vitae* XXIII (1968), p. 410. The most recent publication of F.-X. DURRWELL: *Mystère paschal, source d'apostolat*. Paris, Ed. Ouvrières, 1970. — Address: rue Maréchal Leclerc, 161 67-Ostwald, FRANCE (Editor's Note).

2. This study aims to be Biblical in inspiration. But it does not set out to analyse the account of the institution of the Eucharist; it presupposes the faith of the Church in Christ's Presence in the Eucharist and seeks to make the affirmation of this Presence intelligible on the basis of Scripture.

Contrary to the pattern of some studies on the Eucharist, it deliberately seeks no recourse from a philosophical system. It remains firmly within the limits of a theology which I would term a theology of the first degree, which is the coordination of the revealed facts and truths. The chosen purpose, which is to verify the correct line of vision, to determine also the principle of the process of interpretation, is, however, of first importance: the whole of Eucharistic theology is determined by this first option. What is more, in the various systems of interpretation which were in vogue previously and which still hold sway today, little attention is so often accorded to this essential problem.

*Some Observations.*

A full twenty years ago, far-sighted people were pointing to the danger of depersonalizing the Eucharist.<sup>3</sup> Catholic piety had formerly been most sensitive to the personal encounter with Christ, to the intimacy of prayer before the Eucharistic Presence and of a very personal communion with the Lord. The liturgical movement came along to widen these horizons; but it sometimes happens that the addition of a new wealth, instead of enriching the earlier experiences, in fact causes us to forget them. The new tendency was now to be to live the Eucharist not so much as the presence of a person, but as an action, as a means; and, rather, to perceive in it a holy and sanctifying thing: it was to become a celebration, the worship of God, in the form of thanksgiving; it became the bread of Christian life, and was seen as the food for eternal life, and, above all, first and foremost, as the meal around which we are to gather in our Christian brotherhood.\*

What denotes a diminution of concern for the personal Presence in practical terms tends naturally to find expression in terms of doctrine also: the question is posed, rarely as a matter of doubt, but in the form of a tentative examination, and at times as an expression of concern: how can one say that Christ is substantially present in the Eucharist? To what extent must one speak of a Real Presence?

The astonishing thing is that there are those who would have it that the problem has been accentuated by the Council which speaks of a multiple presence of Christ: « in his body which is the Church, »<sup>5</sup> « in the sacrifice of the Mass, in the person of the minister... above all under the Eucharistic species... present in the word... present when the Church prays and sings,

3. See, e.g., the reaction of A.-M. ROGUER, « L'adoration eucharistique dans la piété sacerdotale », in *La Vie Spirituelle* 91 (1954), pp. 5-12.

4. A consideration voiced at this time: « Why thanksgiving? When one has eaten, one no longer thinks of what one has eaten. » And that expression so often used to describe the tabernacle: « the pantry for the ailing members of the community. » This tendency has become stronger since then. The Bishop of Versailles, Mgr. SIMONNAUX writes: « For some time now... one has attached importance to evaluating what is a sign and what is significant; does not one forget the essential of the matter which is thus revealed in symbol form?... One runs the risk of blurring the outlines of the truths contained in the dogma of the Real Presence. Defining the Eucharist or the Mass as a *celebration* or a *sharing* of the word and the bread is a minimalist expression which makes one think more of a brotherly agape than of Christ's Last Supper in all its holiness. » *Doc. cath.* 67 (1970), p. 143.

5. L. G., 14.

for he promised: « Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. »<sup>6</sup>

In actual fact, this multiplicity of ways in which Christ is present in his Church only helps to make more plausible and more intelligible the tremendous Eucharistic mystery. But, for some, such an affirmation is a novelty, and, amid their discovery that the Eucharistic Presence is not indivisible and that it may be classed among other manifestations of presence which, wrongly, they deem lacking in immediate reality, they conclude or fear the necessity of concluding that the Eucharistic Presence has a reality which is extremely relative.

It is common knowledge, too, that in theological circles discussion has arisen as to the manner of this Presence, and that the doctrine of transubstantiation has been contested not only in its terminology but even in its very self. The din of disputation has reawakened the theological concepts once learnt in the seminary and which have lain dormant since then beneath the level of consciousness of so many priests; they have emerged on the surface in the precise terms in which they had then been known, and, in their trappings of scholasticism, their medieval aspect seems to give ground for such contestation. What had been doubtless a masterly philosophical explanation, today constitutes an added difficulty for the faith of men for whom the philosophy of days gone by has become estranged.

The doctrine of transubstantiation poses a linguistic problem: for modern man, the word, « substance, » denotes an empirical reality, and the change of one substance into another is, for him, a measurable phenomenon: in this context, the statement that the substance of the bread is changed into that of the body of Christ has become unintelligible.

Yet the real difficulty is not one of language; it resides more deeply in the explanation adopted by theology over the centuries. It is pointless to avoid scholastic language, speaking neither of substance nor of accidents, if, true to scholastic interpretation, one declares that in the Eucharist bread and wine are no more, that all that remain are the form, the colour and the taste... the modern Christian cannot help but feel uncomfortable. Experience tells him that the Eucharist is of bread and wine: is his faith to deny this experience? Must Christian reality be not only superior to earthly reality, but contrary to it?

Scholastic-based theologies, then, are no longer much help to the Christian today; they lay great stress on the Real Presence, but fail, now, to make this intelligible to him, which, after all, is the aim of theology.<sup>7</sup>

6. S. L., 7; D. CE., 8.

7. Ch.-V. HÉARS, *L'Eucharistie, mystère de la foi*. Colmar-Paris, 1967, p. 152... recognizes that his « Thomist exposé will doubtless clash with the thinking of many of our most well-informed contemporaries; the majority will perceive a return to outdated philosophical concepts which science and rational interpretations provided by modern thinking have long ago superseded. » If in fact this

Modern theologies have more success in making themselves understood; but their statement of the reality of the Presence is often less apparent. Their entire attention is directed towards the Eucharistic symbolism, and stress the role of faith in the celebration. After reading such studies some people have thought it necessary to come down on the side of a relative and symbolical nature of the Presence; or at least to conclude that the Presence is restricted in time to the celebration of the Mass in which the symbolism reaches its fullness. Others are inclined to attribute to faith a direct role in the constitution of the sacrament. It is common, now, to hear: « Christ is present in the Eucharist by reason of the faith of those present. » Or else, « Whatever may be the nature of the ministry in the Catholic Church or in the Protestant churches, it is on faith alone that the truth of the Eucharist depends. »

These, then, among others, are some observations.

#### *One Source of the Difficulties in the Way of Belief.*

Normally the Eucharist should not prompt any difficulties for faith. Faith does not consist merely in the admission of revealed truths, but in recognizing the mystery which manifests itself and consenting to it.<sup>8</sup> Far from making faith more difficult for the believer, the Eucharist constitutes its most efficacious sacrament: it is through the Eucharist more than any other means of salvation that the Christian mystery comes to us, permitting us to recognize and to consent to it in mutual communion. It is the revelation of Christ which inspires faith, and the Eucharist is this very revelation ever present in the heart of the Church.

Yet there must remain certain problems of a rational nature which are posed by the Eucharist and which are not resolved by faith, problems which must stay for ever insoluble because the Eucharist is beyond a rational explanation. Faith can come to terms with it since it possesses knowledge of another order, a deeper understanding of the Eucharist, which these problems cannot confound.

There are on the other hand difficulties of a rational order, capable of unsettling one's faith, and which are not in themselves bound up with dogma but brought on by theologies which nevertheless seek to make the mystery more accessible to man. Some find difficulty in accepting tran-

philosophy is no longer understood, then why have recourse to it in order to make the Eucharistic mystery intelligible?

8. God reveals himself in the act of communion; the revelation is an offer of communion; it establishes a covenant between God and his people. Faith does not merely give its assent to truths which are put before it, it accepts this communion and hence becomes a means of knowledge through communion with the divine mystery.

substantiation due to the fact that some particular earlier theology which purports to be the only valid interpreter of it affronts the intellectual outlook of modern man. Others draw back from giving complete credence to the entire reality of the Presence because a particular theology which they have adopted wholeheartedly makes a case of basing its explanation on a more modern philosophy, and in reality fails in its task.

These difficulties result, if I am not mistaken, from the aims of those theologies which try to interpret the Eucharist on the level of reason, a way in which it is impossible for the Eucharist to be explained; and these aims are imposed on them by the point of view which they adopt. *In the theology of the Eucharist, the « point de départ » of the process of reflection is of crucial importance.*

#### I. IN SEARCH OF A POINT DE DÉPART

The Eucharist is a reality of the world, and a mystery, too. Each of these two aspects might serve as a starting point for theological examination.

##### *Earthly Realities as a Basis for Thought.*

Scholastic theology had opted for the sacramental elements. It had asked the question of itself: how can the bread and the wine become the body and blood of Christ? It has entrusted philosophy with the task of providing the reply. If, in fact, the premises for thought are located among these earthly realities, then it falls to human thought to resolve the problem of the Eucharistic Presence. And so one consults the philosophy which one professes, that of Aristotle, and one asks of it how a substance recognized within the framework of this system can become through the divine power the body and blood of Christ, whilst still preserving its original outward form.<sup>9</sup>

Nowadays, other methods of explanation eagerly seek to replace the scholastic interpretation, and other philosophies have taken over the baton of Thomist thought. No longer does one speak of a new substance, but of the determination of a new sense. In their relations with each other, men can modify an object by the process of recreating it on the basis of the new significance which they attach to it. This object becomes, in this way, essentially different in men's eyes without its physical nature being transformed in the process. In order to understand that the bread, a bodily

9. Later on, DESCARTES examined the philosophy of substance which he himself had elaborated. Cfr *Lettre au P. Mesland, Feb. 9th, 1645. Œuvres et Lettres*, Pléiade edit., p. 1175.

food, becomes food for eternal life, that very food which is Christ himself, one analyses the sense, the meaning, of a gift offered in friendship by one man to another, and one underlines the presence of the one to the other, and the giving of self which are contained in this gesture; and there are those who think that one has merely to project such a creation of meaning to its conclusion to explain the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. An analysis, too, is made of the significance of the meal shared with others: this has always been for men a natural sacrament of brotherhood. Now, it is Christ who forms the bonds of human brotherhood. Here, again, it would suffice to place the Eucharist in the perspective of the symbolism afforded by the meal, and to develop this significance to its conclusion, in order to perceive the presence of Christ in the midst of the congregation gathered around the Eucharist.

Finally, there are those who are mindful of Christ when he said: « For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them » (Mt 18, 20), and feel able in the terms of this perspective to discover the explanation for the Eucharistic Presence.

All these forms of research have something in common, the most modern as well as the scholastic theory which they contest, and this is the « point de départ. » They start from earthly realities—the bread, the wine, the meal, the assembly, the symbolism used on earth in human relationships.

#### *This Principle is Open to Question.*

Now, earthly realities could never provide an explanation for the Christian mystery. The latter is eschatological, and eschatology does not depend on first realities, nor can it be explained by them; it is they that depend on eschatology and are comprised in it. Doubtless, eschatology may be perceived through surface realities, but these are no more than its tarnished reflection the eschatological meaning of which becomes evident at the moment that eschatology itself come into the picture.

Thus it is that the Old Testament in itself is incapable of bringing a man to Christ, if Christ does not reveal himself through the reading of the Old Testament. St. Paul assures us of this: the Jew wears a veil over his face when he reads the Scripture — he sees only the superficial « letter; » the written document. The veil falls when the Jew turns towards Christ the Lord, for « the Lord is the Spirit, » the total and profound reality, named « spiritual » and eternal, of which all other realities are but the shadow (cf. Col 2, 17).

It is thus, too, that the mystery of the Church does not find its explanation in the earthly men who make it up, but rather in the presence of Christ who moulds them into the community of salvation.

