

The Presence of the Body and Blood of the Lord

by J. M. R. Tillard, op

- (1) The positions of the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion with regard to the "Eucharistic sacrifice" are connected with another problem, also a difficult one, namely, the manner in which we understand the presence of the Lord's Body and Blood in the signs of the memorial. We all admit that this Body and Blood are given to us. We all state that they are given to us as spiritual food and drink, received in a spiritual manner. None of us hesitates to affirm that the Lord is truly present in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But do we posit an identical content for the same terms? This question harks back to the question of sacrifice, and unless we have first clarified this latter question we cannot say that we are in complete agreement on the former.

- (2) It is no easy matter to unravel this tangled problem, and this is true for both Churches. It is well known that article XXVIII of the Articles on Religion appears to reintroduce what we might call a compromise teaching:

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another; but rather a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.

Transsubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord cannot be proved by Holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The Body of Christ is given, taken and eaten, in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

- (3) On the part of the Lord there is the offering and gift of his Body and Blood. The signs are not empty. We are therefore far from a Zwinglian point of view. And yet it is also stated that this offering only actualizes itself in the Christian through the latter's faith. Article XXXI says this in so many words:

The wicked and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as Saint Augustine saith) the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ: but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing.

- (4) One has to ask whether this web of traditional affirmations conceals - at least as far as essentials are concerned - what Catholic tradition (in the broad sense) holds to be the necessary truth, corresponding to a correct interpretation of the data of faith.
- (5) Particularly since the renewal of liturgical and patristic studies, Roman Catholic thought has seriously questioned itself on the true nature of the

Eucharistic presence, trying to see it from a broader viewpoint⁽⁴⁾. Thanks above all to a profound contact with the tradition of the Churches of the East, and also to the renewed stress upon the primary role of the sign in the sacramental reality, Roman Catholic thought has gradually come to perceive more closely the genuine sense of its faith in the true presence of the Lord in the Sacrament of the Last Supper. Several aspects of this research, which have removed numerous misunderstandings of which the Roman Catholic, not appreciating properly the true implications of the traditional vocabulary, was unaware, but which offended other Christians, have been incorporated into the Conciliar texts or the pastoral decisions of the official Magisterium. We must refrain from following up several attractive lines of thought, which still have the status of personal positions which will have to stand up to the test of critical examination and develop properly in dialogue. Instead we must present the essential features of what one may term the enlightened faith of the Roman tradition today. By reason of certain difficulties encountered in our dialogue, we shall take the liberty of speaking in some detail of this Roman Catholic view.

(6) A sacramental presence.

We would state first that the presence of the Body and Blood is for the full actualization of the Eucharistic sacrifice and in order that this latter may be effective in the life of believers. The most essential term to be kept in mind in this regard is that of "sacramental being". The real and true presence of the Lord in the memorial is therefore not to be confused with a physical type of presence. The presence with which we are dealing belongs to a very specific order of reality, one which cannot be confused with the manner in which natural realities are present. It is the reality of the new world made accessible by the Resurrection and through the action of the Holy Spirit. It should be stressed that this recourse to a "sacramental" and not "natural" manner of presence in no way betrays a desire to juggle with the texts of Trent. In Session XIII, in the first chapter of the Decree on the Eucharist, we find the following lines (often quoted in abbreviated form):

The Sacred Council teaches and openly and simply professes that in the venerable sacrament of the holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is really, truly and substantially present under the appearances of these sensible realities. Nor is there any contradiction between the fact that our Saviour is himself always seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven according to a mode of presence which is natural to him, and the fact that nevertheless he is sacramentally present to us in many other places in his substance, in a manner of being which our words can scarcely express and yet which our minds, enlightened by faith, can recognize and which we must firmly believe as a thing possible to God⁽⁵⁾.

Principio docet Sancta Synodus et aperte ac simpliciter profitetur, in almo sanctae Eucharistiae sacramento post panis et vini consecrationem Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum verum Deum atque hominem vere, realiter ac substantialiter sub specie illarum rerum sensibilium contineri. Neque enim haec inter se pugnant ut ipse Salvator noster semper ad dextram Patris in caelis assideat iuxta modum existendi naturalem, et ut multis nihilominus aliis in locis sacramentaliter praesens sua substantia nobis adsit, ea existendi ratione, quam etsi verbis exprimere vix possumus, possibilem tamen esse Deo, cogitatione per fidem illustrata assequi possumus et constantissime credere debemus.

