

The Blessed Eucharist

By Right Rev John Cuthbert Hedley.
Catholic Truth Society of Manila No.sac034 (1935)

Part 1.

THE INSTITUTION.

WE will begin with the facts of the institution of the Holy Eucharist. There is still sufficient Christianity in the country to make it worth our best pains to ascertain exactly what our Blessed Lord said and intended in regard to this as to other matters.

It happens – or rather, it is a dispensation of Divine Providence – that the history of the institution of the Holy Eucharist is so full – and so explicit that no man who believes in Christ can possibly reject the Eucharistic institution altogether. Men may try to reduce its meaning to very little, or to explain it away, but they cannot deny it is there. And what is more, our Lord's words are so plain, so literal and so reiterated, that any views founded upon them, except our own Catholic view, can only be supported by uphill labor and unconvincing argument.

There are chiefly two sets of passages in the New Testament, which bear upon the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

We have, first, the anticipatory promise, as related in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Saint John, and, secondly, the history of the actual institution; which occurs, in almost identical words, in Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, Saint Luke, and the first Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians. We begin with the former.

It was in the second year of the sacred ministry, about twelve months before the Passion, that Jesus fed 5,000 people with five barley loaves and two small fishes on the slopes of a mountain to the north-east of the Lake of Galilee. It will be remembered that He crossed over the Lake of Galilee with His disciples, from Capharnaum, the town of His home, to the mountains on the opposite shore. There He found a great multitude gathering to hear Him. The circumstances of the miracle are familiar, and need not be here described. That same night the disciples set out to return in their boat to Capharnaum. A storm on the lake kept them rowing the whole night, until Jesus joined Himself to them, and then on a sudden they touched the shore. When the day came, and the storm had ceased, numbers of those who had witnessed the miracle of the feeding of the multitude came over to Capharnaum, seeking Jesus; and it is to them, and to the Scribes, Pharisees, and notables of Capharnaum, that He addresses Himself in the memorable passages which follow.

I begin with the twenty-seventh verse of the sixth chapter of Saint John. The people crowd round our Blessed Lord, and He, with a clear reference to the recent miracle, exhorts them to "labor, not for the food that perishes, but for that which endures unto life everlasting". Observe, at the very beginning, the two words "food" and "life everlasting," placed in relation to each other. The Jews fasten on the word "labor," and ask what they must do. Our Lord replies that they must believe in Himself. They, still thinking of the miracle, reply that Moses did an equally wonderful thing in

giving the heavenly manna; therefore, Moses was not to be set aside unless some further sign were shown. Jesus replies that, did they but know it, there was offered to them, at that moment, a Bread which was in very truth Bread from heaven, giving life to the world. Like the woman at the well, when our Lord spoke to her of the water of life, the multitude begs our Lord to give them the means of obtaining that Bread. Then He says, "I am the Bread of life; he that comes to Me shall not hunger, and he that believes in Me shall never thirst."

The crowd thereupon murmured loudly, This is Jesus the son of Joseph; we know His father and His mother; how can He say that He has come down from heaven? Our Savior went on to insist, "You need not murmur one to another; the Father of heaven has sent Me; Him no man can see. He that believes in Me has life everlasting."

Up to this point, our Lord has been speaking of belief in Himself – of acceptance of Him as the Bread sent down from heaven. To partake of that Bread was to believe; to believe was to take the essential step towards securing life everlasting.

But now He begins a new and startling announcement. First He repeats what He has already said, "I am the Bread of life". (Verse 48.) This summary repetition is a very striking point, because thus repeated it is no longer, if I may so call it, a substantive statement, but assumes the character of an introduction to a new exposition.

He says again, then, "I am the Bread of life. Your fathers did eat the manna in the desert, and died; this is the Bread that comes down from heaven, in order that if any one eat thereof he may not die. I am the living Bread, that am come down from heaven. If any one eat of this Bread he shall live for ever." All this is verbally a repetition. But it assumes a new and striking significance when He goes on without break to say something entirely fresh: "And the Bread which I will give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." He stops there, for the moment. But we are informed in the most emphatic manner that this new point was instantly taken up by the hearers. For the very next words of the text are, "Then (or thereupon), the Jews strove among themselves saying, How can this man give us flesh to eat?" Now comes the opportunity for our Lord, either to correct a misunderstanding, if there is one, or to insist, to amplify, to emphasize. This is what He actually says: "Amen, Amen, I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have not life in you." Note the amplifying phrase "drink His blood". Then, without pause, He repeats – for it is a repetition, except that the word for "eat" is altered – and says: "He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood, has life everlasting; and I will raise him up at the last day."

He then emphasizes the point that He means real food and drink: "My flesh is food really, and My blood is drink really". Then, using for the fourth time in four consecutive sentences the double phrase, "to eat My flesh and drink My blood," He expresses His loving purpose and view in this great dispensation, by saying that he who does this "abides in Me and I in him"; it is to be a pledge and sacrament of intimate union. Then He invokes all His power and divinity, as one who would have all who hear Him understand well how great a thing is in question, using the terribly novel phrase a fifth time: "As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eats Me he, even he, shall live by Me." Finally, He again refers to the manna, and says, "This is the Bread that came down from heaven." As if He said, What think you now of the manna of the desert? They who eat that manna, as I told you, died; he that eats this Bread shall live for ever.

It seems as if He broke off here; for the sacred text says in verse 59: "These things He said in the synagogue, teaching in Capharnaum". But there is a most instructive sequel. Either then, or later,

our Lord knew that many were much disturbed, and called this a “hard doctrine”. But He does not explain it away. If the words He had recently used referred, like those in the earlier part of the chapter, to faith only; or if they signified no more than that there was to be a symbolical eating of bread and wine, it is almost inconceivable that He should have said nothing to liberate His disciples from a mistake to which His own expressions had undoubtedly given occasion. But He only expresses His compassion for the blindness or perverseness of those who will not accept His Word. “Are you scandalized?” He says. Is this teaching a block of stumbling to you? But let me tell you that those who would understand Me, need other lights than those of mere human intelligence. What would you say if you saw Me, who stand before you as a man, ascending up to whence I came? “It is the spirit that saves; the flesh profits nothing.” That is, spiritual insight alone will here avail; merely natural or human judgment profits nothing. The passage recalls that similar phrase which our Lord addressed to Saint Peter – “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but My Father.” And that other, spoken to the Jews on another occasion: “You judge according to the flesh.” All these passages express the same thing – that the real character of our Blessed Lord and of His teachings, are, as Saint Paul insists so eloquently in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, beyond the discovery or the criticism of human nature’s native faculties.

