

# THE EUCHARIST: CHRIST'S SELF-COMMUNICATION IN A REVELATORY EVENT

THOMAS D. STANKS, S.S.

*St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore*

THE COUNCIL of Trent tells us that the Eucharist contains truly, really, and substantially the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>1</sup> and that the presence of Christ is brought about through that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the entire substance of the wine into the blood, only the species of the bread and wine remaining.<sup>2</sup> The Council clearly asserts, therefore, what the Eucharist is (Christ) and how this is brought about (transubstantiation), but we must notice that the how is limited to the matter, the elements, and that nothing is said here of the form, the words used, which we must of course consider, since it is an indispensable part of the sacrament.

If we look to other magisterial pronouncements, we see this aspect readily affirmed. When the truth of transubstantiation (although the word itself was not used) was first proposed by the teaching office of the Church in 1079 to Berengarius, the oath he had to take states that it is "through the mystery of the sacred prayer and the words of our Redeemer" that the change is brought about.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, the Council of Florence in 1439 specifies that "the priest speaking in the person of Christ effects the sacrament; for by the power of the very words the substance of the bread is changed into the body of Christ and the substance of the wine into the blood. . . ."<sup>4</sup> These statements call attention to the words; through them the mystery is enacted. If they effect the body and blood of Christ, there is certainly far more to them than merely pronouncing them. It is to this "far more" that we wish to direct attention. Our deeper grasp today of Hebrew concepts, such as the power of the word, would shed light on the endeavor. Accordingly, we shall consider the dynamism of the word, then the Eucharist as event, and thirdly the Eucharist as a constituting action of Christ and the assembly. Finally, all this should indicate to us what we will consider

<sup>1</sup> H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum* (32nd ed.; Barcelona, 1960) no. 883.   <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 884.   <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 355.   <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 698.

in our fourth part, namely, Christ's purpose in the Eucharist: a revelatory event for the sake of personal communication. We are aiming for a more comprehensive grasp of the mystery by which the single elements will become more intelligibly united with the whole, at the same time that a proper context is furnished, we hope, for considering what has come to be known as transignification or transfinalization.

#### THE EUCHARIST AS WORD<sup>5</sup>

"Word" in Western thinking refers to the meaning, the ordered content of thought.<sup>6</sup> Our languages tend to translate the objectivity of thought, the inroad of the object upon the subject. The Hebrew "word," on the other hand, is first of all an act, something dynamic, productive, an extension of the person who speaks.<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew language translates the consciousness of men who do not let things become the measure or criterion of themselves.

It must be noted, however, that the Hebrew mind does distinguish between thought and action; "the word of the heart" (pure thought) is certainly different from "the word of the lips" (word-act). Similarly, the Hebrew mentality distinguishes the different meanings of *dabar* (word-deed-thing); nonetheless, these modes could overlap or become identified in a way that defies Scholastic logic.<sup>8</sup>

The fundamental notion of the Hebrew word is word-deed-concrete object.<sup>9</sup> The word has a sacramental character, for it effects what it says; it is dynamic. But in doing so, the speaker himself is projected, for speech reveals the speaker. The word then is dianoetic: it makes the thing understandable and reveals the personality of the speaker.<sup>10</sup> We see the dynamic-dianoetic character of the word in Isaac's blessing of Jacob; the blessing could not be given again or taken back.

In thus conceiving the spoken word as a reality charged with power

<sup>5</sup> For fuller treatments of the "word" as such, cf. John L. McKenzie's article and bibliography, "The Word of God in the Old Testament," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 21 (1960) 183-206; T. Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (London, 1960); L. Bouyer, *The Word, Church and Sacraments* (New York, 1961) esp. pp. 7-29; A. Deissler, "The Fundamental Message of the Old Testament Today," and J. Giblet, "The Johannine Theology of the Logos," in *The Word: Readings in Theology* (New York, 1964) pp. 93-147; A. Jones, *God's Living Word* (New York, 1961) esp. chap. 1; C. Tresmontant, *Essai sur la pensée hébraïque* (Paris, 1953).

<sup>6</sup> Boman, pp. 67-68.

<sup>7</sup> McKenzie, pp. 190-91.

<sup>8</sup> Boman, p. 56; McKenzie, p. 188.