In the same way, Christian preaching, as understood by St. Paul, founds its origin and explanation in the mystery of salvation of which it forms, itself, the sacrament; it is not the word of man, but of God (I Th 2, 13), « the message which was a mystery hidden for generations and centuries... and has now been revealed... the mystery is Christ, » (Col 1, 25-27) the Christ of glory coming into the world through his Church. The Apostle himself is a part of the mystery of death and resurrection, he is a product of eschatology, and is only an apostle in that he arises out of it.<sup>10</sup> The modern pastoral principle which requires all evangelization to start out from earthly realities, from everyday facts, from concrete happenings means that the apostle who must ever preach eschatology, must do just that at precisely the point where it reveals itself closest to man, where it is made manifest to the prophetic gaze of the Christian: at the heart of the realities of this world. But it is always from the far side of these realities, that is, from their eschatological depths that the Christian message is derived.

In order to be true and faithful to its object, Christian thought must start out from the eschatological reality, in virtue of which a reality is truly Christian. The principle of intelligibility of the Christian mystery resides in this mystery. Neither the bread, nor the wine, nor the meal, nor the assembly, understood on the basis of a philosophy of intention or of nature will have it in them to account for the Eucharistic Presence. The key to the mystery is to be found elsewhere.

The fourth Gospel has opened out before the theology of the Eucharist a way which should never have been closed off. When the disciples protest: « This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it? » Jesus tries to set them on the way of true understanding by evoking the *paschal mystery*: « Does this upset you? What if you should see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before? » Earthly flesh has no value whatsoever; eaten as an earthly food it would have no meaning in terms of eternal life, « It is the spirit (heavenly reality) that gives life, the flesh has nothing to offer. The words (the things of which I speak) I have spoken to you are (realities of) spirit and life, » (Jn 6, 61-63) eschatological realities.

It is within the house that the key is to be sought: it is from the inside alone that the Eucharist is revealed.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cf. F.-X. DURRWELL, *Le mystère pascal, source de l'apostolat*. Paris, 1970, pp. 149-162.

<sup>11</sup> The Christian mystery ever reveals itself from within. Scripture, and particularly in St. John, affirms time and time again that the disciples came to understand Jesus and his message on the basis of his glorification, that is, the

### An Instructive Failure.

Using the same method, starting out from the sacramental elements, the theology of the Eucharist has, in another sphere, registered a failure rich in the lessons it teaches : the sphere concerned with the sacrifice of the Mass.<sup>12</sup>

For centuries after the Council of Trent, it was at pains to counter Protestant denials and to affirm the Mass to be a sacrifice. It considered the question : How does the Eucharistic celebration realize the conditions of a true sacrifice ? How is Christ immolated, offered up in the act of this celebration ? There was talk of Christ being immolated by the sword that was the word of consecration, of a sacrifice by separating the body and the blood on the basis of the two « species, » of an immolation in the reduction to the state of being food, of a destruction of the body of Christ by the communion of the priest and of the faithful, of an immolated existence, one inflicted upon Christ by his inclusion in the Eucharist... All of them theories which resulted in making the Mass a new sacrifice, different from the one unique sacrifice as understood in Scripture, never to be repeated, never able to be so, that is the sacrifice of Calvary.

Conscious of this essential uniqueness, theologians today place the Eucharistic sacrifice in the field of symbols. In its reality, the sacrifice of Christ belongs for ever to the past ; it is present for us by reason of the Eucharistic symbol : the bread showing the body, and the wine the blood, represent Christ just as he was than at the time of his death ; « the Eucharistic sacrifice is essentially representative of the sacrifice of Calvary. »<sup>13</sup>

fullness of the mystery. Jesus himself turns to his Hour to justify his claims (cfr Jn 2, 18-21 ; 8, 28). The mystery of Christ can be understood when the mystery of Christ is revealed ; it is « Christ who preaches Christ » (St. AUGUSTINE, *In Joh., tract. 47*, 3. CCL 36, 405 s.).

12. In reality this sphere is different only for the theologies which have their basis in earthly realities. We shall see that the Eucharist is at one and the same time, and for the same reason, both Presence and sacrifice.

13. A. VONIER, *La clef de la doctrine eucharistique*. Paris, 1942, p. 130 s. : « The Eucharistic body and blood of Christ are a complete representation of that phase of his existence when he was dead on the Cross ; they do not in any way represent that other phase of his existence in which he lives, glorified, in heaven. His body and his blood, separated in the reality of the sacrament, can stand as the memorial or the representation of the Lord whose body was hanging on the cross, whose blood was being shed upon the hill of Calvary. The Eucharistic sacrifice, then, is essentially representative. »

One particular statement is to be noted : the Eucharist « in no way represents that other phase of Christ's existence, in which he lives, glorified, in heaven. » — Dom Vonier sees the sacrifice from the one viewpoint of being an immolation. Now, this concept of sacrifice is totally outmoded by studies on sacrifice in general, and, particularly, on the meaning of the sacrifice of Christ, who is not only immolation but a means to achieving communion with God, a passover.

The uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice is, then, guaranteed, but to the profound detriment of the reality of the Eucharistic sacrifice : the Mass has the function of representing, not of making really present ; the sacrifice of Christ belongs decidedly to the past and to that alone, in itself inaccessible to the Church. Now, the best contemporary theology draws its inspiration from the Bible, and claims for the Eucharist the real presence of the sacrifice as well as the real presence of Christ. For the Church must be united with Christ even in his very sacrifice ; in order to be saved, it must be in communion with Christ at the precise point where salvation is accomplished for Christ and for the Church : in his glorifying death. It is thus, according to St. Paul, that one is a Christian, by communion with Christ in his death by which he is glorified. Already, the sacrament of initiation must produce this simultaneous participation in Christ and in his sacrifice : « When we were baptized in Christ Jesus, we were baptized in his death » (Rm 6, 3 ; cfr Col 2, 12).<sup>14</sup> Every other sacrament, similarly, is a Paschal communion ; but the Eucharist is the very culmination of all the sacraments : it is marked out by a very Real Presence of Christ and of the sacrifice, and by a very real communion with Christ and with his sacrifice. « Take this all of you and eat it : this is my body which will be given up for you, » says Christ. The body is given up just as much as it is present — presence and sacrifice are indissociable. Moreover, the theologians unanimously affirm that

In the Eucharist, the bread and wine are expressions also of life and of joy — even at the very forefront of their natural significance ; they give the Eucharist the character of a meal in the Kingdom, a sacrament of communion with the Paschal Christ. « When we eat the flesh of the Lord, and drink his blood, it is his Passover that we are celebrating. » St. ATHANASUS, *Letter 4*. PG 26, 1379.

Ch.-V. Hérís took up the theory. He, too, considers Christ's sacrifice from one single point of view — that of immolation, and affirms that, in the Eucharist, the sacrifice has no effect whatsoever upon the person of Christ himself, but, rather, « symbolizes his death upon the cross. » *Op. cit.*, p. 198. Without a more biblically inspired theology, or one based on liturgical principles, authors have latterly been unanimous in consigning the true sacrifice of Christ to past time, and in explaining away the Eucharistic sacrifice as a mere act *in genere signi*.

14. Scripture has no instance of « an application of the merits of Christ, » nor a « distribution of graces » acquired by Christ. This language belongs to a juridical theology. In speaking of salvation being realized among our very selves, Scripture uses a language of communion : one is involved in salvation *as realized in Christ*, one eats the body of Christ in his passover, one is consecrated in his consecration, baptized in him and in his glorifying death. The merit offered by Christ is Christ himself as shown in his death, in the welcome given to the Father ; grace is the glory of God in Christ, the divine action which begets, which glorifies Christ in his death.

Christ becomes present for us, in order to have us share in his sacrifice.<sup>15</sup>

Such, then, are the results of this reflection upon the Eucharistic sacrifice, one which sets out from the basis of earthly reality. Sometimes, one can prove the reality of the Eucharistic sacrifice, but only by making the Mass into a different sacrifice from that one unique sacrifice of Christ which is recognized by Scripture; sometimes, in order to avoid this error, one can feel obliged to reject the reality of the sacrifice of the Mass.

This assessment testifies to a necessary failure.

*The Eucharistic Presence.  
Inexplicable on The Basis of the Various Elements  
of the Sacrifice.*

When elaborated along identical lines, does not the theology of the Eucharistic presence run the risk of producing equally doubtful conclusions?

The question put in scholastic terms — how can the substance of the bread and wine become the substance of the body and blood of Christ — supposes that the Christ of glory can inscribe his presence in *this* world in the form of a substance of a temporal nature, what constitutes the *natural being* of the bread becoming itself the being of Christ,<sup>16</sup> and Christ thus becoming integrated with the world after the fashion of a worldly reality. Preoccupied to the exclusion of all else with philosophical notions, the scholastic theory of transubstantiation is *indifferent to the paschal character of the Eucharist*. Now, this latter denotes essentially a commu-

15. It is quite astonishing to see how theologians relegate the sacrifice among the realms of the symbol, whilst still affirming the entire Thomist realism of transubstantiation: the true Presence of the body, and also a representation of the sacrifice! In fact they admit that our participation in the sacrifice is the ultimate aim of Christ's Presence: hence, therefore, a Christ who is really present with a view to final communion in his sacrifice, and whose Presence is not real! — Starting out from the elements of the sacrifice one can, by means of Aristotelian philosophy, provide an explanation of the Real Presence; but one cannot account for the reality of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Now, the interpretation of any one aspect of the Eucharist is only valid if it corresponds to the mystery as a whole.

16. « What was bread has become the body of Christ; what was wine has become the blood of Christ. It is the « *Christus ex pane* » and the « *Christus ex vino* » of the theologians. » Ch.-H. HERRIS, *op. cit.*, p. 193. — It being generally conceded that the Eucharistic Presence is no longer there when the outward form is no longer that of bread and wine, surely the theory should also say that at that moment, in reverse, as it were, a transubstantiation *ex Christo* comes about?

nion with the glorified Christ who, in his death to the world, is living at the level of God, and is *no longer of this world save to the extent that he is its eschatological reality*. Grounding its argument in the substance of the bread and wine, the theology results in a Christ who is not, or at least who may not be, the one with whom we are in communion: Christ in his death and resurrection.<sup>17</sup> It is in this way that, following the same course, it had resulted in a sacrifice which is not the sacrifice of Calvary.

When we turn our attention to the symbolism of the celebration in order to try to discover a way of explaining the presence of Christ, it does seem that one can never quite attain the full reality of that presence. It is pointless to develop to its conclusion the significance of the self-giving contained in a present or that of the communal meal; it still seems quite impossible to attain to that reality which the Church recognizes in the Presence of Christ.<sup>18</sup> Staying in the area of symbols peculiar to human relationships, one is moreover inclined to doubt — justifiably in this case — the permanence of the Eucharistic Presence, and to confine this presence to the moment of the greatest density of the symbol — the very instant when the bread is given and eaten, or, at the very most, the period of the celebration of the Mass.

As for explaining the Eucharistic Presence from the starting point of the assembly, as is sometimes done, particularly in irregular celebrations: « Since we are here united in brotherhood by this meal, Christ is in our midst! » — this is to turn Mt 18, 20 into a comment on the Eucharist which cannot be justified. One is forgetting that the Eucharistic assembly is constituted by virtue of the Eucharistic Presence of Christ and not vice versa: « The fact that there is only one loaf (which is the body of Christ) means that... we form a single body » (1 Co 10, 17).<sup>19</sup> A meal shared between Christians, however brotherly, is not a Holy Mass.

17. According to S. TH. III<sup>e</sup>, at the Last Supper, the Eucharist comprised the passible body of Christ (q. 81, a. 33); if the consecrated bread and wine had been kept until after the meal, Christ would have undergone death in the sacrament as upon the cross (q. 81, a. 4); later on until Easter, the body would have been present without the blood, and the blood without the body, and the whole without the soul (q. 76, a. 1, ad 1m; a. 2). These statements are in the logic of the system, but are incompatible with the true character, essentially Paschal, of the Eucharist.