Hence, this passage has no reference to any distinction between the literal and the figurative, as if our Lord wished to say, I am only speaking of symbolical flesh and blood. After the ‘anasteso’ (I will raise him) of verse 54, He would have certainly contradicted Himself, had He said this. He goes on “The words which I speak to you are spirit and life”; that is, This statement and announcement which I have made is in the spiritual order – the order which alone will save men – for the ideas of mere human nature will never save them. “But,” He continues sadly, “there are some among you who do not believe...” who cannot or will not rise above mere natural judgment; “that is why I said to you that no one can come to Me unless it is given unto him by My Father”.

The almost universal opinion of the Fathers, the doctors, the scholastics and the theologians, is that this chapter of Saint John, at least from verse 48, is a promise and description of the Holy Eucharist. If it is, as there can hardly be a doubt, I would ask you to observe how very strongly it makes for the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence.

First, the sacramental eating of His Body and drinking His Blood is placed as a sort of sequel or development of the Incarnation. It is as if He said, “I am the true Bread from heaven; partake of Me, by believing in Me, and you shall have life everlasting. But I say more than this; I say, that I am going to make Myself truly and literally food and drink, for your spiritual life; and I wish you to summon all your faith in God and your trust in Me, so that you may be able to accept this new and amazing dispensation.”

Secondly, it is acknowledged that the only figurative meaning of the phrase “to eat the flesh and drink the blood” of a person, as far as the Jews were concerned, would have been the deepest injury and spite that one man could bear to another.

Thirdly, we must note how our Lord masses together the six assertions of which we have spoken, each repeating and strengthening the others, and all reiterating the strange and novel phrase “eating My Body,” and not merely the one with which He started, “eating bread from heaven”.

Fourthly, as we have already pointed out, when the hearers understood Him of a literal partaking of His Body, He made no correction or explanation, when it would have been easy, natural, and imperative for Him to do so, had they misunderstood Him.

Lastly, He appeals to the spiritual apprehension as against the fleshly apprehension. This was an appeal which both He and His Apostles were accustomed to make when a deep or novel Christian doctrine was set before the world. It would have been utterly out of place had He merely been intending to institute a harmless and obvious symbolical ceremony, not by any means so important as many ceremonies of that ancient Law which He was superseding and abolishing.

We justly conclude, therefore, from the words of the sixth chapter of Saint John, here considered, that our Lord, about a year before the Last Supper, promised that He would give the world a dispensation or institution of which it would be literally true to say that men really and truly therein received as food His sacred Body and Blood, as a means of grace and a pledge of life everlasting.

We now pass on to the words of Institution themselves.

Let us first set down, in words that follow as literally as possible the Greek text, the four passages in which we find the Institution related in the New Testament.

SAINT MATTHEW 26:26. – “When they were at meat” (or “eating”) “Jesus taking bread and having uttered blessing “(or “having blessed” it) “broke, and giving it to the disciples, said, ‘Take, eat; this is My Body’. And taking the Cup” (or “a Cup”) “and having given thanks, He gave (it) to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for this is My Blood of the New Testament, that (Blood) which is shed for many unto the remission of sins.”

SAINT MARK 14:22. – “And when they were eating, taking Bread, having uttered blessing He broke and gave to them, and said, Take, this is My Body. And taking the Cup, having given thanks, He gave to them; and all drank of it. And He said to them, This is My Blood of the Testament (that is) shed for many.”

SAINT LUKE 22:19. – “And taking bread, having given thanks, He broke and gave to them saying, This is My Body, that (Body) given for you. This do ye unto My remembrance. And in like manner the Cup, after the supping, saying, This Cup (is) the New Testament in My Blood, that (Cup, or Blood) shed for you.”

SAINT PAUL, 1 Corinth 11:23. – “For I received of the Lord, what I also have delivered to you, that the Lord on the night on which He was betrayed took bread, and having given thanks, broke, and said, This is My Body, that for you; this do in remembrance of Me. In like manner also the Cup, after the supping, saying, This Cup is the New Testament in My Blood; this do, as often as you shall drink, unto My remembrance.”

The Vulgate and the Textus Receptus insert in Saint Paul’s text “Take ye and eat” before “This is My Body”. But the best Greek manuscripts and the interesting Codex Amiatinus [old Latin Vulgate] omit these words; which seem to have been inserted from Saint Matthew. The Vulgate also has “which shall be delivered for you” (quod pro vobis tradetur) instead of simply “that (Body) for you”. There seems no authority in any Greek manuscript for the future tense, although some of the manuscripts add “delivered” (present participle), or “broken”.

It will be observed that, of these four passages, that from Saint Matthew agrees almost word for word with that of Saint Mark, whilst Saint Luke’s words are practically the same as those of Saint Paul. We have thus virtually two forms of the history of the Institution. Did Saint Matthew omit any of our Lord’s words, or did Saint Paul attribute to Him words that He never uttered? The answer is, that we are not obliged to believe that any one of the accounts gives the exact words of our Lord, without change or omission, or even explicative addition.

As Father Knabenbauer says:

“We gather from these passages that the Apostles were most solicitous to give with accuracy the sense of the words of Christ, but not so His words themselves; and this is frequently observable in other utterances also of our Lord which are related by more than one.”