<sup>9</sup> Boman, p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> McKenzie, p. 205.

and the speaker as one who in releasing his word releases the dynamism of his own personality, we have a basis for a pattern of development in the Hebrew idea of word. God's word is personified.<sup>11</sup> It is seen as having personal qualities, like justice and peace (Ps 84:11), or kindness and faithfulness (Ps 88:15). God's messenger on a mission (Is 55:11) can also be a fierce conqueror of his enemies (Wis 18:15). A later stage is reflected in seeing the word as God's wisdom itself which dwells in heaven and comes to earth only because God sends it (Bar 3:29). If man has wisdom, it is not his achievement but a gift of God (Wis 9:1). This Wisdom-Word, the companion of God before and in creation (Prv 8:23-36), is like a prophet preaching in the streets of Jerusalem (Prv 8:2).<sup>12</sup>

The prophets' use of things in connection with their spoken words brings out even more forcibly the power of the word to bring about what it says. Very often, not content to pronounce an oracle, the prophets enact their prophecies and represent under figure what they wish to proclaim. They would have recourse to this method especially when the word does not seem to express strongly enough the message for which they are responsible. Isaiah's nakedness is a sign of Egypt's humiliation before the Assyrians (Is 20:1-5). Jeremiah gives his celibacy a symbolic value: the loneliness of his unmarried life forebodes the desolation of Israel, for death is about to sweep over the country. His forlorn celibacy is nothing but an enacted prophecy of imminent doom (Jer 16:1-4).<sup>13</sup> Ezekiel cuts off his hair and divides it into three parts. One part he burns, another he scatters to the wind, the last he strikes with the sword. This too is a prophecy in action of what will happen to the people in Jerusalem: one third will die of pestilence, one third will be scattered, the last third will be slain by the sword (Ez 5:1-5, 11-12).<sup>14</sup> Incidentally, from the grammatical point of view,

<sup>11</sup> The following treatment of the personification of God's word is taken from Jones, pp. 13-15. It might be argued that Hebrew thought did not personify the word but saw it as exercising independent functions which are almost personal. This would, however, quite suffice for our purpose here; in the Hebrew view a word once spoken had a quasi-substantial existence of its own (Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* [New York, 1966] p. 521).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Brown, pp. 520-23, for a comparison of Wisdom and Word.

<sup>13</sup> L. Legrand, *The Biblical Doctrine of Virginity* (New York, 1963) p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> J. Dupont, "Ceci est mon corps, Ceci est mon sang," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 80 (1958) 1033.

the Ezekiel expression "This is Jerusalem" (5:5) corresponds exactly to the formulas "This is my body. . . . This is my blood."<sup>15</sup> This same notion of prophecy in act is also found in the New Testament. The prophet Agabus binds his hands and feet with Paul's girdle as a symbolic gesture of what will happen to Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10 ff.).

What is important for our subject is that in the Hebrew mentality a certain realism is implied in every prophecy. For the Semite, a prophetic action is normally efficacious: it not only represents that which it announces, in a certain manner it produces it.<sup>16</sup> Jeremiah is ordered to make chains (27:1-3) as a symbol of the yoke under the King of Babylon which Juda should accept (27:12). The false prophets seize the chains and break them (28:10-11), for in their thought it would deprive the prophecy of its effects. We find another example in the false prophet Zedekiah, who, having made himself horns of iron, declares to King Ahab: "With these you will push and destroy Syria" (3 Kgs 22:11). Eliseus executes a prophecy when he invites the king to strike the earth with an arrow. Joas strikes three times and the prophet becomes angry, says: "If you had struck five or six times you would have utterly destroyed Syria; now you will strike her only three times" (4 Kgs 13:17-19). Thus, for the Hebrew, the prophetic action which announces an event marks as well a certain beginning of it. The power of God is already in action; the event is in some way *en marche*.

Although Israel saw the word as dynamic, as effecting what it says, and even many times personified it, still she had no idea of the Word as a distinct person, one in nature with God.<sup>17</sup> This idea came forth only with the full revelation in Christ. But Christ is the Word who spoke to man in creation, in the covenant, in the law. Christ is such a unique, personal union of God and man that He becomes God's instrument through which He reveals Himself and speaks as none of the Old Testament institutions could. He is the new Shekinah, God dwelling in man. His word is to re-create and give new life, to bind men with God in a covenant whose intimacy was heretofore unimaginable, to promulgate a law of love in His Spirit—in short, to make men sons of God.