18. E. SCHILLERMEYER, *La présence du Christ dans l'eucharistie*. Paris, 1970, p. 132: « The phenomenology of the gift-of-self-within-the-gift is basically incapable of rendering in an adequate manner » the way in which Christ communicates himself in the Eucharistic form. For « nought else is given to us in the Eucharist than Christ himself. »

19. It is true that Christ is already present in the Church and that the latter



*The Paschal Mystery*  
— a Basis for Theological Reflection.

The meaning of the Eucharist which the sacramental elements are unable to furnish resides in what lies beyond earthly realities, in Christ and his Kingdom which comes into our world through the medium of the bread and wine.

All Christ's teaching concerning the Kingdom of Heaven found its culminating point, its « point of crystallization » in the institution of the Eucharist.<sup>20</sup> The account of the Last Supper begins by the proclamation of the « accomplishment » of Easter celebrated in the Kingdom of God (Lk 22, 15 s.). It is concluded<sup>21</sup> by the evocation of the new wine which Jesus will drink in this Kingdom. The Eucharist can only be understood in the perspective in which it was instituted: as a sacrament of the eternal Paschal meal which is indeed the Kingdom of Heaven.

In 1 Co 10, 3, the Eucharist is evoked by the name of spiritual food, for the body of Christ which the faithful receive in communion is that of Christ-spirit (cfr 1 Co 15, 45), Christ in his Paschal mystery. The meal is « the Lord's Supper » (1 Co 11, 20) which is the glorified Christ; « the table » is that of « the Lord » (1 Co 11, 26); the body which is given up is the Lord's (1 Co 11, 29).<sup>22</sup> The whole institution of the Eucharist is bathed, according to St. Paul, in the Paschal mystery; the very death which is proclaimed by the Eucharist is that of the Lord (1 Co 11, 26)<sup>23</sup>: for the Apostle, « The notion of the Eucharistic body merges with that of the body after resurrection. »<sup>24</sup> In that it is the presence of the eternally glorified Christ, the Eucharist is placed beyond earthly realities and beyond the philosophies which interpret it.

According to the fourth Gospel, the promised bread is « the flesh given for the life of the world » (6, 51). To remove from his promise whatever might seem absurd in it to Jewish eyes, Jesus has recourse to his ascent into heaven (6, 61 s.), and declares that the flesh in itself has no value — for « It is the Spirit that gives life » — and that the realities of which he is speaking are « spirit and life » (6, 63). In defining the Eucharist as « the flesh... which has suffered for our sins and which the Father has

is able to consecrate the bread and the wine by reason of that very Presence. But the Church is not the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Presence of Christ through the bread and the wine.

20. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Gottes Herrschaft und Reich*, Freiburg, 1959, p. 173.

21. See P. BENOIT - M.E. BOISMARD, *Synopse des quatre évangiles*, t. I. Paris, 1965, p. 287.

22. At least, according to some manuscripts. Others say merely: « if the body is not discerned. »

23. Cfr D.M. STANLEY, *Christ's Resurrection in Pauline Soteriology*. Rome, 1961, p. 118.

24. L. CERFAUX, *Le Christ dans la théologie de Saint Paul*. Paris, 1951, p. 214.

resurrected by his own will, » Ignatius of Antioch remains faithful to the theology found in John.<sup>25</sup>

It can be seen from a collection of scriptural texts that the Eucharist has been considered as a sacrificial meal (cfr p. ex. I Co 10, 14-21) a communion with the Paschal Lamb. Now, a sacrificial meal is celebrated around a victim which is immolated and « sanctified » in the divine sphere. For Christ, this sanctification is termed glorification, death, and resurrection; the Eucharist would not be the sacrificial meal of the New Covenant, if the body were not present, immolated and glorified.<sup>26</sup>

The Eucharist, then, cannot be studied as some undefined presence, that of a substance in this world, or that of a man of this world made present by a sign, for it is the presence of the Paschal Christ, who is not of this world. *The principle of intelligibility of the Eucharistic mystery resides in that which constitutes it: the Paschal Christ coming into his earthly Church.* How true it is that Christian realities find their interpretation in eschatology, the very reason for their being Christian.

## II. THE PASCHAL MYSTERY, ONE OF PAROUSIA

### *The Importance of the Parousia of Christ.*

Scripture has much to say concerning the parousia of Christ, which is his coming and his presence to the Church; it speaks of his

25. *Smyrn.*, 7, 1.

26. The essentially Paschal character of the Eucharist is not contradicted by the fact that the institution of the Eucharist preceded the death and the resurrection. In the account of the Last Supper, the Eucharist is presented as a meal at the foot of the cross, a sacrificial meal; as early as the Supper, Christ was to be given, then, to the apostles in his immolation and his glory. — A Presence of the Paschal Christ which precedes in time his death is not unthinkable, when this Presence is brought about in the sacrament. As far back as Ch. de Condren, it had been understood (*L'idée du sacerdoce et du sacrifice de Jésus-Christ*, Paris, 1745, p. 102). In his glorifying death, Christ lives on the level of God, everlasting in his redemptive act (cfr below, p. 290); he is able to be present in other species in both temporal aspects, before and after his death. He proceeds from out of the eschatology into our twentieth century, and he could also come out of the eschatology at the time of the Last Supper. In both instances, we are dealing with a similar coming in other species in a time scale preceding the eschatology.

« However, a Eucharistic Presence of Christ, at the Last Supper, in his earthly form, as is postulated in the scholastic theory of transubstantiation, contradicts the sacrificial context inseparable from the Christian sacrament and from the Eucharist in particular. » F.X. DURRWELL, *La Résurrection de Jésus, mystère du salut*, 9th edit., Le Puy, 1968, p. 384, n. 46.

epiphany, that is, his appearance to the Church ; the scriptural importance of the theme is so great that one must be astonished at the lack of attention accorded to it by current theology, at the humble place given to it in the work of redemption. Theology does no more than allot it the spectacular role of winding up the history of salvation. Yet its real function is to bring it to its fulfilment *in ourselves*.

For the parousia carries within it the entire grace of redemption ; it is the mystery of salvation itself, in that it realizes not only in Christ but for us and in us that very same mystery : salvation is nothing other than the Paschal Christ present in his Church and united with it.

According to the synoptic tradition, Jesus never ceased to proclaim his coming. He is « the one who comes. » Here is his messianic prerogative : « Are you the one who is to come ? » (Mt 11, 3 ; cf. Jn 11, 27). The title of Son of Man is inseparable from the proclamation of the coming in glory : « For if anyone... is ashamed of me... the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his father » (Mk 8, 38). « And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory » (Mk 13, 26). Before his death, Jesus declares that now there will be accomplished the whole of this prophecy ; « From this time onwards you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven » (Mt 26, 64).

At the outset of his preaching, Jesus proclaims the Good News of the coming Kingdom (Mk 1, 14 s.). But, little by little, the advent of the Kingdom becomes merged with the advent of the Son of Man in the glory and the power of God. How apposite the saying is : « According to the Gospels, Christ is himself the Kingdom. »<sup>27</sup>

From the very day when Jesus predicts his passion, the Synoptics see the introduction of the theme of the resurrection, one implicit in the theme of the Kingdom and of the imminent coming of the Son of Man. The resurrection appears as a definition, an interpretation of the coming in glory<sup>28</sup> : the Son of Man will indeed come in glory, but via humiliation and death, and finally resurrection. And so Jesus is able, at the very beginning of his passion, to proclaim as about to come to pass his coming on the clouds of heaven : « From this time onward... » (Mt 26, 64).

27. ORIGEN, *In Matth.*, Tract. 14, GCS III, p. 283.

28. Mk 9, 9-13 clearly shows the close relationship between the theme of death and of entry into glory with that of the coming of the Son of Man. Cf. also Mk 10, 35-39.

After Easter, the theme of the resurrection is more evident than that of the coming ; henceforth, one speaks of resurrection, whilst Jesus had announced his coming in power and glory. Yet early Christianity still maintains the intimate relationship between the glorification of Jesus and his final coming (cf. Mt 26, 64, and 28, 18) : in its eyes, the resurrection is the irruption of eschatology into the world ; in the name of the resurrection (cf. Ph 2, 9-11 ; Rm 10, 9), one accords to Jesus the title of Lord, which is that of the final coming (Ph 2, 10 s. ; 2 Th 2, 14). In the Acts, the resurrection is the Good News made real (Ac 2, 27-36 ; 13, 32), the coming of Christ among his people and the arrival of God's blessing (Ac 3, 25 s. ; 26, 23), the ultimate fruition of the divine promise (13, 32 s.). In St. John, too, the proclamation of the death and resurrection is incorporated in the theme of the parousia and epiphany : « I am going away and shall come » (14, 18, 28), « In a short time you will no longer see me, and then a short time later you will see me » (16, 16).

What coming is involved ? The one unique coming — in the fullness of salvation, at the end of time. The eschatology is accomplished in Christ's death in which he is glorified according to the fullness of God. Scripture speaks only of the « coming » of Christ — it knows of no « return. »<sup>29</sup>

#### *The Immediacy of the Parousia.*

It is customary for us to reserve the word, « parousia » for the ultimate manifestation of this coming. As early as the first Christians people were wont to put last in time that which concerned the culmination of the history of salvation. St. Paul considers « the Day of the Lord » (1 Thess 5, 2 pass.) as a reality of the future ; since we have not yet entirely reached it, he still awaits it. Nevertheless, he is still conscious of living in the present, in the Day of Christ : « You know well that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night... But it is not as if you live in the dark, my brothers... No, you are all sons of light and sons of the day... We who belong to the day » (1 Thess 5, 2-8 ; Rom 13, 12 s. ; 1 Co 10, 11 ; Col 1, 12). And so he reserves the name for the parousia in its totality, yet cannot help but acknowledge that it is already here.

*No, the paschal mystery is also the parousia.*<sup>30</sup> God sends his Christ among men by the very same action which glorifies him ;

29. Except in certain parables when the Master, having gone away, must come back to be again present. The material nature of the image requires that the coming is presented as a return.

30. F.X. DURRWELL, *op. cit.*, pp. 299-340.



« Jesus has risen for us, » (cfr 2 Co 5, 15), the one « given » to the Church by the resurrection (cfr Eph. 1, 22), « sent » to the people : « It was for you in the first place that God raised up his servant and sent him to bless you » (Ac 3, 26). The mystery of the incarnation which is both sanctification in God *and* mission into the world (cfr Jn 10, 36) attains in the glorifying death its height of sanctification and fullness of mission. When speaking of his « hour, » Jesus said : « I consecrate myself » (Jn 17, 19), and « I will come back to you » (Jn 14, 18). According to Heb 2, 9, it is through his glory that Christ is for us and is given to us : « Jesus... crowned with glory and splendour, so that he might have experienced death for all mankind. » When considered from this personal point of view the glorification of Jesus is to be termed resurrection : from the standpoint of the Church and of its saving power, for men, it may be termed parousia.<sup>31</sup>

#### *Parousia, the Mystery of Salvation Communicated.*

It is of course necessary that it is to us that Jesus comes in the glory of his death, for otherwise, that death would hold no salutary meaning for us. Salvation is nothing other than Christ himself in his glorifying death : « He has become our wisdom and our virtue, our holiness and our freedom » (1 Co 1, 30). *It is in his person that God accomplishes salvation* : Christ is the proclaimed Good News (Ac 13, 32 s.), the affirmation given by God to all the promises of salvation (2 Co 1, 20). In the eternal mystery of his death and resurrection, he is not only the saviour, he is the salvation, the fullness which pervades the Church. This affirmation is at the heart of Paschal theology. A salvation of this type cannot be either distributed or applied : it becomes ours when Christ comes and gives himself in communion : « He has called us into communion with his son » (1 Co 1, 19).