Let us observe how exactly the accounts agree in meaning. First, we have in all the chief and sacramental formulas “This is My Body,” said whilst He held the bread, “This is My Blood,” whilst He held the cup. Secondly, they all call the Cup the “Blood of the Testament: or the “New Testament”. Of the significance of this, a word will be said presently. Thirdly, whilst in Saint Matthew we have “Take and eat,” “Drink ye all of this,” we have in Saint Paul that He “gave” the Bread and the Cup – certainly for no other purpose than to be partaken of. Fourthly, both in Saint Matthew and in Saint Luke, the sacred Blood is said to be “shed for many” or, equivalently, “shed for you”.

Then, if we look at the apparent differences, we find them of great significance. Saint Matthew and Saint Mark say “as they were at meat,” or “whilst they were supping”; Saint Paul and Saint Luke use the phrase “after the supper”; the significant fact being, as it is easy to gather, that the Institution took place whilst they were still sitting at table, before the formal or ceremonial conclusion of the Supper and yet after the legal formalities were really finished. We have here the solution of the apparent difficulty arising from certain words of Saint Luke.

Some controversialist, citing the words “I will not again drink of this fruit of the vine until I drink it new in the Kingdom of Heaven” have found therein an argument against the Real Presence. But in the ritual of the Paschal Supper, the Cup was handled and partaken of at least three or four times. It was evidently to one of these occasions that the words in question are to be referred. True, those words are, in Saint Mark’s account, placed immediately after the words of Institution. But even if our Lord, in using them, held the Eucharistic chalice in His hands, there is no reason for making any difficulty. That chalice was still, to outward appearance, the fruit of the grape; it was originally wine; and the significance of this phrase depends upon the Paschal Supper and Eucharistic Institution considered as a single rite in which “wine” was used; our Lord giving His Apostles to understand that this was the last time He would partake like that, or join in that rite, until the sacrifice of the Cross was consummated, when there would be what He calls “new wine”; a new dispensation and a new ritual, conveying the grace of the Blood of Christ. But it is far more probable that our Lord spoke the words before the Institution, as stated in Saint Luke, verses 16, 17, 18 – the bread of the Eucharist being taken into His hands in verse 19. The declaration that this was the last Paschal Supper is fittingly followed by the establishment of that rite which is to take its place; the Eucharistic proclamation being intended to be a sequel to the former declaration and the fulfillment of the ancient Passover.

Before further commenting on the words of institution, I will call your attention to the way in which they are reproduced in the form of Consecration, in the Mass.

After reciting that our Blessed Lord, the day before His Passion, took Bread into His holy and venerable hands, the form states that He “raised His eyes to heaven, to God, the Father Almighty, and giving thanks blessed and broke.” The circumstance of the raising of the eyes to heaven is not mentioned in the New Testament. But this Roman traditional form, as we cannot doubt, is as old as any part of the New Testament, and the raising of the eyes to heaven, or to God, is mentioned in nearly all the ancient liturgies. That our Blessed Lord actually used this significant gesture we may

justly infer from other passages of the New Testament. For example, in the miracles of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, as related in Matthew 14:19 and John 11:41 at the tomb of Lazarus, He is said to have raised His eyes to heaven and given thanks. Neither are the words “He blessed (it)” found in the Scriptural account, but it is undoubtedly implied in euloghsae (Saint Matthew and Saint Mark). With what gesture He blessed the elements is not recorded; it was probably with the uplifted hand, for we cannot suppose that He signed upon them that Cross which had not yet been elevated to the happy dignity of being the source of all blessing to the world.

The form continues, “And gave to His disciples, saying, Take ye all and eat; for this is My Body”. It here agrees with Saint Matthew and Saint Mark, and omits the words “delivered for you,” of Saint Luke, and “broken for you” of Saint Paul. {The reference is to the Liturgy of Saint Pius V.}

In the consecration of the Chalice, we have a more elaborate formula. “In a like manner, after supper was done, taking also into His holy and venerable hands this most excellent Cup, also giving thanks unto You, He blessed and gave to His disciples, saying Take ye and drink ye of it, all; for this is the Cup of My Blood, of the new and eternal Testament; the Mystery of Faith; which shall be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins. These things as often as you shall do, you shall do unto My remembrance.”

Here we have, first, one or two variations from the text of the Scripture. We have “The Chalice of My Blood,” which differs from the text of Saint Matthew and Saint Mark, “This is My Blood,” and agrees with Saint Luke and Saint Paul. Then we find the word “eternal” inserted. This is not found in any of the Evangelists. It emphasizes our Lord’s statement, that that Blood is the Blood of a Sacrifice, which marks the New Law, and the New Law is to abolish the Old Law with its sacrifices, and is itself never to be superseded, but to last for all time, and to be fulfilled in eternity.

Then we have a very remarkable insertion – “The Mystery of Faith”. What is the origin, and the meaning, of these words, which intervene between two Scriptural clauses? There can be little doubt that these words, like some others we have noted, represent words that our Blessed Lord actually used. The Evangelists have not transcribed them in relating the history of the Institution. But they have been preserved by tradition.

The phrase “Mystery of Faith” was certainly a formula of the early Church, and we may presume a phrase of our Lord’s own. Those words of Saint Paul addressed to the Deacons that they should “have the Mystery of Faith in a pure conscience”; that similar phrase “the Mystery hidden and prepared before all ages,” occurring twice, and the “Mystery of Jesus Christ which has not been discovered to the children of men in former ages,” make it quite plain that the “Mystery of Faith,” or the “Mystery of Christ,” was the saving of the world by the Blood of Christ. The precious Blood, poured out for men, is the Mystery of Faith. We are not bound to believe, certainly, that our Lord did use these words; we may be satisfied with thinking that they are there by the authority of the Church. But as we find them, almost without exception, in all the ancient liturgies, it seems impossible that any single Church, even the Roman Church, should of its own initiative, have invented them; and as they form part of a formula in which our Lord’s own words are professedly given, it would seem a kind of irreverence to have put them into His mouth if they were not His. It is certain that neither the Evangelists nor Saint Paul have related all the words used by our Lord. {The Vatican II Liturgy of Blessed Paul VI has slightly modified the Latin words used, mainly by putting the phrase ‘Mystery of Faith’, at the end of the sentence and by adding ‘given up for you’ from Saint Luke’s Gospel, to the Consecration of the Body.}

I have laid before you all, or nearly all, that is found in the text of the New Testament relating to the Institution of the Holy Eucharist and the significance of that Institution. We shall go on to inquire more in detail what is the meaning of the words, "This is My Body," "This is My Blood".