By the time of the fourth Gospel, and in that treasury of Old Testament fulfilment, the ideas about God's word contained in both Testa-

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1033-34.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1034.

<sup>17</sup> Jones, p. 22.

ments will be perfected. For John the Word is a distinct person (Jn 1:1); He is everywhere dynamic and creative (1:3); He gives life to men (1:4; 14:6); the kindness and fidelity He brings bind men in a covenant far superior to that of the law, a covenant in the Word whom men can see and not with a God whom Moses was not permitted to look upon (1:17-18).<sup>18</sup> The Gospel tells the story of that revelation. The various episodes in the Book of Signs are pointers to the *whole* theme of the Gospel: Christ, the fulfilment of the Old Testament, is revealed, crucified, risen, exalted, communicating His eternal life to men.<sup>19</sup> Each episode is made up of discourse and narrative, both related to a single dominant theme. The truths enunciated in the discourses find dramatic expression in the actions described. Word and act are one, and this unity is fundamental to John's thought.<sup>20</sup>

Christ, the Word-made-flesh, is the climax of God speaking, revealing, communicating Himself to men. This, then, is the course the Word of God runs: from creation to re-creation, from making to remaking, from the fashioning of the world to its renewal in Christ.<sup>21</sup>

It is this Word who speaks over the elements in the upper room and in every Eucharistic celebration. What we have at the Last Supper is a double simile of Jesus, which has its formal analogy in the manner in which the prophets of the Old Covenant announce future events parabolically.<sup>22</sup> Its meaning is quite simple and each of His apostles could understand it. "Jesus made the broken bread a simile of the fate of his body, the blood of the grapes a simile of the fate of his outpoured blood. 'I go to death as the true passover sacrifice,' is the meaning of Jesus' last parable."<sup>23</sup>

In other words, Jesus showed them in figure that which was going to happen the next day: the bread that He breaks and distributes signifies His body which is going to be delivered; the wine in the cup is the sign of the blood which He will pour out on the cross to establish the covenant which God wishes to conclude with men.<sup>24</sup> Jesus performed a prophecy in act.<sup>25</sup> The announcing of the event begins it and its power is already operative. But in this action we cannot place Christ on a

<sup>18</sup> Brown, pp. 35-36.

<sup>19</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1960) p. 386.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 384.    <sup>21</sup> Jones, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London, 1966) p. 224.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.    <sup>24</sup> Dupont, p. 1034.    <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

wholly divine plane and remove Him from a Hebraic understanding of reality. Christ was a Jew. As we have said, the Hebrew "word" is essentially an act, a deed, something operative, really effective. The word makes the thing intelligible and reveals the personality of the speaker. Spoken, it releases the dynamism of the speaker himself, so that his personality is found in the word-deed-thing. From this we see the inseparable connection between the word spoken and the thing done.

#### THE EUCHARIST AS EVENT

As the Hebrew concept of word leads to a greater unity and intelligibility in the understanding of the Eucharistic transformation, so the Semitic idea of time-space will also contribute in no little way to a better grasp of the same. In the Bible we meet the revelation of God in the form of historical events, God's great acts.<sup>26</sup> God is the God who acts and speaks. Revelation comes not by way of seeing but of hearing. It has been said that what the eye was to the Greek, the ear was to the Israelite. To the Hebrew, neither history nor even nature is, but both are events, happenings. The thing is always the thing done.<sup>27</sup>

The role space plays for us is the role time played for the Hebrews.<sup>28</sup> As the Greeks gave attention to the peculiarity of things, so the Hebrews minded the peculiarity of events.<sup>29</sup> The same holds for the concept of holiness, which in the Greek world attaches to symbols of space, whereas the biblical notion of holiness attaches to symbols of time. The Greek statue of a god was a graven image to the Jew. Space is not ignored among the people who are given a Holy Land, for that would be a debasement of creation; but space is not so central. Yahweh is present in His temple, but He cannot be contained there. In the Hebrew world, holiness in time comes first; space is produced by event. In Genesis, God blessed the seventh day and made it holy; the Sabbath was a hallowed time.<sup>30</sup>

Of course, this mentality carried into the New Testament and was shared by our Lord. Jesus' command at the Last Supper was "Do this

<sup>26</sup> G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts* (London, 1952) p. 57.