- (7) Now this order of reality is, as we have said, essentially conditioned by its relationship with the sign. What the Council condemns in Canon 1 of this session is the minimalist position, which reduces this "sacramental being" to a mere signification while forgetting that in the sacramental economy the sign bears the mysterious presence of the very thing that it evokes⁽⁶⁾. The paschal humanity of the Lord truly becomes present to the Church celebrating the memorial. This humanity does not become present by a mere evocation or by a simple causality. It becomes itself present, and in itself. Nevertheless one must specify at once that this takes place under a mode of being which is not the natural mode, but of which the finality consists precisely in a putting into contact with the
- (8) natural mode. It is possible to describe this sacramental mode as a mode of mediation, and this on two levels. First, because the sign and its objective content tend at one and the same time towards the humanity of the Lord in his natural being, excluding all modification and a fortiori all multiplication, and also towards men, who are many and existing in different situations, and who are to be enriched with the benefits of salvation. The sacramental presence thus makes it possible for the single and immutable to become present to the multitude of men down the course of the ages. On a second level, however, the sacramental mode permits what may be termed an intermediate presence, situated between a natural and historical presence that man can no longer experience as such, and the presence "face to face" that man cannot yet experience. These two levels represent two dimensions of a single mediation, the vertical dimension (of the Lord Jesus to the Christian) and the horizontal (between two moments of the mystery of the encounter between Jesus and man). The first receives its finality from the second; both answer to the situation of the Church. It would not therefore be possible to picture this presence according to the mode whereby Jesus was with his followers during his ministry⁽⁷⁾.
- (9) The threefold orientation of the memorial - the memory of the past, the designation of what the grace of God is doing hic et nunc and the proclamation of the future - which is an integral part of the signs themselves, indicates the quality of this presence. The latter springs from the memory of the Saving Event and fosters hope; in the strongest sense of the expression it is the presence that the Holy Spirit, who communicates the good things of Jesus (cf. Jn 16:14), accomplishes for the present moment of the History of Salvation.
- (10) At this point it is possible to draw a first conclusion: there can be no question there of a presence located in space. Even though mediaeval theology and Trent employ the term contineri or the expression contineri sub speciebus⁽⁸⁾ to indicate the relationship of the Body and Blood with the sacramental species, they are nevertheless careful to emphasize that "nullo modo corpus Christi est in hoc sacramento localiter"⁽⁹⁾ Thomas Aquinas even specifies that the place in which the Body of Christ is sacramentally present is not "filled by the substance of Christ"⁽¹⁰⁾. There is little point in dwelling on this matter, which has ceased to be a source of misunderstandings between us.
- (11) It is true that the use of "substance" to indicate the reality of what is thus contained and given remains a major source of confusion, not only because modern thought has evolved and scarcely understands any longer the ancient meaning of the word, but also because this ancient meaning itself is not clear and alternates between a common and a technical use. It is not enough to state that the Tridentine texts refuse to tie the faith down to a philosophical system; this will not cause misunderstandings and ambiguities to disappear.