Jesus claims to be the bread of life ; he is the Lamb immolated and sanctified in the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins (cfr Jn 1, 29-33 ; 7, 37-39 ; 17, 19 ; 19, 34-36). The bread one eats thereby to gain life ; one eats the Paschal lamb, too, thereby to be sanctified. This is why Jesus said : « Take this, all of you, and eat it : This is my body which shall be given up for you. »

31. The time of the Church does not precede the parousia ; in a sense, the Church does not await the parousia, it is created by it. What she is waiting for is the fullness of that coming and of its own true mystery.

### III. THE EUCCHARIST, THE SACRAMENT OF THE PAROUSIA

Countless are the ways that lead to this so essential coming into the world : the Lord of the world, Christ himself, comes to us by a variety of ways. Every manifestation of salvation, every means to it, is a sacrament of the advent, of communion. The Church, Christ's body in the world, is the fundamental sacrament through which Christ comes and invites every man to communion with him.

The apostles, both those of the days of yore, and their successors, in their person and in their words, are sacraments of the parousia of Christ, mediators of the presence and of the contact Christ has among and with men.

What one generally calls the sacraments are all of them means leading to the Presence of Christ in his work of redemption. And among them the Eucharist, the sacrament « par excellence, » constitutes also the means « par excellence » for the coming of Christ into this world.

#### *The Eucharist, Christ-present.*

More than something holy, a means of divine praise and sanctification, more than a food for eternity, a meal in which the bonds of brotherhood are intertwined, the Eucharist is basically the personal coming of Christ. Everything within it necessarily depends on this parousia.<sup>32</sup>

In spite of the sometimes deeply rooted divergences between Catholic and Protestant exegetists, as regards to the Eucharist and the realism of Christ's Presence, they are agreed that this Presence of the Lord among his people formed the essential constituent of the faith and of the Eucharistic experience of the early communities.<sup>33</sup>

These early communities knew little of our detailed theological concepts, and gave perhaps little thought even to important aspects of the Eucharist. Did not St. Paul feel himself obliged to refer to its sacrificial

32. P. Hitz is right, then, when he writes : transubstantiation « constitutes the foundation... of the Eucharist in all its dimensions. » « La présence eucharistique du Seigneur », in *Laumen Vitae*, 22 (1967), p. 319.

33. The words of institution express « the fundamental idea of the Presence of Jesus in the brotherhood around the table » ; for the whole of « early Christendom, the Presence of Jesus constitutes the gift of the Last Supper » ; « for Paul, too, the meaning of the Supper is in the Presence of Christ. » БЕЖМ, ТИВНТ, III, pp. 736 and 738.

nature, and the fact that it was instituted on the eve of the Passion, and that it is the Lord's death which is proclaimed in it? But it had always been accepted that the Eucharist is « the Lord's Meal » in which Jesus is present to the community gathered around his table (« the Lord's Table »). This faith and this experience are clearly illustrated in the story of the travellers going to Emmaus; here, the disciples plunge their whole being into the joy of the Presence and recognize the Lord « at the breaking of bread » (Lk 24, 35). The Presence is still veiled, but it carries within it the promise of fruition and so prompts the desire: « Maranatha — Lord come » (1 Co 16, 22; Did 10, 6).

The words of consecration emphasize the personal character of the Lord's Presence: « this » is not merely a sacred food, a sustenance for holiness, but « my body, » and, for a Semite, the body is identical with the person,<sup>34</sup> expressing its presence. « I am the bread of life, » Jesus declares in John, « He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him » (6, 48, 56). Christ speaks this Eucharistic language when, in the Apocalypse, he promises: « I shall come in to share his meal, side by side with him » (3, 20).

*One must, then, hold as most superficial any theology and any pastoral form of liturgy which, in order to emphasize other aspects of the Eucharist, tends to dismiss lightly the Personal Presence of Christ amid his faithful; for this is the essential meaning of the Eucharist.*

#### Sacrificial Presence.

The Eucharist is both Presence and sacrifice; the two aspects are inseparable; each implies and explains the other.

The Christ of the parousia is the Paschal Christ, eternal in the death by which he is glorified and sent to us, Christ alive forever in the mystery of the Redemption, in that eternal moment of the realization of this mystery.<sup>35</sup>

For, on the one hand, God's glorifying work in Christ is an act of ultimate fullness; it is, therefore, eschatological and knows no tomorrow, nor future change; it is the action of God which begets his Son for eternity (Ac 13, 33; Rom 1, 4).

On the other hand, this eternal action of God does not follow the death of Christ, it coincides with it. If one studies the redemption through the various images which are used to describe it, death and glorification

34. Cfr Eph 5, 28: « Husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man to love his wife is for him to love himself. »

35. One of the principal preoccupations of the book, *La Résurrection de Jésus, mystère de salut*, was to show that the glory eternalizes Christ in his death. Cfr pp. 171-183, 270 s., 386-388.

always constitute one indivisible mystery. Death is *deserving* of salvation; it is an act by which Jesus receives salvation, which is no other than the creative and glorifying action of God; glorification, then, does not follow on from death, and salvation is not given after the welcome accorded to it, it is given in death itself. Death is, then, a *giving of self* of the Son to the Father (Eph 5, 2). Now, an act of giving takes place at the precise moment when there is a corresponding acceptance of the offering made. The death of Christ is a giving of self to the extent that the oblation is received, to the extent that the death finds an equivalent divine acceptance which is the glorification of Christ. The death is a *passover*, a passing, a rising up to God (cfr Jn 13, 1; 6, 62). Christ meets his Father, not beyond but at the very top of his ascent towards him, that is, in his death. And this encounter is in the form of eternal glorification.

Hence the reason for one's saying that death and glorification are two faces of one single mystery<sup>36</sup>: Christ lives forever at the apogee of his movement towards the Father, in the ever present fullness of his oblation. St. John, then, sees him in glory when on the very cross itself, drawing men towards him when raised up on the wood (12, 32 s.),<sup>37</sup> until the very end in his transfiguration showing himself to be the eternal lamb (19, 37) standing erect in glory — with his throat cut (Apoc 5, 6). It is an image of eternity that John shows us when he indicates the water, the symbol of the Spirit of the glorified Christ (7, 37-39) pouring out admixed with the blood if immolation (19, 34-37).

If, then, Christ comes into his Church, it is then, at that moment, the unique instant of his glorifying death, in the reality of his sacrifice, that he shows himself present in it.<sup>38</sup> *The Eucharist is a sacrifice as well as being a Presence, in fact, because of it.* This sacrifice is expressed in a sign; yet it is not, first and foremost the sign but the presence which causes the Mass to be the sacrifice of Christ.

Christ, in one act, gives to his own both his body and his sacrifice, in order to unite them to himself in his sacrifice. *His body is his*

36. J. HUBY, *Mystiques pauliniennes et johannique*, Paris, 1946, p. 21.

37. W. THÜSING, *Die Erhöhung und Verherrlichung Jesu im Johannes-evangelium*, Münster i.W., 1960, p. 33: for the fourth Gospel, the Cross is the eternal throne of Christ's glory.

38. Hence, the Eucharist is the sacrament of the « celestial » liturgy according to the significance given to this word by the Letter to the Hebrews, that is, into a sort of sacrifice which we accomplish... Since they are signs of the realities of heaven which he, the pontiff, accomplishes, in a figure, then that sacrifice must needs be their manifestation; and the pontiff produces a type of reflection of the heavenly liturgy. » ТИХОДОРЪ ДЪ МОСКОВСКЪ, *Hom. catéch.* XV, 15, edit. R. Torneau, Città del Vaticano, 1949, p. 485.

*sacrifice, too.*<sup>39</sup> For it is in this way that Jesus preserves eternally his own true character, the Son of God in his truth (cf. Rom 1, 4), beloved of his Father (Jn 10, 17) : in his sacrificial act and in his glorious death. The saviour is, in his own person, salvation, « having become our redemption » (1 Co 1, 30), our introduction to God (Heb 10, 20) : he is the Paschal mystery.

Just as in the case of the Eucharist, the Church is both the body of Christ and his sacrifice continually offered on earth until the end of time ; one becomes a Christian by communing with death and resurrection (Rom 6, 3 ; Col 2, 11 s.). The apostle in particular constitutes a Presence of Christ among men in sharing his death and glory (2 Co 4, 10-12 ; Gal 2, 19 s.) ; his word is Christ's word (Rom 10, 14), an emanation of his Presence (2 Co 2, 15-17) and, in this way, it is at the same time crucified and charged with the power of the Spirit which raises Christ from the dead (1 Co 1, 17 s. ; 2, 4). Christ's Presence — wherever and whenever — implies the presence of his sacrifice.

A theology of the Eucharistic Presence which does not imply sacrifice, and which does not succeed in synthesizing Presence and sacrifice<sup>40</sup> must needs admit defeat : such is no true theology of the Presence.

If the Mass is a sacrifice on account of the Presence, then the Presence finds, in its turn, its own complete definition in the Paschal character of Christ, that is, in his sacrifice. For the pascha of Christ, his saving Presence to the Church is an aspect

39. Since whenever Christ is present he is present in his sacrifice, there is no reason to make a distinction, by separating them, between the Eucharist as a presence and the Eucharist as a sacrifice. With Christ, there is no distinction. It is ever in his glorious death that he is present with us. With regard to the Church, one must make a distinction between the celebration of the Eucharist and its conservation. The sacrifice of Christ becomes the Church's sacrifice when the Church celebrates the Eucharist. It does so in the Mass, where the sacrificial Presence of Christ is most clearly expressed, and where the Church shares with Christ his glorifying death, becoming with him a single body in a single, unique sacrifice of his. The Church celebrates the Eucharistic sacrifice, too, in the other forms of the Eucharistic rite, but does so in a manner less than perfect, for in every Eucharistic prayer, the Church unites herself with Christ in his glorious death. Worshipping the Presence and participating in the sacrifice can never be separated.

Where there is no worship of the Eucharist, but a mere conservation of the Eucharist, there is no participation in the sacrifice. There are no two ways about it — Christ's Presence must be a Presence in his sacrifice.

40. Such is the scholastic explanation of transubstantiation, which in itself is indifferent to the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist. Such, too, is the interpretation of the Mass by Dom Vonier and his school, for whom the Presence is real, and the sacrifice is representative.

of the mystery of the death and resurrection : and this is the fullness of incarnation, that is the total sanctification of Christ in God and total mission into the world, oblation to God which is complete, and one universally valid for all men. The coming of Christ is brought about through and in the sacrifice : it is a giving of self.

The whole interpretation of the Eucharist, then, is to be found within the Paschal mystery.

#### *Present under Other Species.*

Christ comes into the world through signs of his Presence. « When he died he died once for all » to this world, « his life now is life for God » (Rom 6, 10) and is no longer visible in the same way as the realities of this world. Completely impossible — for, now dead and now raised up again, he is removed from this world, because of his very being he is elsewhere. He enters into the stream of our existence only in that he constitutes its very term. However real the Presence is, that Presence will never be other than a coming : he is visible within the world in that he is not of the world ; he is present by means of the earthly realities which he has chosen as the means and the signs of his coming. Christ's Presence and sacrifice become a part of our world under other species : the Paschal mystery explains the sacramental nature of the whole Church, and, particularly, the symbolic character of the Eucharist.

« *By the Power of Submitting all Things to Himself* »  
(Phil 3, 21).

If he wishes to turn an earthly reality into the means of his Presence, his Presence in this world, the Paschal Christ has the power to do so. Christ's glory is all-powerful on earth. God raises him in the « strength of power and might » and gives him the Spirit which is the divine power of creation as well as infinite holiness, and allows him to share in his own overlordship (Mt 26, 64 ; 28, 18 ; Rom 1, 4 ; Phil 2, 9-11 ; Eph 1, 19-22).