<sup>27</sup> T. O. Wedel, "The Theology of the Liturgical Renewal," in *The Liturgical Renewal of the Church* (ed. M. H. Shepherd, Jr.; Oxford, 1960) p. 9; cf. also Boman's "Summary and Psychological Foundation of the Differences," *ibid.*, pp. 205-8.

<sup>28</sup> Boman, *Hebrew Thought*, p. 137.    <sup>29</sup> Boman, *ibid.*, p. 139.    <sup>30</sup> Wedel, pp. 8-9.

[an action] in remembrance of me." And when Paul explains the meaning of the Eucharist, he says it "shows forth the death [again an action] of the Lord until He returns."<sup>31</sup>

In this action-memorial a past *event* becomes really present now. Trent says that this is a sacrifice in which Christ is not just contained but immolated, that the same Victim is now offering (an action).<sup>32</sup> The very nature of the Eucharist is the real presence of a past event in on-going time. The "thing" is still there to be dealt with and must receive meaning, but it gets its meaning from the event. The Latin term *sacramentum* was narrowed down in the Middle Ages and was used to signify a sacred thing, whereas the Greek term *mysterion* had a much wider meaning and signified first of all an action, a re-presentation of an event.<sup>33</sup> *Sacramentum* substituted for *mysterion* and was used at first to describe any rite of the Church. It gradually became the center of more philosophical interest, especially in the time of Augustine, and came to be understood in accord with a general Platonic outlook as being an outward and visible reality: through sacraments man could penetrate to the inner spiritual world and receive grace therefrom for his spiritual life.<sup>34</sup> Vatican II's Constitution on the Liturgy provides a corrective here in stating that every liturgical celebration is an action of Christ the Priest and of His Body the Church.<sup>35</sup> In fact, in chapter 2, where "The Most Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist" is discussed, no mention is made of the *presence* of Christ as such.<sup>36</sup> The Mass is described as a Eucharistic sacrifice, the sacrifice of the Cross, a memorial of His death and resurrection, a sacrament of love, a paschal banquet, and the faithful are urged to take part in the "sacred action."<sup>37</sup> Since we are heirs to this medieval shift of meaning given to the word "sacrament" from action to thing, we can easily fall prey to searching how a spatial substance can be the vehicle of a personal presence. The deepest conceptual roots of the Eucharist, however, are Hebraic, and we are aware that spatial images are inappropriate to the Hebrews for representing the correct state of affairs in space.<sup>38</sup>

The Fathers, viewing the Eucharist in dynamic and personal cate-

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.    <sup>32</sup> Denzinger 940.    <sup>33</sup> Wedel, pp. 5-6.

<sup>34</sup> F. W. Dillistone, *Christianity and Symbolism* (London, 1955) p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Liturgical Press ed.; Collegeville, 1963) no. 7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, no 47. No. 7, of course, treats presence at length.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 47-48.    <sup>38</sup> Boman, *Hebrew Thought*, p. 142.

gories, describe the making present in time of the once-for-all sacrificial *act* of Christ. Christ is both Lord and High Priest of the Eucharistic meal, and His active presence is shown in various ways. He is the one who *nourishes* His people by the Eucharist.<sup>39</sup> It is by *Christ's own words* that the bread and wine become His body and blood.<sup>40</sup> Christ acts in this meal because it is in reality *a share in the heavenly liturgy*.<sup>41</sup> The idea of Christ as High Priest in the Eucharistic celebration is developed by Theodore of Mopsuestia, who compares Christ to Melchizedek, as the Epistle to the Hebrews had done.<sup>42</sup> Thanks to these images, the Eucharist is presented as a sacrifice and a spiritual offering of Christ. He is the High Priest who accomplishes His work by the priest of the Church. From these various patristic references we see that the Fathers do not concentrate on the elements of the meal. They have the conviction that there is an active presence of Christ in the entire Eucharistic celebration. As St. Ambrose says, "I find you in your mysteries."<sup>43</sup> Dom Gregory Dix has made the statement that with two possible exceptions (only apparent) no Eastern or Western author before Nicaea who fully states his doctrine fails to regard the offering and consecration of the Eucharist as the *present action* of our Lord Himself.<sup>44</sup> They not only ascribe to the humanity of Christ a new space

<sup>39</sup> St. Irenaeus says that Christ offered Himself to us as milk because we were as infants (*Contra haereses* 4, 38, 1 [PG 7, 1105-6]), and that the flesh so nourished by the Eucharist will not end in corruption. "Our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion" (*ibid.* 4, 18, 5 [PG 7, 1127-29]).