- (12) What does the Roman Catholic tradition really mean by substantial presence⁽¹¹⁾? The term substantia is here taken in a sense which stops short of the properly systematic definition (which, however, it should be noted is not foreign to it) which contrasts it with accident. Substance indicates that which answers the question "what is this?"; in other words it indicates the profound, fundamental being of things once one has gone beyond simple appearances - that radical "what" of a reality. Put in another way, the substantia is what the intellect perceives as the ultimate basis which bears all the manifestations or attributes of this reality and which takes account of these latter. The senses, in fact, never grasp it as such, because one can only perceive it in the spiritual insight which perceives it - like a watermark in paper - in its expressions or appearances. This is true whether one is dealing with natural realities or with artificial ones. It is what enables one to say: "This is the perfume of roses", or: "This has the taste of bread". It is the ultimate answer at this normal level of human curiosity, and beyond which the mind cannot go except by asking questions, as a further stage, about the nature of this rose or of this bread. Hence, in the Eucharistic memorial, to the question "what is this?", the believer who receives the Eucharistic Bread has to reply according to his faith: "It is the Body of Christ, who gives himself as food, as the Bread of Life". He thus affirms that what is thus present and given is not a mere supernatural power but truly the profound being of the Lord's Body, and hence the "what" which manifests itself and acts in all that faith attributes to the reality of the Lord's Body, and which is the principle unifying all these attributes.
- (13) The believer, however, also affirms that this presence, however true and real, is realized in a special and mysterious mode. It has not been sufficiently noted (this time at the level of technical reflection properly speaking) how the mediaeval and Scholastic effort to translate in terms of substantia and transsubstantiatio what Tradition conveyed under different terms⁽¹²⁾ serves not only to safeguard the reality of the presence but also to avoid heavily materialistic or physical ideas of this presence. Whatever may be said of the validity of the philosophical tools used, which no longer find an echo with us, it is essential to recognize that the affirmation of a presence per modum substantiae implies that the Body of the Lord is sub speciebus in a manner that escapes all our metaphysical investigations and that we cannot attempt to imagine. For mediaeval Scholasticism in fact the material substance - existing whole and entire in the whole and in each of its parts - cannot be seen, touched or pinned down to a particular place except in and through its own accidents. The substance is only experienced through these accidents. This becomes a fundamental condition when it is a matter of recognizing its presence.
- (14) Now in the present case the accidents perceived by the senses are those of the bread and wine. The presence of the Lord, believed by faith, only has contact with the faithful in the accidents of the sacramental sign. The Bread of eternal life, which is truly the Lord's Body really given, is only offered and received in the accidents of the bread of earthly life. Presence and sacramental sign are here joined together, and in a way that characterizes this type of presence by bringing it close to that whereby a spirit makes itself present. At the same time the two types of presence remain distinct⁽¹³⁾. We are therefore at the opposite extreme to a materialistic viewpoint.
- (15) In addition, the Body and Blood thus given are the Body and Blood of Christ glorified, who has become, through the power of the Spirit, Lord of creation. The rediscovery of the nature of the paschal mystery in which death and resurrection are inseparable has enabled Roman Catholic thought to renew its links with the great insights of the Eastern tradition⁽¹⁴⁾.

- (16) For the Cross brings salvation only in and through the Father's acceptance of that which Jesus offers on the Cross. The Father's "yes" is the Resurrection. The saving Body and Blood are the Body and Blood of Jesus who has become Kurios. Thus Paul speaks of the supper of the Kurios, the table of the Kurios, the cup of the Kurios and of the Body and Blood of the Kurios in a way which is not fortuitous (cf. 1 Cor 11:23-33; 10:21). The reality made present in the Eucharist therefore also belongs to a very specific universe - that of the "new world", the world of the Spirit of God, the world of which we cannot grasp the true nature. In this way not only the mode of presence but also the gift itself escape the laws of this present creation.
- (17) It will have been noted that we insist on the part played by the Holy Spirit. Undoubtedly one of the most valuable dogmatic fruits of the dialogue with the East is this renewed highlighting of the necessary basic link existing between the mystery of the Eucharistic presence and the action of the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of the Lord. This conviction, very tentatively expressed in the Conciliar texts, in which it appears clearly only in a fine passage of the Decree on the priestly life and ministry⁽¹⁵⁾, marks the Instruction on the cult of the Eucharistic mystery⁽¹⁶⁾ and subsequently the Institutio Generalis of the Roman Missal⁽¹⁷⁾; it has had a profound influence in the restoration of the Eucharistic liturgy. It is responsible particularly for the prayers of epiclesis of the new Canons and for the generally unified atmosphere which now prevails in the celebration of Mass. The Christian who is alert to the meaning of the texts perceives that it is a question not of a somewhat magical act but of a mysterious presence, which leads up to an encounter in which in the power of his Holy Spirit the Lord of the Church truly gives himself to the Christian through the sacramentality of the memorial. In brief, both the content of the Eucharistic signs and its form find their explanation in the power (which is always a transforming power) of the Spirit of God who, taking possession of the realities of Creation - of which he is the prime agent - thus brings about the Lord's taking possession of the new heavens and the new earth. In other words, he "appropriates them to Christ the Lord", putting them into a state of total and radical possession by the Kurios, who thus brings to being in and through the first Creation the tokens of the eschatological world.
- (18) The Kurios exercises his Lordship over men essentially through the dynamism which reconciles them and brings them together, making them into one body, his Body⁽¹⁸⁾. The gift of the Eucharistic Body and Blood represents in the economy of the new time the act par excellence of the full Salvation which is the effect of the paschal Sacrifice. Thus the sacramental presence is the efficacious encounter of the Lord with the community celebrating the memorial and his encounter, within that community, with each of the faithful. Thus we have here a presence which, since it is that of the Lord in the exercise of his Lordship over his Church, is at the centre of a dynamic process leading towards a welcoming in which, on the believer's side faith plays the key part. Trent is careful to state that this presence is for us (nobis)⁽¹⁹⁾. And this moreover is the reason why the Eucharistic Canons or Anaphoras require the transformation of the bread and wine but do so in such a way as to stop never at the presence as such but rather at a further transformation - the one which the Body and Blood of Christ are to perform in the lives of the believers. The real presence of the Lord's Body and Blood is thus - and not by accident - unintelligible without this insertion into the movement, the salvific action, whereby the Lord gives himself to those who are his own. To put it in another way: the presence represents what the movement contains, what it brings, the reality which it communicates. Its reality, its truth are therefore determined in