Now, God is the lord of the world in that he is its creator ; his power is absolute since it addresses itself to the very existence of things. God's action in raising him from the dead confers on Christ a cosmic role, and it is this power of creation which Christ puts at the disposition of the Church : « ... the ruler of everything, the head of the Church... » (Eph 1, 22). For the man who believes in his heart that Jesus is the Lord, and that God has raised him from

the dead (Rom 10, 9), the Eucharistic dogma denotes nothing that is impossible : Christ is the Kyrios, his word is sovereign, it accomplishes whatever it decrees, « ... by the same power with which he can subdue the whole universe » (Phil 3, 21).

*Present by this Power Alone.*

The faith of the Church plays a role in the celebration of the Eucharist ; John 6 shows us that its importance is capital. This role, however, is not to bring the Bread of Life down from heaven, but to receive it and to eat it ; « Take and eat. » The parousia is a strictly divine function ; its incidence in the world is a vertical one, for God alone raises Christ, creating him for us, sending him to us. Man may allow himself to be drawn by the Kingdom, to be possessed by it, in order to possess it in turn — this is the role of faith — but he has no power over it : the Kingdom bursts in upon this world by its own power.

After his death, Christ « shows himself to Cephas, » « shows himself to the Twelve. » We are not told that they saw him, but that he appeared to them.<sup>41</sup> Christ comes to his own as Lord, in the sovereign liberty of his own initiative, and of his own power. And the disciples believe in him.

Faith is inspired by the Presence, and not vice-versa. Today, Christ comes in the words of preaching, and his coming makes man amenable to faith. He comes in the Eucharist, and his coming inspires the faith with which he is greeted. It is said of the disciples at Emmaus that, « Their eyes were opened... at the breaking of bread » (Lk 24, 31. 35). Their eyes were not opened of their own accord ; someone opened them. It is the Lord who, of his own accord, is present, and that Presence produces faith. It is up to man to allow himself to be opened up.

According to Lukke's narrative of the Last Supper, the Eucharist is the New Covenant (the *kaine diatheke*) (Lk 22, 20 ; 1 Co 11, 25), that announced by Jeremiah (37, 31). This divine *diatheke* is more than an alliance between two contractants<sup>42</sup> : it is « a divine disposition, the powerful manifestation of the sovereign will of God in the context of history, by which he directs relations between himself and man according to his own designs for salvation. »<sup>43</sup> God is the prime mover here ; it is he who « establishes it » (Jr 31, 31). More than a bilateral alliance, the Eucharist is a divine institution which creates the people of God, and eschatology establishes itself in history.

41. Cf 1 Cor 15, 5-7. According to exegetists, the verb, ὁφθῆν, has a middle sense. It does not mean : he was seen by Cephas, but... he appeared to him.

42. The translation, « New Covenant, » is only correct if the word « covenant » is endowed with a different meaning from its current usage.

43. BEHM, « TWNT, » II, p. 137.

It would, then, be wrong to attribute to a worldly reality — whatever it may be — to the community of the faithful, or to faith, a direct role in the constitution of the sacrament. Any attack upon the sovereignty of divine action as concerns the coming of Christ in the Eucharist, and therefore in the parousiac sense, too, would go counter to the most certain guidelines which we are given in Scripture. The Church does not come before the parousia nor does she produce it : it is she who is created by it, the Church — at first imperfect — bestirred by the beginning of parousia, and finally the Church in all its fullness at the time that Christ will give himself to her according to that very fullness. The power of changing the bread into the body of Christ is the power of Christ present within the Church and acting through his own ministry. It is true that the ministers must be united with Christ in at least a certain minimum of faith, in order to celebrate the Eucharist.<sup>44</sup> Yet their faith does not produce the Eucharistic parousia ; it unites them with Christ so that he can work through them.

*Present as the Ultimate Reality.*

Although the paschal Christ shares the divine omnipotence — « God wanted all fullness to be found in him » (Col 1, 19) — his lordship over the world is not in all respects identical with that of the Father. Christ belongs himself to that creation of which, together with the Father, he is the Lord. St. Paul affirms in a similar formula the inclusion of Christ within creation and his transcendence over it<sup>45</sup> : « He is the first born of all creation » (Col 1, 15). Christ merges with the creation of which he is the primordial creature ; and yet he surpasses quite completely that creation, which, « created through him and towards him, » has its entire « existence in him » (Col 1, 16), being the transcendent Lord of the world of which he remains the centre. He is the principle and the prime head (Col 1, 18) of the Church in like manner — the Church to which nevertheless he belongs. The world and particularly the Church have their existence through Christ, just as a circle exists by its relationship to the centre, which nevertheless itself belongs to the circle.

44. The minimal faith which is expressed in « the intention to do what the Church does. »

45. The two titles of Christ, « image of the invisible God, » and « first-born of all creation, » involve the same complexity. It is the Christ of glory, and not the Logos considered outside the mystery of the incarnation. Yet the perfection of the image, his total equality with God, testifies to the transcendence of Christ.

Now, how, precisely, is the glorified Christ present in the world? He is the «fundament» in which everything is anchored and «has its being»; he is «before all things,» but his priority has no temporal setting. He arrived late on the scene of world history, long after the first origins; but he remains the Alpha of all things therein because he is also the Omega, the eschatological plenitude. For God performs his work of creation by reference to that filial perfection which is the glorified Christ, and through a progressive participation to the ultimate end. So, the world has its roots in its future, in the heights to which it must rise, in Christ «in whom and towards whom it is created.» Christ then is the centre of the world of which he also is Lord because he represents its ultimate fullness.<sup>46</sup>

And so when he comes to us, his advent is parousia. When he avails himself of matter of worldly creation, bread and wine, for his coming, he is acting through his eschatological power, power which he wields as being the culmination and fullness of the world, a cosmic power which he possesses as being the cosmic plenitude.

By using realities of this world, bread, wine, men such as the apostles, an entire community, and making them into sacraments of his coming, Christ is not in any way treating them violently: he is not contradicting their basic nature. Eschatology does not contradict what comes before; it does not disarrange the world into which it comes either by a process of corruption, or of dilution or yet of substitution, for, in that very world, it is the basic true reality. The so-called first creation moves to meet Christ by a process of interiorization in which, by passing beyond its original state, it comes to find itself finally revealed in all truth. When eschatology is working on the surface level of this world, one speaks in terms of miracles; even the miracle is not a violation but rather a by-passing of the superficial laws in obedience to a higher law which is its fullness.

It is thus that a man can become a Christian without detriment to his humanity; he in fact becomes more truly a man than before.<sup>47</sup> And the bread becomes, in the Eucharist, «the true Bread.»

#### *By the Power of the Spirit.*

The parousia of Christ is brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit. For it is in the Spirit that God begets, raises from the

46. Cfr F.X. DURRWELL, *Le mystère pascal, source de l'apostolat*. Paris, 1970, pp. 28-41.

47. St. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Rom.*, 6, 2.

dead and glorifies Christ makes him the Lord-spirit (cfr 2 Co 3, 17 s.), the eschatological man, the Christ who comes to us.

When Christ comes to meet men through the mediation of the apostles and their preaching, it is through the Holy Spirit that this advent is brought about, «by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit» (Rom 15, 19; cfr 2 Co 10, 4). When he becomes present in the Church in the Eucharist, it is through the power of the Spirit that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. Parousia is always brought about by the power of the Spirit.<sup>48</sup>

The Church invokes the Holy Spirit, then, upon those who must be the witnesses of Christ, that is, the mediators of the Presence of Christ, his representatives, the apostles: the Church sanctifies them by the Holy Spirit through the sacraments of confirmation and order. The Church invokes the Holy Spirit in the celebration of the Eucharist, knowing that through it the bread and wine are «sanctified and transformed.»<sup>49</sup>

#### *Within the Church.*

The Church is the one place for Christ's parousia within this world: «God allowed him to be seen, not by the whole people, but by us who have eaten and drunk with him» (Ac 10, 40 s.). «I will come to you,» the Lord said to his disciples (Jn 14, 18), «I am with you to the end of time» (Mt 18, 20). A Presence of Christ in this world, a real Presence under the form of other species, can only come about within the Church which alone forms — through all her faithful who confess the name of Jesus — the body of Christ. Scripture knows of no visible presence of eschatology within this world outside the Church.

48. NARSAI (†502) compares the action of the Spirit in the resurrection of Christ and in the Eucharistic transformation: «The Spirit descends upon the gifts without any motion being involved, and allows the power of its divinity to rest upon the bread and wine, thus bringing about the mystery of our Lord's resurrection from among the dead... That same Spirit which raised him from the dead, now comes down to celebrate the mysteries of the resurrection of his body.» *Hom. 17. Sur l'exposition des mystères*. Lettres chrét. 7, p. 236. This realization of the resurrection is to be understood as that of the resurrection of Christ in this world, that is, as a parousia.

49. Cfr among many others, St. CYRIL (or JOHN) OF JERUSALEM, *Catech. myst.* 5, 7. PG 33, 1113, 1116. St. JOHN DAMASCÈNE, *De fide orth.*, 4, 13. PG 94, 1145: «The bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of God. If you ask how this comes about, it suffices to reply that it is through the Holy Spirit.»

Now, the Eucharist is located at the very heart of this sacramentality of the Church ; it is tightly bound up with the Church whose food it is, and can be celebrated nowhere else than within the Church. To no one else, other than to his one Bride, does Christ make the gift of his body. Where there is no Church, there can be no Eucharist.

For the man desirous of celebrating the Eucharist, concern over fidelity to the corporate community of the Church is of first importance. The priest is the minister of the sacrament in that he is the minister of the Church, that he « wishes to do that which is done by the Church. » He would be pronouncing the words of the solemn act in vain, leaving the parousiae mystery unaccomplished were he not to pronounce them within the Church. St. Ignatius of Antioch requires that no assemblies should be conducted « in isolation from the bishop, » or else they would be « neither valid nor conforming to the commandment of the Lord. »<sup>50</sup>

Now this does not mean that the Church is co-author of the parousiae together with the Spirit and Christ,<sup>51</sup> but that she is the only place where it may come about. That the Eucharist belongs to the Church, and the inter-connection of these respective mysteries could furnish ecumenical dialogue with a criteria for the reality of the Eucharistic Presence : it would appear that no assembly is truly Eucharistic unless it is also that of the Church as instituted by Christ : the Church with its apostolic college.

#### IV. THE MODALITY OF THE PRESENCE IN BREAD AND WINE

The Church has expressed by the word, transubstantiation, her way of understanding the modality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. She believes that the bread is itself transformed into the body of the Lord, so that, in eating the bread, the believer receives the Body.

The affirmation is of ancient date : the word is of more recent origin. Both received at the hands of St. Thomas an interpretation based upon the Aristotelian philosophy of substance and adopted by the body of Catholic theology over the course of several centuries. Whilst expressing itself in such terms at the Council of Trent, the Church has, nonetheless, never bound itself to a philosophic interpretation. She knows well that there is no happy balance between the Christian mystery and its dogmatic

formulation ; she is even more aware of how to distinguish between the mystery and an attempt to understand it based upon reason.

According to the Thomist interpretation of transubstantiation, nothing remains of the substance of the bread and wine ; all that remain are the accidents supported miraculously by other substances, those of the body and blood of Christ into which the substances of the bread and wine have been transformed.

As we have already observed, faith is scarcely helped today by this interpretation. The Christian at this stage of his development is no longer conversant with Aristotelian philosophy ; the substance of which he speaks is subject to chemical analyses and he knows that these analyses will reveal the persistence in the Eucharist of the substance of the bread and wine which are thus understood.<sup>52</sup> For all men, sophisticated or not, the bread is a food and the wine a drink ; one knows that the Eucharistic bread can satiate and that the Eucharistic wine could induce headiness. To say that the Eucharist is neither bread nor wine is a most enigmatic statement which sets the Christian mystery up against the knowledge of earthly realities. How strange a climax for a theological investigation, that, based upon these realities, it is lead to contradict them !