<sup>40</sup> St. John Chrysostom's explanation of the Eucharistic celebration stresses that Christ is in several ways actively present. He held the Last Supper and now holds this banquet. It is not a man here who makes the offerings become the body and blood of Christ, but Christ Himself. The priest here represents Christ and pronounces the words, but it is the power and grace which operate. "This is my body," he says, and these words transform the offerings in the same manner that the words "Increase and multiply," pronounced only once, gave forever to our nature the power to procreate sons (*De proditiōne Judae*, Hom. 1, 6 [PG 49, 380]).

<sup>41</sup> St. Ambrose sees the entrance rite as a figure of entering the heavenly sanctuary, where the Lord has prepared a table for us (*De mysteriis* 8, 43 [PL 16, 403]). Chrysostom connects the *Sursum corda* with the *Sanctus*, both expressive of the sentiments of the angels in the heavenly liturgy, where the seraphim chant the Trisagion in the presence of God (*De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 4, 5 [PG 48, 733-34]).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. J. Lecuyer, "Le sacerdoce chrétien et le sacrifice eucharistique selon Théodore de Mopsueste," *Recherches de science religieuse* 36 (1949) 481-516.

<sup>43</sup> *Apologia David* 1, 12, 58 (PL 14, 875).

<sup>44</sup> D. G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (2nd ed.; London, 1945) p. 253.



dimension, but to the past completed act of Christ a new time dimension—in other words, a time universalization in contrast to a space localization.<sup>45</sup> Such would also be more in keeping with the Hebrew notion, because for the Israelites the content of the world was eminently temporal, whereas for the Greeks it was principally spatial.<sup>46</sup> This is illustrated by the fact that it was easy for a Jew, when in the Hellenistic age he had to find a Hebrew word for *kosmos* (world), to translate it by *'olam* (unbounded time), which in all the Old Testament writings had only a temporal meaning.<sup>47</sup>

This time dimension, the present action of Christ Himself, regards the Church as being re-formed through the particular event of the Eucharistic celebration. Composing the Church anew in an event is so important to her very nature that one can say she would cease to exist altogether if she renounced once and for all this actualization and functioning.<sup>48</sup> In the sacrament of the Eucharistic bread, the unity of all believers is brought about.<sup>49</sup> The Church “is most manifest and in the most intensive form, she attains the highest actuality of her own nature, when she celebrates the Eucharist. For here everything that goes to form the Church is found fully and manifestly present. . . .”<sup>50</sup>

As Charles Davis brings out so well in his *Liturgy and Doctrine*, the Church here in this world exists on two levels, that of a permanent institution and community, and that of an event. True to its incarnational principle, it is a visible structure permanently endowed with the saving power of Christ. It is a permanent community in which Christians live together in Christ. “But it was the will of God that the mystery of the Church should achieve again and again an even greater presence in history, a fuller actuality, in the manner of an event in which the permanent reality would be more clearly manifested and, at the same time, strengthened and created anew. This event is the liturgical assembly and, in particular, the eucharistic assembly.”<sup>51</sup>

Although the Church is manifested in other ways, such as in a general council, in the teaching of her pastors, in the charitable works of the community, in her missionary endeavors, the liturgical assembly is still the visible expression of the Church which is the most common, ordi-

<sup>45</sup> Wedel, p. 6.    <sup>46</sup> Boman, *Hebrew Thought*, p. 153.    <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>48</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments* (New York, 1963) p. 20.