But now I would ask you to rise above all mere controversy, and to take a broad and comprehensive view of that great act of our Blessed Savior. You behold Him at the point where two epochs meet. That night the ancient Law was to cease. That night, the long period of preparation, of hope, of prophecy, of instruction, which had lasted from the Egyptian exodus to that hour, was to end. The old rites, the sacrifices, the Temple worship, was to be finished with; the old ordinances, which as Saint Paul says, carried with them, as ordinances, no grace, but only penalties for disobedience, were to die out, to fade as the stars when the sun is coming. The great sacrifice was, once for all, to be accomplished. Tomorrow, the Lamb that was foretold from the beginning of time and from eternity, was to offer that to the Eternal Father which would for ever make all other offerings superfluous. But at that last moment of intercourse with His chosen ones, our Lord was most certainly thinking of something else than His own Passion. The awful sacrifice of that Friday was to last long, but it was to be over in a few hours. Jesus is looking forward into the vast and dark future; the future with its generations and its millions of souls, not one of whom was to witness what was to pass on Calvary; not one of whom was ever to look upon their Savior in the flesh. What were these to have? How were these to carry on their worship? How were they to make sure of the grace that was to save them? Was the Incarnation to be nothing but a history? Was the Cross to be only a memory?

Conceivably, it might have been so. The very record of that life and passion would have left the human race for ever richer; and the abundant grace purchased by the Blood of Christ would have been there for every human soul, had there been neither a Church nor a visible dispensation. But practically the salvation of the future millions required, besides an indefectible teaching Church, a dispensation of perpetual outward and public worship, and the continued renewal, tangible and impressive, of the outpouring of Calvary. Only thus could men in great numbers be saved. It was, therefore, with the coming centuries in His view that He said: "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you"; because it was to be the occasion of the establishment of the New Covenant, with a worship, and rites, and ordinances, fitted to keep men up to the level of such a stupendous divine interference as the Incarnation and the Passion.

It was with the profoundest knowledge of men's frame that He said they should receive His grace and His life by eating His flesh. He foresaw the daily Mass, the innumerable Communions, and the never-failing, universal, always growing, Christian cultus of the Blessed Sacrament. And it was with that intention and desire that He said to His Apostles, and through them to the long generations of the Catholic priesthood, united to the faithful laity, 'Do ye this in memory of Me!' For the Eucharistic gift is the perpetual memorial of Jesus Christ the Savior; but a memorial which is the most powerful of all memorials, for in It men have His own flesh and blood, soul and divinity, to rouse them, to touch them, to win them, to heal them, day by day, so that every man may have life everlasting within the most easy reach. The stupendous miracle of the Real Presence is not too great a miracle to effect such a purpose as this.

Part 2.

THE REAL PRESENCE.

THE Holy Eucharist, among Catholics, and even by some non-Catholics, is justly called a Mystery. It is truly a Mystery. But even a Mystery is not wholly and entirely mysterious. There can be no reason why a reverent and reasonable mind should not study and discuss these aspects of a Mystery, which can be treated by human reason, guided by Faith, on premises supplied by revelation and reason respectively. Such rational consideration of a Mystery becomes absolutely necessary when it is the object of the attacks of hostile science.

The chief, though not the only, Mystery of the Holy Eucharist lies in the Real Presence. The discussion on the Real Presence, as I need not say, has been, and continues to be, active and warm, within the Church and without, and the literature of that discussion has grown to enormous dimensions.

It is partly theological, partly philosophical, and partly polemical. All educated Catholics, and not only professors or priests, may rightly be anxious to be well informed on each of these aspects of the Eucharistic question. As regards theology, whilst there are, in the Catholic manuals, many details of theological speculation which the mass of Catholics have no opportunity or need to enter into, there is at the same time a wide field of Catholic dogmatic teaching which they can well appreciate, and with which it is worth their while to become more or less scientifically acquainted. The philosophical aspects of the Holy Eucharist are even more within the range of lay discussion, for it is on this side that the keenest of our non-Catholic intellects approach, and in most cases attack, this Mystery. Eucharistic controversy, as far as it is distinct from theology or philosophy, is concerned with the relations of the Eucharistic dispensation to the text of Scripture, to early Church history, and to Christian history in general. No one should be altogether unprepared to give an account of the faith that is in him.

There is no difficulty in stating the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence. The doctrines of the Christian revelation are intended for the edification and spiritual and mental advantage of the Christian multitudes; for the illumination of the minds and the nourishment of the hearts of the masses for whom Christ died. Therefore, they must be capable of easy statement. It must be easy to ascertain what they import; easy to obtain a certain intelligent grasp of their meaning; and easy to find, in every generation, words fitted to convey the right idea of them to the minds even of the young, the uneducated and the ignorant. "All your children," said the Prophet Isaiah, "shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of your children". Our Blessed Lord refers to this passage just before making His promise of the Eucharist.

For a statement of the doctrine of the Eucharist, I cannot do better than take you straight to the Council of Trent. That great Council tells us, in very striking words, that the principal object of its assembling was to root out the errors then so widely prevailing on the subject of this venerable and divine Sacrament. It begins its decree on the Holy Eucharist thus: "This holy Synod teaches, and openly and simply professes, that in the august Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, is truly, really and substantially contained under the species (or appearances) of these sensible things".

The words "openly and simply professes," are worth notice. They indicate that the Catholic Church has nothing to conceal; and that there is nothing in this great dogma, which she is not ready to state to the whole world. Adversaries may discuss, refine, object; but the doctrine itself is very plain.