their purpose by the experience of grace enjoyed by those who in and through it will receive communion with the mystery of reconciliation and peace which is the Lord's humanity. Scholasticism said in a technical way that here we were at a level of res et sacramentum completely directed towards the ultimate level of the res.

(19) This dynamism flowing from the Lord to the assembly, which has its source in the sacramental Body and Blood, also brings about a presence of the Lord which overflows the limits of the signs used. For although the Lord only becomes present in the way hitherto described in the bread and the cup, which pass on the fullness of the gift of himself, it is the same Lord who in the word that is proclaimed fires the hearts of his own so that they may receive him in truth; it is the same Lord too who through the person of the minister presides at the Supper to which he invites them. What Catholic tradition calls the substantialis presence springs from this widely-spread presence of the Lord in the midst of his People, this presence being wonderfully expounded by the Constitution of Vatican II on the Liturgy and above all by the Encyclical Mysterium Fidei and the Instruction on Eucharistic worship⁽²⁰⁾. There we find its nature made plain. One cannot truly understand it unless one grasps it in the action of the Kurios inviting (through his minister and his Word) his own to his Table, presiding at that Table through his minister, giving himself sacramentally but really in the Body and Blood of his Pasch, so that all may be enrolled in the salvific power of his Lordship, thus becoming his Body. Let us make it clear at once that it is the Lord present at the right hand of the Father, and therefore outside the sacramental world, who thus offers to his Church in the Eucharistic signs the special gift of himself.

(20) One can say - but clearly in a special sense - that the sacramental Body and Blood with their salvific reality are present as an offering, awaiting the welcome of the believer⁽²¹⁾; this welcome can only become real through lively faith, itself a gift of the Spirit. Faith causes the presence to blossom as a lifegiving encounter. Roman Catholic tradition has never ceased to make its own the Augustinian view that different people partake of the Body of Christ with different effects. Without the faith of the Christian, the Eucharist could not, in spite of what it contains, produce its res. But is the Eucharist not ordered to this effect of grace, as is every sacrament? This indicates the capital importance of the part played by faith. Through faith, and only through faith, the presence - which does not need faith in order to be the objective gift of himself that the Lord makes to his Church - becomes no longer just a presence for the believer but a presence with him in the sense that personalist philosophy gives to the word presence, which it links to the interpersonal and mutual relationship. G. Marcel's remark is well-known: "Presence is more than the object; it exceeds it in all senses"⁽²²⁾. From this point of view, to be present is not simply to be placed in front of someone but to be linked with him by a bond of relationship. One thus finds oneself, with regard to the Eucharistic mystery, faced with two levels of presence which are not of the same order but which nevertheless are closely linked to each other. For on the one hand the objective presence in the sense of classical theology requires that ultimate res that contemporary thought regards before all else as an interpersonal presence; on the other hand, this latter cannot have existence and consistency unless the sacramental signs convey the objective truth of the offering of the Lord.

(21) It is without doubt at this stage of our description of the Roman Catholic view that several of our Anglican brethren will feel uneasy - less at the stating of the presence as we have presented it than at our insistence on the need of what we have termed (in order to avoid any misunderstanding) the objective presence. With us they accept a true and real presence of the Lord,

one essentially linked with the bread and wine. But, taking very seriously as they do the part played by faith - which we have just emphasized - , they do not wish to make a dichotomy between the offering made by Christ the Lord of his Body and Blood in the sacramental signs and the welcome given by the believer. To them it seems preferable to link the presence of the Kurios with the global movement of the Eucharist which culminates in the act of sacramental communion, without seeking to detect with precision a moment at which the bread and wine already bear the gift which the Lord wishes to make of his paschal humanity. The Lord's words at the Last Supper: "Take and eat, this is my body" impels them not to dissociate in a way which to them seems artificial the coming of the presence and the act of sacramental eating. This they do without necessarily falling into receptionism pure and simple. The Body and Blood become really present and are really given. The elements are not mere symbolic signs lacking objective content (23). But there is a refusal to remove them from the integral dynamism of the memorial.