<sup>49</sup> Constitution on the Church (N.C.W.C. ed.; Washington, D.C., 1964) no. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Rahner, pp. 84–86.    <sup>51</sup> C. Davis, *Liturgy and Doctrine* (New York, 1960) p. 67.

nary, and accessible.<sup>52</sup> The Eucharist is the Church made actual in an event;<sup>53</sup> Christ and His faithful are now assembled. This makes us pause to reflect on the astounding nature of the Eucharistic event. Since the Eucharist makes the Church actual, enabling believers to commune with their Lord, the inner reality of the Eucharist is the same as the inner reality of the Church. The gathering of the faithful is not outside the Eucharist taken in its full significance, but part of the sacramental sign. The reality of the Eucharist, in the old Scholastic sense of the effect achieved by it, is precisely the Church, the mysterious reality of our communion of life with Christ and with each other. "Mystical Body," now used of the Church, was originally used to refer to the Eucharist.<sup>54</sup>

#### EUCARIST AS A CONSTITUTING ACTION OF CHRIST AND ASSEMBLY

We have seen that the Eucharist is an event with Christ acting in and through His Church. The elements of bread and wine which the Church uses in her action cannot be separated from the words she pronounces from the beginning to the end, nor from the community expressly assembled for this celebration. Community is here expressed and brought about.<sup>55</sup> All that is done (words, actions, prayers, etc.) design the action, give it its meaning.<sup>56</sup> As such, then, the Eucharistic celebration is a manifestation of the Church. The Constitution on the Liturgy accents this notion: "the liturgy, most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church" (no. 2; cf. no. 41). The liturgical assembly, then, possesses the power to show forth the mystery of Christ and the true Church. This is so because the assembly is already identifiable with Christ. We know that Jesus repeatedly identified Himself with *all* who should be His. Dom Gregory Dix points out that "the primitive Church took this conception with its fullest force, and pressed it with a rigour . . . foreign to our weakened notions. The

<sup>52</sup> A. G. Martimort, *L'Eglise en prière* (Paris, 1961) p. 88, n. 2.

<sup>53</sup> C. Davis, "Episcopate and Eucharist," *Worship* 38 (1964) 509.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Corpus mysticum* (2nd ed.; Paris, 1949) esp. chap. 1, "L'Eucharistie, corps mystique." <sup>55</sup> Constitution on the Church, no. 3.

<sup>56</sup> For an explanation of the full sign of the Eucharist, cf. E. Masure, *The Sacrifice of the Mystical Body* (London, 1954); A. L. Schlitzer, "The Sacramental Sign of the Eucharist," *Yearbook of Liturgical Studies* 2 (1961) 3-31.

*whole church* prayed in the Person of Christ; the *whole church* offered the Eucharist as the re-calling before God and man of the offering of Christ."<sup>57</sup> In the idea of the primitive writers generally, "it is *the church as a whole*, and not any one order in it, which not so much 'represents' as 'is' Christ."<sup>58</sup> Ignatius writes to the church of Smyrna, "Do you all follow your bishop as Jesus Christ followed the Father."<sup>59</sup>

Christ is already an indwelling reality in the assembly, and it is the trust and task of the assembly to give His redemption, which is already present to them, a greater presence in time, a deeper actuality, so that the mystery of Christ may be revealed and the nature of the Church manifested. It can now be seen what the Church really is: the redeemed redeeming, gathered and held by Christ, who is present and operative among His members. God has given this power to man.

And so the Eucharist cannot be adequately considered without recognizing that God's people enact it, designate it, make it to be what it is, and they do so because this is *their Eucharist*. The assembly appears to the historian as the first and the most fundamental liturgical reality.<sup>60</sup> The true Church is manifesting both itself and the mystery of Christ. It will be difficult to grasp the transforming power that man has in regard to the Eucharist as long as he sees the Mass as something he attends rather than as something he does. Christ is acting in everything the community does, and not behind the scenes or simply on the stage of the altar. Christ does not go away after we consume the Host. If He goes away, that means we are no longer Christians. Christ now acts through the Church. The present risen Christ in and through His Body, the Church, is doing this. Since we are the body principle of Christ, our integral human acts are those of Christ. Our own experience of what we are doing is revelation, because this is what Christ is doing.<sup>61</sup>

#### CHRIST'S PURPOSE

##### *Revelatory Event*

We are now in a better position, I believe, to see the Eucharist as a revelatory event enacted by Christ and the assembly. It is Christ's action in and through a community establishing a new relation with

<sup>57</sup> Dix, p. 29.    <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*    <sup>59</sup> Ignatius, *Ad Smyrn.* 8, 1    <sup>60</sup> Martimort, p. 83.