The Council, for the moment, leaves all controversy out of sight, and takes its stand upon our Lord's own formula, which it reiterates and slightly expands in order to bring out its plain meaning. Our

Lord says, "This is My Body". "This" is the Object which He holds in His hands, and which has the appearance of Bread. The Council says, accordingly, that our Lord Jesus Christ is there, under those appearances – truly, really, and substantially there. The word truly (vere) here reinforces the word "is"; as when, in answer to an inquiry, 'Is it so?' one replies, "Truly it is so".

The word "really" (realiter) is in opposition to a merely figurative presence. A distinction of res (thing) from figura (figure, symbol, or presentment) is common and well known. Thus when it is stated that our Lord's Body and Blood are present "really," the meaning is that they are there not merely symbolically or virtually, or representatively (as in a portrait, for example), or figuratively, or improprie (improperly), or after a manner of speaking. When it is said that "the rock was Christ," this is a symbol. When our Lord says, "I am the Door," this again is a symbolical or figurative expression. The Fish, in the catacombs, is justly said to be our Lord, inasmuch as it represents Him, like a symbol or anagram would. The priest is sometimes called "Christ"; but the sense evidently is, that He is Christ virtually, in a given sphere. If we say that Christ abides in the soul of the just man, the meaning is that He is there by power and loving complacency. In none of these instances could we say, without qualification, that He was there realiter.

"Substantially" is distinguished against "modally"; the word "substance" being here taken in the sense in which the term is used in the scholastic philosophy – namely, as a distinct, self-complete, existing nature, in which various modes, "accidents" or qualities, inhere, and which at the same time is distinct from such modes. Each thing is conceived as a nature which is distinct and distinguishable from all other natures, which has a certain completeness – as one tree is not another tree but a finished whole – and which is at once the substratum or subject of its own color, size, taste, et cetera, and yet not identical with any of these or with the ensemble of them. Thus, "substantially" here excludes all that "really" excludes, and states in addition that our Lord's Body and His Blood are present as things or natures in the full and complete sense. The term has quite a different meaning in modern popular speech. When we meet the expression "substantially present," or "substantially complete," or "substantially achieved," we generally take it to mean not quite or wholly present, complete, et cetera, but so far so that very little remains to be concerned about. And from this meaning or use is derived the further use of "substantial" for "considerable" or "important," as when we speak of a substantial gain or a substantial installment. The employment of the word "substance," with its derivatives, in Catholic philosophy will have to be more fully insisted upon farther on. It is the very key to the philosophy of the Real Presence.

Meanwhile, it is very useful to us, whether as against gainsayers, or for our own profit, to take our stand upon the plain statement set down by the greatest ecclesiastical authority. The words of the Council of Trent are clear enough, both in themselves and to the ordinary human mind, to give the intelligence of the faithful believer a true and sufficient hold or grasp of the doctrine. All Catholics have a right to decline to be drawn into elaborating this doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, or similar doctrines. We speak plain words; to these plain words, we adhere; and if you press us and say, 'Do you mean this, or do you mean that?' to these plain words we comeback. The Catholic who is not a theologian, or an expert thinker, may not always be able, at a first or even second glance, to say whether the terms the phrases proposed to him by non-Catholics are admissible or not; whether the statements offered to him by non-Catholic friends, or found in their books, are reconcilable with the Church's doctrine or not. But he can always adhere to his own "sound form" of words, and to the obvious meaning of those words.

Carefully bearing in mind this plain, intelligible, and authoritative statement of the doctrine of the Real Presence, and remembering that this statement is meant for use in our own times, let us now turn to the earliest Christian records and see how it accords with what we find written in the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church. By an examination of these sources it will be clear that no other statement – that is, no contradictory statement, and no less ample a statement – can be reconciled with the earliest Christian teaching.

It will not be necessary to repeat what has been said when commenting upon the words of the Promise in the sixth chapter of Saint John. The terms which our Lord there employs, could hardly have been more aptly chosen had He intended to forestall the Tridentine definition. We have in the Greek words of Saint John the assertion of a “true” and indubitable Presence.

The force of “really” is plainly involved in the comparison used by our Lord, “As the Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father, he that eats Me he also shall live by Me”. As if He said, The eating of Me and the grace given by Me, are as “really” connected as My proceeding from the Father is “really” connected with My living by the Father; the latter is a real and not a figurative statement; its terms and their connection are all real; and in the same way, in the former statement, the eating of Christ is “real,” the grace is “real,” and the connection between the two is “real”.

The force of “substantially,” as expressing a complete, objective, self-contained nature, is involved in our Lord’s saying a saying that would otherwise be very crude, and even painful – that the faithful are to “eat Him,” and to “eat His Body,” to “drink His Blood”. This excludes mere instructive symbolism, mere fancy, however beautiful. It involves the providing of an objective thing, and its presentation to one who is to deal with it as one deals with food.

Coming to the words of institution, their polemic force as proving the Real Presence is, first of all, of a negative kind. If our Lord says, “This is My Body,” “This is My Blood,” the natural inference is that it is really so. Nay, further, it seems certain that, in such a momentous institution, and at such a crisis of His career, when He was closing His ministry and providing for the future of the immortal Church He was to found, He would insert all the qualifying words that were necessary. But there are simply no qualifications. Bread might certainly typify Him; but, had that been all He meant, would He not have said, “I am Bread,” and not “This is My Body”? Even if we go so far as to admit that He might on some occasion have said, holding up a loaf, “This is Myself,” as He might – though it is a stretch to admit it – have pointed to a door or a vine, and said “That is Myself,” the actual circumstances forbid us to think He could have done so on this occasion. It would have been a very strong thing to say, of a door, “That is Myself”; but it is incredible that He could have gone on to say, “Set up that door in all your assemblies”. It would have been carrying out a figure to grotesque lengths. He would only have used such language if the door had really been Himself: So, if we admit that “This is My Body” might, considered in some contexts, be the declaration of a figure, yet when He goes on to say, you must eat this Bread, and continue to do so to the end of time in your Churches, it is impossible to avoid the inference that a real “eating” means a real “presence”.