- (22) Roman Catholic theology considers that this position pays insufficient regard to certain points that it finds stressed in the revealed texts, notably in the tradition of Paul and Luke, which carefully dwells upon the broken bread identified with the body. Roman Catholic theology therefore replies by putting a further question: does not the above-mentioned Anglican attitude tend to obscure the fundamental fact, which governs the whole mystery of Jesus, that God makes the first step, that his gift not only comes before the human response but awaits and encourages this response - and in waiting can be disappointed? Here we are of course in the sacramental universe, in which temporal successions express values which have their place alongside the profound reality of the mystery. On the other hand, the most serious theology has broken with the excessively shortsighted view which sought to detect the precise word after which the presence is accomplished; it rather sees the efficacy of the Spirit of God and of the Word which brings the presence as pervading the whole Anaphora, which is a word of faith uttered by the Church. At the same time it recognizes that this efficacy has its source in the narrative of the Last Supper. But surely the very fact that we are in a sacramental universe and that the presence itself does not escape the laws of that universe leads one to admit, when dealing with the progression of the rites, two sacramental moments linked in a single and indivisible dynamism of Salvation: the moment of the Lord offering himself freely and in which the initiative of God's hesed we 'emeth is put in clear relief, and the moment at which the Church approaches this gift, which is welcomed with faith in communion. It seems to us that the distinction of these two moments, provided it carefully respects the global dynamism of the Celebration and provided it does not understand the first of these moments in a crudely physical way, more fully safeguards the great affirmation so happily defended by the Anglican tradition, namely that here everything is based on the movement that goes from God to man and which governs faith itself.
- (23) This divergence must be taken seriously. It seems to us more and more like a reef on which we constantly risk running aground; it would appear to be the main source of the oppositions that still exist between us in the matter of the Eucharist. It would not be serving the cause of unity if we were to seek to escape it. Regarding the Eucharistic presence which we are at present discussing, it seems to us that many misunderstandings can be cleared up - and this would seem to be the case here even more than with regard to the other points on which we differ.
- (24) The thought of Thomas Cranmer and that of the first Anglican tradition suffer from a certain ambiguity in the matter of the Eucharistic presence, comparable to that which it betrays on the subject of sacrifice. How far

does the influence of Zwingli extend⁽²⁴⁾? What part is played by the thought of Wyclif? As is well known, these questions have been discussed at length. If it were a question of going by the overall impression created by the texts of Cranmer, Ridley and even of John Jewel, one would be strongly inclined to label the Anglican reaction as the passage from an objective concept of the presence to a subjective one, caring little for the content of the sacramental signs and concentrating above all on the reception of these signs by lively faith. We could include in particular in the considerable collection of texts Book III of the Defence of the True and Catholic Doctrine of the Sacrament, written in 1550, which one cannot see how to interpret otherwise. Let it suffice to quote this passage from a less well-known work:

When I say and repeat... that the body of Christ is present in them that worthily receive the sacrament; lest any man should mistake my words, and think that I mean that although Christ be not corporally in the outward visible signs, yet he is corporally in the persons that duly receive them, this is to advertise the reader that I mean no such thing: but my meaning is that the force, the grace, the virtue and benefit of Christ's body that was crucified for us... be really and effectually present with all them that duly receive the sacraments: but all this I understand of his spiritual presence... Nor no more truly is he corporally or really present in the due administration of the Lord's Supper than he is in the due administration of baptism⁽²⁵⁾.

- (25) This text is clear. And yet in other witnesses one already senses the emergence of the tension which later on will become explicit through the efforts at a theological rethinking within Anglicanism: the recognition of a real action of Christ in the Lord's Supper points towards the recognition of a certain presence in the signs of the meal. It is not a question of a pure subjectivism. Thus it is that N. Ridley confesses his faith in a presence of the "true body of Christ" in the Eucharist, while refusing to see in it a "corporal presence of the body of the flesh": he who has ascended to the right hand of the Father is on the table of the Lord's Supper - "the heavenly Lamb is on the table" - but according to a spiritual presence - "by grace and not after any corporal substance of his flesh taken of the Virgin Mary"⁽²⁶⁾. In 1561, in his Apology of the Church of England, John Jewel uses an ambiguous formula:

We affirm that bread and wine are holy and heavenly mysteries of the body and blood of Christ, and that by them Christ himself, being the true bread of eternal life, is so presently given unto us that by faith we verily receive his body and blood⁽²⁷⁾.