<sup>61</sup> G. Moran, *Theology of Revelation* (New York, 1966) esp. pp. 115-27; B. Cooke, "'De Sacramentis' and the Seminary Course," in *Apostolic Renewal in the Seminary* (ed. J. Keller and R. Armstrong; New York, 1965) pp. 185-93.

Him through the use of bread and wine. Our conception of the relation between revelation and sacrament is the key here; it is the test that determines whether we have freed revelation and faith from an impersonal way of thinking.<sup>62</sup> "Sacraments do not parallel or add to revelation; they *are* revelation. Sacraments are the intersubjective experience of the Christian community and God. . . . If the Bible can in any way be said to 'contain the whole revelation,' this is certainly true of the sacraments as well."<sup>63</sup>

This is so because Christ's past history has not run its course like that of someone belonging only to earthly time: "it continues in a present here and now which depends on the new era brought in by the Resurrection. . . . By this sacramental contact we enter in a mysterious way into this present moment of salvation realized, and we truly share in it."<sup>64</sup> The great acts of God do not cease to be contemporary and active, for history does not exhaust grace.<sup>65</sup> God is faithful through the centuries and is not less concerned with us than He was with any people in the past. As the Dutch hierarchy put it in their pastoral letter, "God meets his people in the celebration of the Eucharist, the covenant sacrifice of his Son, our Lord and brother."<sup>66</sup>

Vatican II, in discussing revelation, does not begin with a certain number of truths but mentions again and again that revelation is the self-manifestation and self-communication of God to man.<sup>67</sup> It even indicates that this communication is still going on: "God, who spoke of old, uninterruptedly converses with the bride of His beloved Son; and the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the gospel resounds in the Church, and through her, in the world, leads into all truth those who believe and makes the word of Christ dwell abundantly in them."<sup>68</sup> God's revelation is thus meant for all men, "but the unified, completed revelation cannot perdure in a book, an institution, or preaching; the salvation event is not in a message but in a person."<sup>69</sup>

Worship, to be Christian, must embody and set forth before the eyes of the worshiper the great historic facts of the Christian revelation, so

<sup>62</sup> Moran, p. 125.      <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>64</sup> P. Benoit, in *The Eucharist in the New Testament* (Baltimore, 1964) pp. 85-86.

<sup>65</sup> J. F. Leenhardt, "This Is My Body," in O. Cullmann and F. Leenhardt, *Essays on the Lord's Supper* (Leetterworth, 1958) p. 40.

<sup>66</sup> "Controversy on the Real Presence," *Herder Correspondence* 2, 12 (Dec., 1965) 391.

<sup>67</sup> Constitution on Divine Revelation (N.C.W.C. ed.; Washington, D.C., 1965) chap. 1.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 8.      <sup>69</sup> Moran, p. 116.

that the worshipping community can be led to acts of penitence and praise which Christ desires.<sup>70</sup> "If Christ is not understood to be *now* revealing God to man, faith is bound to become . . . the rational acceptance of past facts and present teachings which are extrinsic to the sanctifying-worshipping activity now taking place. But belief is not directed to a message but to God raising up Christ, and this is not a past event but an ever present, continuing occurrence."<sup>71</sup>

The historical and the mystical body of Christ are not two disparate things but a unity in the strict sense, and there exist two means to effect incorporation, two means to bring about the transition from the first to the second bodily form: the Eucharist and Scripture.<sup>72</sup> On the one hand, the Eucharist is the means of freeing Christ's historical humanity from the confines of space and time, of incorporating all into the Body of Christ, making them in Christ one body.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, Scripture of itself is oriented toward a bodily expression of revelation, not because Scripture is an incomplete part of revelation, but because Scripture must be bodied forth in transforming man.<sup>74</sup>

These two form a harmonious whole in the sacramental celebration in the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. It is precisely because we believe in God's Word as proclaimed by the Church that we are led further to the sacrament in which the self-giving of Christ is presented and completed.<sup>75</sup> In fact, the whole action can be seen either as God speaking and man responding, or as a religious event. The proclamation of Scripture is a fore-word to the decisive Word of the Eucharist. "The entire eucharistic celebration is thus a service of the Word, and the whole eucharistic celebration is a sacramental event."<sup>76</sup> This action is, of course, that of the whole Christ, Head and Body. Just as in the original revelation God could not reveal Himself except in terms of man's reaction to that revelation, so here the Church mediates God's word and event. And as in the original we have man responding to God, so here we have the sounding and re-sounding of the one word.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>70</sup> R. Abba, *Principles of Christian Worship* (Oxford, 1960) p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> Moran, p. 116; F. X. Durrwell, *In the Redeeming Christ* (New York, 1963) pp. 7-9, 54-59. <sup>72</sup> H. U. von Balthasar, *Word and Revelation* (New York, 1964) p. 15.