Thus, to say the least, the words of institution, understood in their direct and most natural acceptation, signify a Real Presence; and it rests with those who deny the Real Presence to explain them away.

But there is also a strong argument of a positive kind. Let me again suppose, or grant, that the expression, ‘This is My Body’, ‘This is My Blood’, in certain contexts, or abstractedly, might be

merely figurative like, I am the Door. But suppose that our Lord had said, That door is Myself, and had immediately added, “Yes, My very self whom you now hear speaking,” is it not clear that the hearer’s attention would have been strangely arrested, and he would have said to himself, What singular emphasis! Surely, He cannot mean that it really is Himself? That is to say, a verbal enforcement of the kind described would naturally be taken to indicate that what was said was no figure but literal reality. Now let us observe the words of institution. Our Lord says, ‘This is My Body’, – and whilst the hearer is beginning to take in His meaning, He goes on, “That Body which is given for you”. He says, ‘This is My Blood’, and immediately adds, “That Blood which is poured out for you”.

The Greek shows the force of these declarative additions. The Latin goes, *Hoc quod do manducandum est ipsum corpus meum, ipsum quod pro vobis datur; id quod porrigo bibendum est ipse sanguis meus, ipse Novi Testamenti, ipse qui pro multis effundetur.* “This is My Body; yes, the very Body given for you; This is My Blood; yes, the very Blood of the New Testament, the very Blood poured out for you and for many.” It can hardly be denied that, according to the ordinary use of language, such emphatic additions have the force of an assertion of reality, of literalness, as opposed to mere appearance or symbol. The hearers knew how solemn were those words “given” as applied to the Body of Christ, and the “Blood of the Covenant poured out” for the world, as applied to the Cup. They knew well that their Master was thinking of the victims and the blood-shedding of the Mosaic Law, and of Himself as the Victim of the Law to come. Or if they did not, at that moment of awe and amazement, grasp all that He meant, the full force of it would make itself felt after they had been witnesses of what happened on Good Friday. It was impossible, therefore, for them not to feel then, and more strongly afterwards, that if He had intended them to believe in a literal Presence, He could not have used words more startling, more grave, more worthy of such a dispensation, or more strongly suggestive of a desire to be understood as He spoke.

(It is sometimes objected that the words of Institution cannot, in some details, be verified of the real Body of Christ, and that consequently the whole must be taken metaphorically. For example, we read in Saint Paul’s account: “This is My Body which is broken for you”. Now, no one pretends that consecration imports any real change in the Body of Christ. Therefore, it can only be of the metaphorical Body that the word “broken” can be verified. But it is easy to see that the expression “broken” in this place is only a variant for “given”. The expression “to break bread” means, in Holy Scripture, to give or distribute bread – as in Isaiah (58:7), “Break your bread to the hungry.” The Body of Christ being really present is said to be “broken” because it is there under the appearance of bread, which is given or distributed. Hence, Saint Luke, the disciple of Saint Paul, has “which is given for you”. That it means more than merely distributed to the twelve; that the words in Greek – give the phrase a sacrificial character, is what we shall maintain farther on. But the subordinate metaphor found in the use of “broken” for “given” in no way makes the main proposition metaphorical.)

The passage in which Saint Paul relates the Eucharistic institution is introduced in order to regulate the administration of the Supper of the Lord, and to correct abuses, which were springing up. It is observable that he calls the Eucharistic elements simply the “Body of the Lord”. No doubt he calls them also “this Bread” and “this Cup of the Lord,” but this is clearly a reference merely to their outward seeming; for the point of the passage is to impress upon the Corinthians that “this Bread” and this “Cup of the Lord” are much more than what they seem; so much more, that he who partakes unworthily is “liable to punishment” on account of the Body of the Lord – that is, on

account of profaning the Body of the Lord. The same idea is repeated in the two following verses. A man is directed to “prove himself” before partaking of that Bread and that Cup; and the reason is immediately added, namely, that “he who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord” – that is, not distinguishing and recognizing the Body of the Lord. Saint Paul, therefore, calls the Holy Eucharist without qualification the “Body of the Lord”; and when he proclaims that an unworthy participation brings “judgment,” that is, damnation, upon the recipient, he virtually says that that Body is truly, really and substantially there present.

We now proceed to examine the testimonies of the early Fathers. Let it be borne in mind that what we assert is that, in the New Testament, and in the earliest ecclesiastical writers, the Holy Eucharist is called, simply and without qualification, the Body and Blood of Christ; and this under circumstances which fully demonstrate that that sacred Body and Blood are considered to be truly, really and substantially present.

It will not be possible to cite one-tenth part of the texts of the Fathers, as we find them in the writings of Saint Robert Bellarmine, or even in those of Johann Baptist Franzelin. But we may select six or seven, from the Fathers of East and West, during the first four Christian centuries. These will be enough to show our method or principles of demonstration; and as there are absolutely no contradictory passages, they will be enough to prove the consensus ecclesiae (the consent and common opinion of the Church.)

We begin with Saint Ignatius of Antioch. We know that Saint Ignatius was a disciple of Saint John the Evangelist, and that he was Bishop of Antioch – the [original] see of Saint Peter – for thirty-seven years. He was martyred in the amphitheatre of Rome, probably about A.D. 107.

The Epistles of Saint Ignatius are largely concerned with the denunciation of a certain Docetism, which practically denied that Christ was really human. Saint Ignatius speaks strongly of Christ’s divinity and also of His humanity. In the following passage, therefore, he is not speaking directly or primarily of the Eucharist; and this circumstance makes his language very interesting and valuable. It is from his Epistle to the Smyrnaeans: “They (the Docetae) abstain from Eucharist (or thanksgiving) and prayer, because they allow not that the Eucharist is the flesh of Our Savior Jesus Christ (that flesh) which suffered for our sins, which the Father by His benignity raised up. They therefore gainsay the gift of God die in their disputings”. Here the point on which stress is laid is that the Flesh of our Lord is real human flesh, and the argument is that a denial of this leads to a refusal of the Eucharist; the process in the Martyr’s mind clearly being that the Eucharist is really and substantially Christ. We cannot conceive that a Sacramentarian would argue like this. If the Holy Eucharist were natural Bread, and only symbolized the Body of the Lord, the Eucharist could never be adduced as a proof of the reality of Christ’s Body.