#### *God Transforms by Elevating things beyond themselves.*

The Eucharistic conversion is not an isolated phenomenon in Christianity ; it is part of a wider whole. If one wishes to grasp the meaning of the Christian mystery, one must try to comprehend it in all its diverse aspects, to see it as a whole, in order to note the general lines of the laws which hold true within it.

God saves by transforming, and *transforms by elevating*. Salvation comes upon the whole of creation without destroying, without upsetting, without harming : what it does do is to enrich. The new creation extends and perfects the old, charges it with an excess of being ; it is ever an accomplishment, in the Biblical meaning of the word — a hyper-creation. And, in this great work of salvation, it is Christ who is the first-born, a man-God in the supereminent perfection of human truth. Clearly he had to attain to this state through death. But in it he was not destroyed but exalted. Now, the whole of the process of salvation is contained in the mystery of this primordial creature, the glorified Christ, the eschatological end of the world, come, not to harm it, but to create it.

50. *Magn. 4; Smagn. 8 and 9.*

51. Nor does it signify that the Eucharist is only to be imagined as within the participation of an entire community.

52. It is obvious that the result of such analyses would not contradict the Thomist theory. This considers as accidents whatever chemistry might attain.



Apart from the Eucharistic « conversion, » Scripture is cognizant of another earthly reality transformed in the body of Christ : the body of the faithful who, through the sanctification of the Spirit, become also the body of Christ. Present-day exegesis recognizes the reality of the Pauline concept of a Church as the true body of Christ. The first generation Christians did not misjudge the thought of the Apostle when they believed that they themselves became, thanks to the Eucharist, the body with which they were communing : « For we too have become his body, and through his mercy, we are that which we receive. »<sup>53</sup> It is, doubtless, from his Eucharistic experience that St. Paul had drawn his faith in the Church as the body of Christ. For, does he not write : « The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf ? » (1 Co 10, 17).

Now, the grace of the Spirit transforms the faithful into the Body of Christ without depriving them of their original identity. It merges them into the person of Christ to the point when the Apostle can say : « Christ lives in me » (Gal 2, 20). It merges them into the very being of Christ to the point where the Apostle can say : « You are in Christ » (1 Co 1, 30). And still the Christian does not lose his personality ; more than ever, he is « the subject » of his life : « I live in faith in the Son of God » (Gal 2, 20). The bodies of the faithful are members of Christ, and yet do not stop being their own true bodies : « Your bodies are members making up the body of Christ » (1 Co 6, 15).

In order truly to make of it his body, Christ would be obliged to deny to the bread its real, natural being — surely not. There is a quite evident analogy between these two transformations of an earthly reality into the body of the Lord, that of the believer and that of the bread. As far back as the Middle Ages, it was pointed out by an oft quoted sermon of Fauste de Riez, who, moreover, forcefully affirms the change in substance when the bread becomes the body of Christ : « There is no doubt but that these two original matters (the bread and wine) can, on the command of the Almighty, and in the presence of his Majesty, fundamentally change their nature into being the body of Christ ; how can one doubt this when one beholds man himself having become the body of Christ through the action of divine mercy. »<sup>54</sup> This is a valid comparison.

53. St. AUGUSTINE, *Sermones post Maurinos reperi.* Rome, 1930, p. 30. Cfr *Sermo* 27, PL 38, 1099, and *Sermo* 272, PL 38, 1247 s. « If then you are the body of Christ and his members, it is your mystery which is placed upon the Lord's table, and it is your mystery which you receive. Be what you see before you, and receive what you are. »

54. *De Paschate*, PL 67, 1056. — The Middle Ages attributed this sermon to Eusebius of Emese; a critical study of it perceives, at least in essential outlines,

According to Luke 22, 20 and 1 Corinthians 11, 25, Jesus himself has united the Eucharist and the Church in one single concept, proclaiming that the Eucharist is the New Covenant announced by Jeremiah (31, 31), which, according to the Apostle, is « The Jerusalem above, our mother » (Gal 4, 24-26), the Church in its mystery.

Everything within Christianity speaks of a salvation which fulfills beyond measure without in any way changing or distorting. The Old Covenant is « accomplished » without being « abolished. » Human values become Christian by the eschatological dimension with which the Spirit enriches them, and thus become even more truly human. The ardent aspirations which, according to St. Paul, arise from inanimate creation to the saving God (Rom 8, 22), are not heralding the destruction of that creation, but rather its intimate communion with the eschatological liberty of men. The sacraments are means for Christ to contact and to act within this world — their natural properties are not changed — it is through them that they are efficacious signs of grace : sanctifying baptism is a water which cleanses. The Church is the fundamental sacrament of the Presence and the action of Christ : it is not emptied of itself, it is « filled » (Eph 1, 23 ; Col 2, 9) in its original being by Christ who forms it into his body.

Indeed, these are but analogies. But a Christian truth is best understood in « the analogy of the faith, » in its harmonious integration with the totality of the mystery. In calling the Eucharist the true Bread, the language better reflects the mystery than if one said : the Eucharist is no longer bread. Jesus had said : « The bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world » (Jn 6, 51), and the liturgy declares that the bread offered on the altar « will become the bread of the Kingdom. »

An interpretation of the Eucharist which takes its line of argument from the Aristotelian notion of substance, ends by showing that the divine power can change the bread into the body of Christ whilst still retaining the original accidents. But it proves the possibility of changing the bread into any other substance and must therefore conclude that of that moment that bread had ceased to exist. But the Eucharistic conversion is not the conversion of bread into just any other substance, for the glorified Christ is essentially different from all other substances — he is the eschaton of the world. The Eucharistic transformation is unique, because the term of this conversion, the body of Christ, is unique ; unique also is the relationship of a terrestrial substance, the bread to the one who is the eschaton of all terrestrial substances. To impose

a sermon of Fauste de Riez. The author places the Eucharist in the context of the Paschal mystery and the Church, as the body of Christ.

himself upon a terrestrial reality, the eschaton has no need to deprive it of its original being, precisely because he is the eschaton and therefore moving in another order. It is thus that God, who is of another order, has been able to establish the reign of his omnipotence in the *man*, Jesus.

The final reality is destined to « accomplish » the original realities by sanctifying them, as Jesus Christ is himself sanctified (Jn 10, 36), and « accomplished » in his Father.

#### *Sanctified in the Holy Spirit.*

The liturgy ever talks of a sanctification, a consecration of the offerings : « We ask you to make these gifts holy by the power of your Spirit, that they may become the body and blood of your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. »<sup>55</sup> The bread and wine are « sanctified and transformed » by the Spirit, as early formularies have it.<sup>56</sup> Now, *the Spirit sanctifies men and things alike by opening them to eschatology, and thus transforms them.* It sanctifies them, modifying their relationship to the *ultimate plenitude*.

The mystery of the Church may shed some light. How is she sanctified and transformed into the body of Christ ? God exalts Christ above all, and, filling him with his own fullness, and consecrates him the ultimate plenitude of the world — and there, « has made him the ruler of everything, the Head of the Church, » to pour into it his being and his life (Eph 1, 19-23 ; Col 2, 9 s.). The Church is the body of Christ, the Presence on the earth of him who constitutes the eschatological plenitude.

Doubtless, Christ is the eschaton of the whole of humanity, created on the basis of that final reality (Col 1, 15 s.), and everything has its being in him (Col 1, 17). To a certain extent, Christ is the head of the whole of humanity. For mankind, eschatology is not just a future reality ; it is as of now the centre towards which humanity takes its line of creation, its very root towards which humanity must plunge in order to accomplish its destiny. But, within the Church, this projected descent has already been attained (1 Co 10, 11 ; Tess 2, 2-8 and pass.). It is in this way that the Church emerges among men ; she is distinguished by the depth which she alone already attains, as of here and now, in

55. Second Eucharistic Prayer.

56. St. Cyril (or John) of Jerusalem, *loc. cit.* — St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, III, 4, 10 : « that which is a fruit of the earth is sanctified in order to become so great a sacrifice only through the invisible working of the Spirit of God. » *Sermo* 227, PL 38, 1099 : « The bread that you see upon the altar, sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ » St. Ambrose uses the word « consecration, » *cf. De Sacr. IV, 4, 14 ; 5, 21. De Myst. 54. CSEL* 73, 52, 55, 113.

the grace of the Holy Spirit.<sup>57</sup> She is distinguished by her Head — hers alone in a most unique way ; her convergence upon this centre is so intimate ; her acquaintance with eschatology is so immediate. One feels obliged even to aver that the Church in its mystery is located at this central point : for proof, witness the Eucharist, the meal of the Kingdom to come, which she celebrates here and now, and which she alone is entitled to celebrate. The eschaton is the immediate substance of the Church ; the Church has its being in it ; « You are in Christ » (1 Co 1, 30). Hence, she is, in this world, the body of Christ.

Christ, then, is the centre of the Church, but not in the same way that he is the center of the whole humanity. Similarly, he is at the centre of the New Testament, but not in the same way that he is at the centre of the Old. *The differences are the result of a distant or total concentration.* In the New Testament, in the Church, the circle converges upon the centre.

Now, one must needs remember, the Eucharist is christened with the same name as the Church : « This is my body which will be given up for you ; this cup is the *New Covenant*, » « The Church which is his body, » which is « the *New Covenant*, the heavenly Jerusalem. » It does seem that the Eucharist is to be explained as the Church is, also, to be interpreted. That is, in a unique relationship, immediate and absolute, with eschatology ; that the transformation of the bread and wine is to be understood as a modification of their relationship with him who is the ultimate substance of all things.

#### *Earthly bread and Bread of Heaven.*

Christ is not only the eschaton for men : according to St. Paul, everything is created in him and for him (Col 1, 16), called to be recapitulated in him (Eph 1, 10), and, one day, Christ will be all in all (Col 3, 11), in that he will fill all things (Eph 4, 10). But, at least in our days, there is a unique relationship between the Eucharistic bread and that final term, the glorified Christ ; it alone is *sanctified in the Spirit by a total concentration upon Christ*, assumed into the eschaton so intimately that Christ becomes its immediate « *substantia*, » the deepest reality in which the bread subsists.<sup>58</sup> The Eucharist is the total realization of Christocentrism, *the effect of a reduction, one which is absolute and con-*

57. Attained, it is true, in present time. Hence the need to progress towards eternal possession of the gift which is already vouchsafed.

58. St. Paul spoke of exaltation beyond all things. Modern terminology prefers the notion of depth which Scripture, too, expresses (*cf. Eph 4, 9 s.*). Theologically, the same dimension is involved in both.

verging upon the centre, the anticipation in our world of what is peculiar to the realities of the Kingdom in which Christ is « everything in everything. » One can still, with St. Augustine, speak of the « bread which is upon the altar, » but, just like him, one must say that that bread is the body of Christ.<sup>59</sup> In its appearance, and by all criteria of human knowledge, the Eucharistic bread is exactly what it was before ; in reality, it has become the means to the immediate Presence in the world of the Paschal Christ.

Hence, the Eucharist is the most real bread that there can be. In all God's gifts, even those of an earthly nature, we are initially offered eschatological salvation.<sup>60</sup> This final salvation is not over and above that which is originally created, since this latter was ordained from the beginning of time ; our daily bread is not without a real relationship to the « true Bread » ; according to the fourth Gospel, every form of life has its roots in him who is the fullness of life. But very remote is the reference of an earthly reality, the bread of this world, to him who is the food for eternity. In the Eucharist, the reference is so absolute that the earthly bread becomes in this way « the bread of heaven. »<sup>61</sup>

Although this bread also nourishes after the manner of ordinary bread, the believer does not find himself confronted by two autonomous realities, existing in themselves, that of the bread and of the body of the Lord.<sup>62</sup> The Eucharistic bread is not the body of Christ over and above ; it is itself both the Presence and the gift of that body. The total concentration upon eschatology does not add a new reality to an already existing one ; it is thus that the

59. *Sermo 227*, PL 39, 1099.