- (26) An attentive study of the principal documents involved here shows that at the root of this ambiguity there is a misunderstanding on the nature of sacramental presence. Everything turns on the following proposition: if Christ is in heaven he cannot also be on earth. It is found in F. Lambert, Ridley and in Cranmer, who writes: "Our faith is not to believe him (Christ Jesus) to be in bread and wine but that he is in heaven"⁽²⁸⁾. In the Defence of the True and Catholic Doctrine of the Sacrament, Cranmer moreover describes what he believes to be the position of the Roman Catholic Church in a manner that appears very enlightening to us if we are to grasp properly the sense of his reaction:

Now to return to the principal matter, lest it might be thought a new device of us, that Christ as concerning his body and his human nature is in heaven, and not in earth: therefore by God's grace, it shall be evidently proved, that this is no new devised

matter, but that it was ever the old faith of the Catholic Church, until the papists invented a new faith, that Christ really, corporally, naturally, and sensibly is here still with us in earth, shut up in a box or within the compass of bread and wine⁽²⁹⁾.

Here we are a long way from what we have set out above and from the distinction, firmly expounded by Thomas Aquinas, between the natural body and the sacramental body of Christ. The whole misunderstanding here rests on the mode and the how of the presence. Therefore it is not by chance that, as he himself admits, the question of transsubstantiation, in which he sees the central error and the cause of the other deviations, played the key role in the revision that Cranmer makes of Eucharistic faith⁽³⁰⁾. One is thus led to ascribe greater importance than is sometimes done to the influence of the ideas of Retramnus on N. Ridley.

(27) The efforts of Lancelot Andrewes⁽³¹⁾, John Cosin⁽³²⁾, W. Laud, then the attempt at a via media made by D. Waterland, without forgetting the theology of the Tractarians - all these seem to us to be marked by this ambiguity. We regard Tractarian thought as typical. On the one hand transsubstantiation is rejected as being too much based on a desire to find a human explanation for the realities of the faith, but a great effort is made to distinguish the Roman Catholic view from that of the Capharnaite errors⁽³³⁾. On the other hand, an attempt is made to show that the "spiritual" presence does not conflict with a "real" presence but with a "natural" presence perceptible by the senses⁽³⁴⁾. Thus one comes back to a view which deeply respects the mystery - more so than many a Roman Catholic position - but which is at pains not to empty a genuine Eucharistic realism.

(28) What conclusion may be drawn from our review? First, that as far as the Eucharistic presence is concerned we cannot speak of a total convergence of views. If we do not wish to build upon vain compromises, we shall have to reflect together upon the deep implications of our points of divergence. Would it betray a too easy optimism if we were to say that in our opinion we shall be able, even here, to reach a substantial agreement? If one takes into account the exegetical researches into the nature of the "sign" which is here in question, and if on the other hand one deepens what was said above about the different types of the Lord's presence, which are recognized by all and which are linked together in the Eucharist, while at the same time refraining from seeing in the Roman Catholic position a crude materialism, then a rapprochement on essentials can be devised. Certainly it is hard to base this optimism on official texts such as the Answer of the Archbishop of England to the decision of Apostolicae Curae, or the report on Doctrine in the Church of England with its notion of the real presence and its interpretation of receptionism⁽³⁵⁾. Numbers of Anglicans fail fully to recognize their position here. However, against the background of the sum of new viewpoints that we have just mentioned, these documents demonstrate that between our two communions the convergences exceed the divergences in the matter of Eucharistic faith.

(29) The question of transsubstantiation.

There is however one point on which the Anglican tradition, in spite of a few dissenting voices, seems to have maintained its opposition to the Roman views: the question of transsubstantiation. In spite of the declared intention of breaking with the old polemics, the proposed new version of the Thirty-nine Articles, although suppressing the old paragraph on transsubstantiation, maintains that the nature of the bread and wine is not changed⁽³⁶⁾. It is thus in the line of the report on Doctrine in the Church of England which, having recalled the exact sense of the Thomist and

Tridentine position, writes: "There is solid ground for the Anglican rejection of the doctrine of transsubstantiation as formulated by St Thomas and the Council of Trent"⁽³⁷⁾. It would also be easy to show how the writers of the seventeenth century (even Lancelot Andrewes, who however writes on this subject pages which are full of concessions⁽³⁸⁾), the Tractarians and a number of present-day theologians are in agreement here. Yet one should note, to be honest, that certain Anglican theologians see in the authentic Thomist explanation of transsubstantiation a "tenable opinion" ⁽³⁹⁾.