Following the order of time, we will next take Saint Justin, “philosopher and martyr,” as the ancient Acts call him. He was a native of Palestine, but paid two visits to Rome, where he founded a school, disputed with the heathen, and published his famous Apologies. He was beheaded probably in the year 167. It is in this great man’s First Apology that we find the earliest extant description of the Liturgy of the Mass. I do not quote the whole passage, but only what is to our present purpose. He says: “The food itself with us is called Eucharistia, of which none is permitted to partake except one who believes... and who has passed through the washing for remission of sins and new birth, and so lives as Christ commanded. For we receive these not as common bread or common drink, but as Jesus Christ our Savior being incarnate by the Word of God possessed both flesh and blood for our

salvation, so also we were taught that the food over which thanksgiving has been made by the utterance in prayer of the word derived from Him" (or rather "the food Eucharistised by the prayer of the word delivered by Him") "is the Flesh and Blood of that incarnate Jesus." And he then briefly transcribes the gospel narrative of the institution, bringing into full relief the words, 'This is My Body', 'This is My Blood'. Here Saint Justin says, plainly and simply, that the Bread of the Eucharist, when consecrated, is the very flesh, which the Word of God took for our salvation.

Saint Irenaeus was an Asiatic, and a disciple of Saint Polycarp. Passing to Southern Gaul, in the wake of so many Asiatic Greeks, he was ordained priest at Lyons, and after the martyrdom of Saint Pothinus was appointed Bishop of that great See by Pope Saint Eleutherius. The only complete work of Saint Irenaeus that has come down to us is that which is generally known as *Adversus haereses*; its more correct name is "The detection and refutation of false Gnosis," or Gnosticism. He died A.D. 202. His argument against the Gnostics leads to a clear statement on the Real Presence.

It was a feature of the error of these rationalizing heretics that Jesus was denied to be the Son of God, or the Word of God the Creator – the real "Creator" of 'things visible' being in their view the spirit called the 'Demiurge'. He therefore argues: "How shall they feel assured that that Bread over which thanksgiving has been made" (the phrase here is the very expression of Saint Justin) "is the Body of their Lord, and the Chalice of His Blood, if they do not declare Him the Son of the world's Creator?" His reasoning is that if the change of the Bread into the Body of the Lord depends, as it does, upon the power of Jesus, any theory which denies the power of Jesus over the material world will necessarily refuse to recognize this Eucharistic change; but that the Bread really does become the Body of the Lord is a tenet of Christian faith, professed even by the Gnostics themselves; therefore their refusal to admit that Jesus is the true Son of the Father and the Word of the world's Creator is against the Faith. It is not the argument against Gnosticism which here concerns us, but the un-designed proof of the belief in the Real Presence. This belief, here stated without qualification, is expressed in equally plain terms in several other passages of Saint Irenaeus.

The great African presbyter Tertullian, who lived till the fortieth year of the third century, unfortunately fell into the errors of the Montanists; but his testimony as to the Real Presence is unequivocal. We will only cite two short passages. In his tract *De Idololatria*, he inveighs against the impiety of certain Christians who persist in the unlawful business of the fabrication of idols, and yet presume to approach the Holy Communion. All who have any zeal for the faith, he says, must mourn that a Christian "should approach those hands to the Body of the Lord which bestow bodies on demons". And in the writing which is entitled *De Pudicitid*, a production of his Montanist period, he speaks thus of the Prodigal Son: "He then also first receives the ring, by which when questioned he seals his plighted faith, and so next is fed on the fatness of the Body of the Lord, the Eucharist to wit". The ring and seal evidently refer to Baptism; although there is no authority for supposing that it was ever a part of the Baptismal rite to invest with a ring. But Baptism was enlistment in the army of the faithful, and corresponded to the "ring" mentioned in the parable. Then the neophyte is fed with what the writer calls, in his strong and somewhat crude style, the "fatness of the Body of the Lord" (*opimitate Domini corporis*), "that is, the Eucharist". The Eucharist is thus termed, without qualification, the Body of the Lord.

Origen, the greatest genius of the Greek patristic host, lived about the same time as Tertullian; he died A.D. 254 He represents the tradition of the great Church of Alexandria. The passages in which he calls the Holy Eucharist the Body of the Lord are too numerous even to refer to. Let the following suggestive citations suffice.

He thus writes in his treatise Against Celsus: “Let Celsus, as being ignorant of God, render Eucharistic gifts to demons; but we, giving thanks to the Maker of all things, do also eat the loaves that have been offered with thanksgiving and prayer over the gifts (loaves) now become by prayer a holy Body – holy, and making holy those who use it with salutary purpose”. The phrase a “holy Body” may be also translated, “a Body, a holy thing”. There was no need for the Apologist to say whose Body it was. Let us observe that he says that, in the Eucharist, the Bread “becomes,” or “is made,” the Body. In another of his writings, we find the well-known passage in which he refers to the dropping of a particle of the consecrated Host. “You, who have been accustomed,” he says, “to be present at the Divine mysteries, know that when you receive the Body of the Lord, you take care with all caution and veneration lest any part thereof, however small, should fall, lest any portion of the consecrated gift should be lost.” Finally, in his commentaries in the Prophet Jeremiah, he thus refers to the Easter Communion “If you will go up with Christ to celebrate the passover, He will both give to you that Bread of benediction His own Body and will vouchsafe to you His own Blood”.