60. One will easily admit it if one does not distort God's plan and make it into a work of creation to which the work of salvation would be added as an appendage.

61. As regards earthly things, the relationship may be no more than a reality of little substance. In the world of grace, it is the fundamental reality. Bérulle writes : « In this world, this category of relationship is one of the smallest ; and it is the most powerful category in the realm of grace, which has its being in and is compounded of its orientation towards God, and that alone... How important indeed is this category of relationship within the world of grace ! » Quoted by G. SALET, *Le Christ notre vie*, 2nd edit. Paris, 1945, p. 31. According to Col 1, 16 s. « all things were created in him... and towards him... and in him all things consist. » That is, everything exists in this particular relationship.

62. The Church has always rejected theories like impanation, and consubstantiation which imply that there are, in the Eucharist, two realities in their own rights : « If someone says that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist the substance of the bread and wine remain with the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and goes on to deny that unique and marvellous change that comes about in the whole substance of the bread... A.S. » DS, 1652.

Church is not made up of both men and the body of Christ ; she is herself the body of Christ.<sup>63</sup> Hence the presence of Christ is not mediated by the bread ; the latter does not screen encounter and communion. It is the sacrament of encounter and communion, it makes them a reality.

Such assertions as the above do not explain — no statement on the rational level can explain — the Eucharist. They just provide a certain amount of intelligibility.<sup>64</sup>

### *Transubstantiation ?*

Can one still speak of transubstantiation when one interprets the Eucharistic conversion as a consecration and a sanctification ? Doubtless, no, in the precise sense which scholasticism has given the word, based upon the Aristotelian notion of substance. But it is not in this precise sense that the word was understood when it was first used, and there is no need now to take it in this way.<sup>65</sup> Without using the word, the Greek Fathers believed in a change in the substance of the bread and wine, for they were of the opinion that « in a unique manner, Christ takes possession of the gifts and transforms them. » According to them, « the Eucharistic conversion is an assimilation by Christ, to the nth degree

63. One could multiply the analogies. It is thus that Christ is not man and God as well... he is God-made-man. The Christian is not man and Christian as well ; his way of being a man is to be a Christian.

64. Perhaps one should find here an element of the solution of the problem concerning the Eucharistic Presence among Christian communities which do not possess all the marks of the ecclesial institution : those which do not recognize the Church today as being productive of a divinely instituted apostolic ministry. In a scholastic understanding of transubstantiation, the realism of the Eucharistic Presence is either total or none at all. Knowing that the Eucharistic conversion comes about by the ministry of the Church, one will proceed to say that there is no Presence when and wherever that ministry is lacking.

If one interprets the Presence as a transignification, one may be led to perceive a total realism of Presence in any celebration of the Last Supper, without taking account of the problem of the apostolic ministry, provided that the meal includes all the elements of Eucharistic symbolism.

When one understands the Eucharistic conversion in the way of a reduction applied to the eschaton, it is possible to admit of degrees of intensity in the Eucharistic Presence corresponding to the degrees of authenticity of the ecclesial institution (it being understood that there exists in every community of baptized people a certain measure of apostolic ministry, cfr F.X. DURRWELL, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-237).

65. Thomist theology, too, is well aware that the dogma of transubstantiation must not be linked with the aristotelian notion of substance. It agrees to take the word, « substance, » in a wider meaning : « The word is understood in its normal meaning and indicates that something which underlies what appears on the surface, the substratum which the intellect comprehends but which escapes the knowledge of the senses, » Ch.-V. HÉRIS, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

of the sacramental elements. These latter lose their autonomy of being earthly realities, cease being what they were a moment before, that is, substances rooted in their own selves, and subsisting in themselves.»<sup>66</sup>

One is justified in talking of substance in less precise a sense than is imputed to it by a particular philosophy. So majestic a grasp taken by Christ upon the natural elements that they become means to his own integration within the world and the sheer exteriorization of his life-giving presence — this clearly constitutes a change in substance.

#### *Transfinalization?*

The modern term, transfinalization, would add a very necessary element of definition to the traditional vocabulary. On condition, however, that one does not thereby imply a new finality that the Church, through the symbolism of the celebration and through faith, confers upon the meal of the bread and wine thus making it a communion with Christ and with the brethren. Nor would it even suffice to explain that it is Christ who gives the meal this new end, adding the gift of his body to the meal of the bread and wine.<sup>67</sup> For the giving of the holy body is not linked with the meal on the basis of symbol or of faith, nor even on the basis of the will of Christ alone. Christ's intention is truly creative and provides a new end for the bread and wine in the very fact of transforming them.

In the first creation, God makes a gift of himself, communicating something of his being and his life, but this gift is not added over and above the essence of things by divine will, nor is it extrinsic to them; it becomes identified with them: these latter are themselves bearers of love, and signs of love because they are in themselves a gift to men. So it is with the Church and the faithful through whom Christ goes out to meet men and gives himself to them. He does not meet them on the side of the Church and his faithful, but rather, IN them.

It is thus that the Eucharist is in itself a gift from God, in its own right: the eschaton of the world is not exterior to it; it is its deeper dimension. When God offers us an immediate communion with the eschaton through the means of an earthly reality, it is contained within that very reality that the offer is made. Christ does not only supply another purpose to the meal, nor ally the gift of his body with the symbolism of the celebration, and with the faith of the Church: *by his body, he finalizes the bread itself*, and brings it down entirely within the bounds of eschatology. Seen in this way, transfinalization does not contradict transubstantiation but rather defines its meaning.

66. J. BERTZ, *Die Eucharistie in der Zeit der griechischen Väter*, Vol. I, I. Freiburg, 1955, p. 317.

67. If I am not mistaken, it is in this way that transubstantiation is understood by F.-J. LEENHARDT (*Ceci est mon corps, Cahiers théologiques*, 37, Neuchâtel, 1955, pp. 27-40) who, moreover, has the great merit of looking for the meaning of the Eucharist from the eschatological angle.

#### *Transignification?*

Quite different is the meaning normally attributed to the word, «transignification.»

It often comes about in human relations that one applies to an object an intention which confers upon it a new dimension. A present may be the expression of the total giving of self which a man would wish to make to another. Whilst remaining identical in its physical being, this object has been transformed by its new finality, by the meaning with which it is enriched. The exchange of rings by persons in love is quite different from the implication of the ring which could in different circumstances be that of a homing pigeon. The purpose is different, as is the meaning; the factual reality is different. In human intercourse, it is less the physical nature than the meaning of an object which constitutes its truest being.

Must one not then understand in this way that gift of love which is the Eucharist? Must one not interpret the Eucharist after the fashion of a transignification, a transfinalization in the sense explained above? Christ is present in the Eucharist by the intention which he has to make to the Church, in the gift of this bread, the gift of himself.

It is plain to see: the principles of this interpretation of the Eucharistic presence are located on the level of the realities of this world<sup>68</sup>; they are to be found in the symbolism applied in human relationships and proper to the human condition. But, the Eucharistic presence comes to us from eschatology for which the realities of the temporal world are unable to provide an adequate explanation.

The point is already made plain: it is pointless for a line of thought to develop the reality comprehended by this order of meaning — for this will never overcome the inherent imperfection in the symbol. Precisely upon the point of a presence and a giving of self as expressed in a symbol, one remains imprisoned within the circle of imperfect realities, within the sphere of an intention which is incapable of developing to its ultimate the mutual presence, the self-giving. Man has recourse to symbolism to reach out to another and to give himself to that other, because it is impossible for him to realize the total presence and the total giving of self which he so much desires. Such a mutual presence and such a giving of self are part of something beyond this earthly condition. Here, it is

68. This desire to start out from earthly reality is strongly underlined in the important study devoted to proving the case for transignification — G.B. SAVA, *Transsubstantiation oder Transignification?*, *Zf.f.k.Th.* 92 (1970), pp. 1-34 (cf. p. 23 s.).

local proximity which is the most effective medium for mutual encounter; but at the same time as favouring such an encounter, it places immutable restrictions upon its full success. Man's desire then produces symbols and charges them with achieving the impossible. These latter will always remain a reaching out towards the impossible which thus is an aim never accomplished. *Quite basically, they are part of an order of imperfection which they nevertheless seek to overcome.*

The explanation of the Eucharist simply cannot be located at this level.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament provide an illustration. They, too, were symbols, the expression of a desire. Men entrusted them with the intention which they had of entering into communion with the deity and, eating the sacrificed victim which was symbolically consecrated in the holiness of God, they believed themselves seated at table with God, and in communion with him. They were particularly conscious of what the outward sign can indicate of the true reality. But the New Testament places these sacrifices among « elemental things like these that can do nothing and give nothing » (Gal 4, 9). The Epistle to the Hebrews refuses them the virtue of allowing the priest into the « sanctuary which is not fashioned by human hands, » that is into the real communion with God, since they could only realize this in the form of symbolism. They were but the shadow of Christian realism (Heb 10, 1; Col 2, 17).

Indeed, there is an analogy between the symbol and the sacrament. Parousia has need of signs in order to find expression on the surface of this world; Christ can only appear here now under other species: « I am going away and I shall come »; he comes whilst still absent from the world. *But the role of the bread and the wine is not parallel to that of the symbol in human relationships.* Christ comes and gives himself in a totality which is proper to eschatology and to it alone. He uses sacramental elements, not because he would be incapable of effecting a total presence within the Church and a total gift of self, but because he wishes to bring these about within the tangible realities to which he no longer belongs. Bread and wine are the means of his integration within this world. Such a symbol cannot be created but through divine action, nor can it be compared with symbols which are the effect of a « new determination of meaning, » nor can it be explained in their terms.<sup>69</sup>

69. « The signification-value of the phenomenological appearances of bread and wine changes, because, at the instance of the power of the creative Spirit, the reality is changed. » E. SCHULTEBEECK, *La présence du Christ dans l'Eucharistie*. Paris, 1970, p. 143.

It does seem that the theory of transignification, just like the scholastic theory, hardly takes account — if at all — of eschatology, that is, of the essential of the Eucharistic problem.

There is no need, then, to retain conclusions which are contrary to the tradition of the Church, and which are sometimes deduced from this theory: present by reason of the significance given by Christ to the Eucharistic meal and recognized by the Church, the Lord is present only during the celebration of the Mass — and, ultimately, at the moment of the communion — when the significance is expressed and the community is able to recognize it. The theory of transignification shares a lot similar to the Aristotelian explanation: both inadequate interpretations, neither of them manages to incorporate into its vision the Eucharistic reality in its entirety; the one does not satisfactorily deal with the Eucharistic sacrifice, and the other with the permanence of the Presence.

Nothing argues against the permanence of the Presence: it is not the symbolism of the meal which realizes it, it is the parousia which determines the symbolism of the meal, and which gives to the bread, wine and meal the Eucharistic significance. This Presence, it is true, is not a static one; it is a Presence of donation, bound up with the signs which relate to this donation. But the bread placed upon the table of the Church is indeed this act and this sign. A moving and so expressive act in which Christ presents himself to his Spouse as the food which is offered to her.

And so the symbolism may be reduced to this essential. It has happened that Christians in wartime, in prisons, in concentration camps and in hidden churches<sup>70</sup> have celebrated the Eucharist in conditions of poverty sometimes to the extent of destitution in terms of the outward sign — and yet in the fullest richness of parousiac grace. What is absolutely essential is this food, and that the Eucharist is celebrated in the bosom of the Church, in true faithfulness to the Spouse of Christ to whom alone it is that the Lord makes the gift of his body. It is pointless and even a little childish to go through the rites of an ordinary meal, as some have chosen to do: the Eucharist cannot, either, be celebrated in just the same fashion as a normal meal and no other, for it is the eschatological meal.