- (30) On the Roman Catholic side, it is evident that on this subject the need for a profound rethinking of terminology and also of the categories on which this terminology is based is vividly felt in the various theological circles. The Encyclical Mysterium Fidei, while reacting against attempts which do not as yet succeed in conveying fully the content of the faith, has in no way put a brake on research. It is interesting from an ecumenical point of view to note that this research - the fruits of which are the theories (not as yet fully mastered, but full of promise) of transsignification and transfinalization - is grafting itself on to the efforts long since undertaken outside the Roman Catholic tradition to establish what occurs in the profound being of the bread and wine when the Spirit of God assumes them as sacraments of the Body and Blood of the Lord. For long before those to whom Catholic theological literature attributes the origin of the new attempts at an explanation, the French Reformed theologians of the seventeenth century - especially Michel Le Faucheur - were transcribing the Greek metastoicheiō of Theophylact not only in terms of "traselementation" but also of "change of use and of effects"⁽⁴⁰⁾. Nearer our own times, and in the Anglican communion, a certain W. Spens, taking his stand on the new possibilities that the elements acquire, was following the same line⁽⁴¹⁾. Without yielding to the temptation of too facile agreements, and without forgetting the livergences already indicated regarding the presence, one may perhaps align these attempts with what N. Ridley was already admitting in one of his last assertions:

* In the sacrament is a certain change, in that that bread, which was before common bread, is now made a lively presentation of Christ's body, and not only a figure, but effectuously representeth his body; that even as the mortal body was nourished by that visible bread, so is the internal soul fed with the heavenly food of Christ's body, which the eyes of faith see, as the bodily eyes see only bread. Such a sacramental mutation I grant to be in the bread and wine, which truly is no small change but such a change as no mortal man can make, but only the omnipotency of Christ's word⁽⁴²⁾.

- (31) Perhaps Lancelot Andrewes allows us to see what causes the problem between us when he writes:

All his witnesses (of the Jesuit) speak of some kind of change (pro mutatione, immutatione, transmutatione). But there is no mention there of a change in substance or of the substance. But neither do we deny in this matter the preposition trans; and we allow that the elements are changed (transmutari)⁽⁴³⁾. But a change in substance we look for, and we find it nowhere.

- (32) The totality of the problem is therefore not entirely clear even for Roman Catholic theology. But for the latter one point is clear: the doctrinal explanation of the data of faith cannot bind itself to any philosophy, even if historically it has been possible to use such and such a particular system which seemed more suitable for expressing in the categories of the time the content of faith, which always remains mysterious and transcendent. We have already

stated that on the level of theological analysis the vocabulary of substantia had in Saint Thomas Aquinas a precise and nuanced meaning which no longer finds an echo in our modern ways of thinking. So it is useless to hang on to it at all costs. Here as elsewhere it is necessary to distinguish clearly between the truth to be expressed and the manner of speaking, which latter is always relative even though it may bear the patina of centuries.