Saint Cyprian, in whose strong personality and wonderful gift of speech is impersonated the Carthaginian Church of the third century, was martyred A.D. 258 four years after the death of Origen. He did not write in defense of the doctrine of the Real Presence, any more than the other ecclesiastical writers of his age. But we find in his eloquent remains the clearest un-designed proof that, in his day and in his sphere of Catholicism, the Holy Eucharist was named without qualification, the Body and Blood of the Lord. For example: we find him in Epistle 10, reproofing certain presbyters for being too easy with the Lapsed. “These presbyters,” he says, “before penance has been undergone, before confession has been made... before hands have been imposed by the Bishops and clergy unto penitence, dare... to give them the Eucharist, that is, to profane the holy Body of the Lord.” Another subject frequently treated by the holy Bishop is the preparation of the faithful for the trials of martyrdom. Above all, he says, they must receive Holy Communion, to quote, “for how can we teach them, or urge them, to shed their blood, if we refuse them, when on the eve of the combat, the blood of Christ?”

In another passage, he plainly refers to the custom then prevailing of receiving the Holy Communion in the right hand – “Let us arm our right hand with the sword of the Spirit, that it may courageously reject the fatal sacrifices; that it may remember the Eucharist, and that as it has received the Body of the Lord it may embrace Him, and so at the last day receive from the Lord the reward of a heavenly crown”. There is yet another topic, which gives Saint Cyprian an occasion of testifying on the Real Presence. It was very common in those days of heathen domination for weak Christians to deny their faith by partaking of things offered to idols – which, as he expresses it, was equivalent to worshipping at the altar of devils. Of these fallen brethren he says that it frequently happened that they came straight from these abominations to holy Communion – “Returning from the devil’s altars, they come, with hands unclean and still reeking, unto the holy thing of the Lord... they invade (or fall with violence upon) the Body of the Lord.”... “Violence is offered to His body and blood, and they now sin more against the Lord with hands and mouth than when they denied Him.”

All these very plain and clear testimonies are taken from the words of those who wrote during the period of the persecutions. We may now bring forward one or two witnesses from the great age of the Doctors of the Church, which begins with Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (386) and ends with Saint Leo the Great (461).

We may begin by drawing attention to the Council of Nicaea itself. Any expression, which is incorporated in the text of this great Council, is, without doubt, a Catholic expression. The Council says, “Neither Canon nor custom has handed down that those who have not authority to offer should give the Body of Christ to those who do offer”. The Canon cited forbids deacons to give the Holy Communion to priests; and so we have the unqualified expression “the Body of Christ,” as an equivalent for the holy Eucharist. Is it possible to doubt that, in those days, every Catholic called the Eucharist the Body of Christ?

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem was Bishop of that city for thirty-five years, but of these, he passed sixteen in exile. He died A.D. 386. His precious volume of discourses, addressed to those who were about to be baptized, called Catecheses Mystagogicae, contain a very full and convincing statement of the Real Presence, and of its consequences. For example, we have the following in Book 1, number 7: “When the invocation has been made, the bread becomes the Body of Christ and the wine the Blood of Christ”.

But the fourth discourse is wholly occupied with this subject, and expressly intended to be an instruction to the newly baptized on a subject on which they had hitherto been kept in the dark. Saint Cyril first repeats the words of institution. He then appeals to his hearers not to dare to doubt, since Christ Himself has declared concerning the bread, that it is His Body; not to dare to say, This is not My Blood, when He Himself has pronounced that it is; “wherefore, do not contemplate the bread and the wine as bare (bread and wine), for they are, according to the declaration of the Lord, Christ’s Body and Blood”... “What seems bread is not bread, even though bread to the taste, but Christ’s Body, and what seems wine is not wine, even though the taste will have it so, but Christ’s Blood.” The following Catechism concludes with the well-known directions for receiving the Holy Communion; these we shall have to comment upon on another occasion.

We might now cite among others, Saint Basil, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Saint Cyril of Alexandria, and, above all, Saint John Chrysostom. No one can for a moment doubt that all these great Catholic doctors and witnesses of tradition used the words Body and Blood of Christ, simply, emphatically, and most literally, of the holy Eucharist. But as there are many easily accessible books in which their testimonies are collected and enforced, it will be enough to bring forward, as an exponent of the faith of the Western Church, Saint Augustine.

With Saint Augustine, it is difficult to know where to begin. In a sermon addressed Ad Infantes – to the newly baptized – he explains to them the mystery to which they have been for the first time admitted. “You ought to know,” he says, “what you have received, what you are about to receive, what you ought every day to receive. The bread, which you see on the altar, after being sanctified by the word of God, is the Body of Christ. That chalice, or rather that which the chalice contains, after being sanctified by the word of God, is the Blood of Christ. By these things it was the will of Christ to commend (or to commit to us) His Body and the Blood which He shed for us unto the remission of sins.” This seems plain enough, and strong enough. And when the holy doctor, as he does in numberless passages, lays stress upon the propriety of fasting communion, or comments upon the bread of heaven mentioned in the Psalm, or explains the mysterious phrase “Why do I carry my soul in my hands,” or treats of the “illumination” which Christ was to bestow upon the world, or pours forth his heart in fervent exposition of the words of the sixth chapter of Saint John, or unfolds the hidden meaning of the marriage feast – on such occasions and numberless others he sets down such plain, unqualified, solicitous, serious, emphatic statements, that it is impossible to

escape the conviction, that he would have adopted the expressions of the Council of Trent, not only without difficulty, but as affording the only adequate statement of Catholic truth.

It follows from this rapid survey of the New Testament and of the early Fathers, that the Evangelists and the Christian teachers of the first four centuries were used to call the Eucharist without qualification the Body and Blood of Christ. It was beyond doubt (*vere*) the Body of Christ; it was no figure, but was really (*realiter*) the Body of Christ; and it was the Body of Christ as fully and completely as that sacred Body which appeared on the earth, suffered, died, and rose again (*substantialiter*).

– “It may perchance be asked why God now requires more from Christians under the Gospel than He did from the Jews under the law. The reason is evident; we give more to God because we owe more... The Jews partook of the manna, we of Christ; the Jews of the birds of the air, we of the Body of God; the Jews of the dew of heaven, we of Heaven’s Lord” – *Salvian*, (fifth century Christian author), *Ad Ecclesiam*, Book 2.