## V. THE MODALITY OF PRESENCE TO THE CHURCH

Every presence involves reciprocity. *Being truly present through the bread, how is Christ present to the Church?*

70. I say « hidden Churches. » The word, « underground Churches, » or « clandestine Churches, » designating certain types of Eucharistic forms, has an unpleasant sound due to the connection it establishes between communities in rupture and confessors of the faith who, after their Eucharist celebrations, may well be sent packing to Siberia, if they are not there already. When one has friends there, such similarities are distasteful.

When a man meets another in the same place, the presence is at one and the same time forever mutual and never total. Although localized by virtue of the bread and wine, the Eucharistic Presence of Christ in his Church is not localized in itself; it is not necessarily mutual, and it can be more nearly total than any other presence on earth. It is a salvific Presence: the reciprocity comes about in the free acceptance of salvation.

*A Presence which Comes to Us.*

Christ is present in the world in that he is its *eschaton*. No earthly means of contact has relevance with respect to him; he is beyond its reach, located in eschatology; «Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God» (cf. 1 Co 15, 50). It falls then to Christ to make himself known: he throws the bridge, and establishes our contact with him, drawing us to his table by the faith which he arouses in us. *Truly present through the bread, he is yet only present for the man who is already of the Kingdom*. The Eucharist is the sacrament of the heavenly meal; one must be of Christ's body in order to draw sustenance from Christ.

This Presence is, in this world, that of someone who is located elsewhere, who comes into a world of which he is never again to be a member: essentially a Presence which comes to us, the intrusion of our future into the present.

Thus the Eucharist is par excellence the sacrament of the Christian vocation: the Presence calls, draws the community towards the full realization of its mystery, that is, towards its total communion with Christ; «He has called us to communion with his Son» (1 Co 1, 9). When a yearning hope corresponds to this call, and when the community is moving towards the eschatology, the Presence becomes reciprocal. Truly real in itself, the Presence of Christ has its sole merit for the man on the road to Christ; for the eschatology is not of this world, it is at its centre in that it is the final end, present in the world by the attraction exercised upon it. It is thus that Christ is in the bread, because the bread is totally taken up by him; he is present before man when the latter submits himself to Christ's power. The eschatology comes to us, by making us come towards it.

Thus, the Eucharist is, for us, an imperfect presence. The word, *parousia*, expresses a coming, a presence in the making, and such is what the Eucharist is: a *parousia*. To express the heavenly communion of Christ with his own, Scripture no longer speaks of *parousia*, but of a co-being. The imperfection of *parousia* is not the work of the Lord — his Paschal mystery is a total giving of self — it is to be laid at the feet of the Church on earth. Still partially enclosed in the flesh, this flesh

turned in upon itself, the Church is not able, on this earth, to provide a complete reply to the Christ who comes into it by the giving of himself: the Church is not yet fully matched to the Paschal mystery.

*A Presence of Giving.*

Christ is not present with the aim of offering himself to the Church, but rather, by making that gift to her, he is present by that act of self-giving. Hence it is not everyone for whom he is present, but only for him who receives him and to the extent of that reception.

For *parousia* is, quite simply, the Paschal mystery destined for us. In the eternity of his glorifying death, Christ is universally given up, having become love and gift, «the flesh given up for the life of the world,» bread which is eaten, «he who sacrificed himself as a ransom for all» (cf. 1 Tim 2, 6).

The Presence, then, is destined in its entirety for communion, a Presence whose true meaning is consummated in the welcome given by the Church: «Ut sumatur institutum est,» proclaimed the Council of Trent.<sup>71</sup> A Presence which «joins in communion.»

The believer comes into the act of the communion by more than the mere act of eating. Christ is ever present by the giving of self: the Eucharist is ever the sacrament which solicits communion; a very real communion is established between Christ and the believer whatever may be the form of the celebration. It is faith which performs the digestive act: «Work for food that endures to eternal life — What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants? — You must believe» (Jn 6, 27-29).

Thus the Eucharist is eternally the great sacrament of ecclesial prayer.<sup>72</sup> Amidst the community, there is the holy body of Christ which beckons one to communion in faith and love. And this is the form the prayer in fact takes — a communion.

*A Presence of Immolation.*

The Eucharist is a meal «in the joy and the simplicity of the heart,» the bread is life and the wine gladness, and both speak of the risen Christ: one could forget, as did the community at Corinth (cf. 1 Co 11), that the Eucharist «announces the death of

71. DS 1643.

72. The post-conciliar instruction, *De cultu mysterii eucharistici*, speaks of «the prayer before the Holy Sacrament» which, according to the experience of the faithful, favours an intimate communion with the Lord. AAS 59 (1967), p. 567.



Lord.» But a food is meant to be eaten, and a beverage to be drunk : they are immolated. Present as bread and wine, Christ affirms in a most eloquent manner that he comes to us by dying for us. Presence and sacrifice are indissolubly bound up.

The Church can only communicate with Christ by joining him wherever he shows himself : by participating in his immolation. The Eucharist is a Presence of Christ for whoever accepts to die with Christ, and to the precise extent of that acceptance. It is the Paschal communion, the viaticum of Christian death throughout our life on earth.

#### *A Personal Presence.*

One could supply a philosophical name for this Presence : it is personal. The sacrifice which comprises both a giving and an entrance-way into communion is the normal state of the person : a person who realizes itself through the giving of self and the communion with another. It is thus that Christ attains the height of his personal mystery : in the sacrifice, he is beloved of his Father (Jn 10, 17), in the gift of himself, he has become in full reality « the Son who is nearest to the Father's heart » (cfr 1, 18 and 13, 1. 32).

The personal Presence, and the localized presence are different matters. The latter favours the former, but also places insurmountable obstacles in the way. Christ « is no longer here » in our part of space and time ; « he is risen, » he is not here. The earthly body is an imperfect organ for personal relationships, but the glorified Christ is-for-us in entirety « the life-giving spirit, » the source of life insofar as he exists, not only holy but sanctification itself (1 Co 1, 30), not only genuinely good, but goodness itself, giving nourishment to the Church because he himself is its food. This is the working of the Father within him : he quickens him for us (cfr 2 Co 5, 15), and raises him as the bridegroom of the Church, raises him as one body with her.

Christ, then, is present among men in the personal relationship which he forges with them. He is far away from those who do not accept this friendship, just as light is absent from the life of the blind ; for these, Christ is elsewhere, despite being localized upon this earth through the bread and the wine : he is in the world of the Holy Spirit, access to which is accorded only to those who love.

The whole of the Eucharistic grace resides in this friendship. The sacrament is the food for eternity, the pledge of universal brotherhood, because Christ is all that with which one shares communion in charity. When the desire refers to a person as opposed to a food,

then the word, « eat, » belongs to the language of love, and speaks of a yearning for complete mutual presence, total reciprocal possession. The Eucharist is at work within the Church to the extent that it nourishes her friendship with the Lord. To depersonalize the Eucharist would be to deprive it of its efficacy.

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Thus, the whole treasure resides in the Presence. Taking up the title of a well-known book, one might say of Christ's parousia, and doubtless with a greater element of truth, that it is « the key of the Eucharistic doctrine, » both synthesis and explanation.

The synthesis, since men's salvation is to be sought nowhere else than in the coming of the glorified Christ : « We possess all in Christ, and Christ is all in all for us, » said St. Ambrose.<sup>73</sup> In the glorifying death, he is both the fullness and the coming of salvation, a Christ-with-us, totally parousiac. The Eucharist contains the whole mystery of salvation, and realizes it in us because it is the sacrament of the parousia of Christ.

Here, too, is to be found the explanation of the Eucharistic mystery inasmuch as it is capable of explanation. A Presence proper to the Paschal Christ, a presence in the world of him who is the eschaton, the Eucharist — just as Christianity itself — can only be understood on the basis of the Paschal Christ, of eschatology, through which the Eucharist and Christianity in its entirety have their existence.

About twenty years ago, I communicated this idea to a theologian. He deemed it necessary to dissuade me from following up this line of thought, since the scholastic theory of transubstantiation was, in his opinion, the only one which corresponded to the teaching of the Church. But, for some years now, despite its incontestable merits, this theory has been unable to rally universal support. Other lines of investigation are, for the most part, hesitant, inconclusive, and sometimes faulty — and several of them inspire doubt as to their conviction in the Eucharist.

This is why I have attempted to show that the Eucharist has the basic principle of its validity, not in earthly realities, but in the parousiac mystery of which it constitutes the prime sacrament. This parousia is identical to the Paschal mystery, in that the latter is

73. St. AMBROSE, « De Virginitate, » 16, 99; PL 16, 291. Cfr too, Eph 5, 4, CSEL, 82, 37: « Where Christ is, there is to be found everything — his doctrine, forgiveness of sins, grace, the separation of the living from the dead. »

salvific not only in Christ but for the world. Christ, then, comes to us in his redeeming sacrifice and by virtue of it. This Presence is realized by the transubstantiation of the bread and wine ; but this latter does not inhibit the reality of these elements of bread and wine : it is to be understood on the basis of Christ who in every way finalizes creation, but finalizes in another way so immediately and so absolutely the bread and wine which are consecrated in the Spirit of the Kingdom, that they exist in a unique way in the glorified Christ « in which everything has its being » (Col 1, 17), and thus become the sacrament of his Real Presence in this world.

A theory which is built up from the earthly elements of the sacrament — bread, wine, symbolism of ritual — engenders, by the very principle of its quest, the desire for a rational explanation of the Eucharistic conversion — something which is impossible. He who tries to understand a mystery in the light of a greater mystery, that is, the Eucharist in the light of the Paschal mystery, just cannot be really sanguine about achieving such clarity of perception. He must content himself with lesser lights and ones which are more convincing.

Yet speculative theology is fully justified in pushing on with its researches, setting out from the point at which the mere coordination of revealed facts stop. It is up to it to define the relationship between earthly reality and the eschatology, to show that it is not impossible for the bread to become the sacrament of the body of Christ. But a clear perception of this relationship would be beyond the bounds of human intelligence ; it would suppose the perfect understanding of the Paschal mystery. Now, human intelligence develops within the strict limits of the world into which we are integrated by virtue of our very essence : a sphere of knowledge, then, contained within that earthly reality within which precisely the eschatology is not restricted. A rational interpretation, whether it be in the order of a philosophy of nature such as that of St. Thomas, or of a phenomenology, or of any other system, will never break beyond the bounds of being a more or less distant approximation, an evocation of the mystery and no more than that, nay, a simple illustration through earthly realities of what lies beyond those same realities.

It is for each age to find the illustration which is the most informative for it. For modern man, a philosophy of nature will be doubtless less rich in its evocation than an anthropological line of thought : one, for example, which understands the symbol as being not the sign of an absent reality, but as the revelation of an inner reality, which sees in the human form the veiled manifestation of the deeper being of man and the means to his integration in the world. The symbol, when seen in this way, presents a startling analogy with the integration of Christ in this world, and his veiled revelation, appearing under the form of the Church

or of the Eucharist. Anthropology, then, may well illustrate, may supply analogies, yet fails to explain and interpret.

In order to pave the way for an understanding of the Eucharist, catechesis may rely upon whatever there is on earth of a search for and realization of mutual presence and communion ; it may speak of the bonds of fellowship forged in the setting of a meal. Yet the moment must come when it will affirm most strongly that all this is left far behind by the command given by the Lord : « Take this, all of you and eat it, this is my body. » *It will even start out with this very affirmation, which is immediately more enlightening for him who believes than any other explanation, than any possible analogy with human life here on earth.*

The fact that earthly realities, that reason, cannot adequately interpret the Eucharist does not prove that it is unintelligible, but that it is « the mystery of the faith, » the presence in this world of the eschatology.

(Translated by Peter Jones, Cliftonville)