- (33) Now the truth that the Roman Catholic tradition wishes to preserve, defend and make clear is that of the conversio mirabilis and not directly that of the mode of this conversion. The distinction is crucial for our debate. Further, if the conversio is so insisted upon, this is with the sole aim of taking account of the realism of the presence. If then the Roman Catholic tradition speaks of a conversion of substance, its intention is to make fully explicit the original affirmation of the presence per modum substantiae. It is striking to note how, at the moment in which he has clearly enunciated - in the philosophical coordinates of his time - the elements which bring a certain intelligibility both to the realism and to the mystery of this presence, Thomas Aquinas really seems to restrict as far as possible the use of the term transsubstantiatio (which flowed freely from his pen when he was commenting on the Sentences); he seems to prefer the wider term conversio. Against the sixty-eight occasions on which transsubstantiatio is used in the Commentary on Peter the Lombard, one finds it used only three times in the Summa Theologiae, while the term conversio, which hardly appears at all in the work written in his younger days, comes into practically all the explanations of the quomodo of the presence⁽⁴⁴⁾. Recognising this development allows us to distinguish and evaluate different levels of doctrinal elaboration. It also explains why our divergences on the nature of the presence come back to our idea of its quomodo.
- (34) Without claiming to present here a solution to the problems posed by the notion and the comprehension of transsubstantiation, it seems to us important to develop for the sake of a wider view of the conversio certain of the conclusions that we have expounded above. In fact it seems to us that we should seek in this direction the convergences that we wish to establish.
- (35) We were saying that the content of the Eucharistic signs only found their explanation by reference to the power of the Spirit who, since the first Easter day, actualizes in the realities of Creation, of which he is the originator, the dominion of the Kurios. For the Eucharist is essentially an epiclesis⁽⁴⁵⁾. The Eucharist thus belongs to the order of the new Creation which can only be the work of the Spirit bringing to their teleiosis the different undertakings of God on behalf of man (the first being the Creation), by linking them with the Lordship of Jesus. It is never a question of an artificial addition coming from outside to put, as it were, a finishing touch to the universe of Creation. On the contrary, the Spirit of God exercises his power by "accomplishing", fulfilling, that is to say by drawing out the capacities and impulses of his original work, so that these are surpassed without being destroyed. The order of grace, despite its radical transcendence, respects the order of nature and, far from adding itself to the latter artificially, it carries the order of nature along with it. The same principle holds, in an analogical way, at all the levels of the economy of Salvation. If the highest expression of the principle is in the mystery of Jesus, whose humanity remains inviolate and totally intact although it is that of the Person of the Son, it is found again in the justification and sanctification of the faithful believer who becomes through faith and baptism a real adopted son of the Father, without however ceasing to be fully man⁽⁴⁶⁾. Sanctifying grace, however we may understand it dogmatically, represents an habitual case of a profound transformation of being through the power of the Spirit

of the Kurios, while the structures and imperatives of Creation are fully respected. We should add that this transformation is not reduced to the simple gift of a passing efficacy. It brings to the person a new quality, destined to develop fully in the life of the eternal Kingdom.

- (36) Without doubt it is within this economy of the Spirit, governing the whole Christian vision of ecclesial realities, that the Eucharistic mystery must be situated and that the mysterious transformation of the sacramental elements must be understood. At the same time we must take account of the laws of analogy⁽⁴⁷⁾.
- (37) The question of transsubstantiation then assumes its true dimensions. The discretion of Eastern thought, and at the same time its lively insistence on the fact that in the depth of the bread and wine something happens in such a way that the bread and wine become in all truth the very reality of the Lord present to his own in order to give himself to them - these things, it seems to us, can serve as guiding principles. It is no longer a matter of the bread and the cup for the life which passes, but of the bread and the cup for the new Life, - that Life which (and here we meet once more the law governing the sacramental organism), without rendering the first vain, takes possession of it in order to lead it towards the unending joy of eternal communion. Now the nourishment of the new Life can only be that which in truth is Life. Thus there is carried out in and through the Spirit an act of the Lordship of Christ in this present creation, in which he manifests pledges of the eschatological world. Unless we situate the Eucharist wholly in the always transforming economy of the Holy Spirit we run the risk either of confining ourselves within a too radical rejection of any profound modification of the elements, or of becoming involved in explanations of the Eucharist which are too much bound to the philosophical laws of our universe. We are dealing with a coming of the Spirit of the new times, accomplished in a taking possession of this present creation by the Lord of the new Creation.
- (38) If what we have just put forward is accurate, recourse to a point of view close to that of the East undoubtedly represents for our two communions the means of surmounting the difficulties in which they are both enmeshed. The fine point of the confession of faith, disengaged from any attempt at theological explanation, seems in fact to us to be preserved in affirmations such as the following, of Theodore of Mopsuestia:

When the Holy Spirit comes it is, we think, a sort of unction by the grace coming down from on high that the bread and wine offered receive. And from then onwards we believe them to be the body and blood of Christ, immortal, incorruptible, impassible and unchangeable by nature, as came to pass for the body of our Lord through his resurrection⁽⁴⁸⁾.

- (39) There is also this well-known passage of Cyril of Jerusalem:

We implore God who loves men to send the Holy Spirit upon the gifts that are laid on the altar, that he may make the bread into the body of Christ and the wine into the blood of Christ; for all that the Holy Spirit touches is sanctified and transformed⁽⁴⁹⁾.

- (40) It would be easy to bring forward numerous testimonies from Patristic literature and from the liturgical treasures of the East, showing how the recognition of a profound change of the bread and wine can go hand-in-hand with a real sense of mystery where the reference to the Spirit is seen as the principle of explanation, and in which the Eucharistic fact has not