<sup>73</sup> Balthasar, p. 15. <sup>74</sup> Moran, p. 124.

<sup>75</sup> O. Semmelroth, *Church and Sacrament* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1965) p. 43.

<sup>76</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, "Revelation in Word and Deed," in *The Word* (n. 5 above) p. 268.

<sup>77</sup> O. Semmelroth, "God's Word and Man's Reply," *ibid.*, p. 274.

We thus see that the three elements we have discussed in the first part of our article form necessarily a unit: the Eucharist as word is itself an event consisting of the action of Christ and the assembly. Christ is actively present throughout this revelatory event, while the community is showing forth the death of the Lord till He comes.

*For the Sake of Communication*

The whole purpose of God's creative word, of this revelatory event, is for the sake of communication between persons. The essence of a word is that a person expresses something which is hidden inside him, and he does this not for the expression itself but to communicate with another person.<sup>78</sup> The speaker himself is in a certain sense the goal which is to be fulfilled in his verbal communication.<sup>79</sup> In the case of God's speech, nothing outside of Himself can be the goal and aim of His communication.<sup>80</sup>

The personal poles are pre-eminent even when nature or symbolic forms are used in the communicating process. F. W. Dillistone expresses this very well when he summarizes the Old Testament attitude:

... the pattern of the encounter was of greater significance than any natural objects employed within the encounter. To talk together, to eat together, to have direct personal contact was of primary importance and the human leader who could mediate the Divine will through word or deed was accorded a place of greater eminence than any natural phenomenon. This primacy of the meeting, the covenant, the instruction in the Divine, the pledging through solemn word and act, continued throughout Israel's history in varying shapes and forms. *Communication* from God to man and from man to man was at all times the pre-eminent concern.<sup>81</sup>

We shall return to a consideration of things and symbols in the Christian worship, but we must dwell longer on the main concern of that worship, communication between persons. The aim of communion is not the species, which are the result of a common celebration. The word and event proclaim a mystery, so that we may commune in that mystery. Christ does not so much come to us as He takes us to Himself. The Eucharistic celebration is the personal gift of Christ, and in it we do not narrow Him down to our little dimensions but open ourselves for His dimensions.

<sup>78</sup> Semmelroth, *ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>79</sup> Semmelroth, *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Semmelroth, *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Dillistone, pp. 55-56.

This communication or revelation takes place between persons and exists only in the experience of people.<sup>82</sup> Christ's revelatory-redeeming activity brings the believer into contact with the continuing event of salvation in which the Word still speaks a word which, like all human words, is to a degree revelatory and effective. But His word, beyond all human words, has a revelatory and effective (redeeming) power that reaches the deepest part of men's hearts.<sup>83</sup>

Seeing the Eucharistic celebration as communication between persons is most important for understanding the presence of Christ. His presence here and now is obvious, because He is revealing and communicating here and now. There are as many kinds of presence, however, as there are forms of activity, of communication,<sup>84</sup> but persons are present to each other as far as they communicate.<sup>85</sup> If there is no communication, a person could be present as a thing. Personal presence is born from communication between persons,<sup>86</sup> and the sacraments are the language in which the community and Christ communicate.<sup>87</sup>

For postempiricist philosophy, communication is a primary notion. Previous philosophers saw the difference between interior and exterior, between mind and body, in terms of privacy and publicity.<sup>88</sup> Descartes maintained that we should draw a sharp line between two main areas of experience, the interior and the exterior; the latter belongs to the physical order, the former to the psychological.<sup>89</sup> We sense here the sharp distinction between what is personal and what is a "thing."<sup>90</sup> In fact, however, according to phenomenologists and linguistic philosophers, there exists no separation between the interiority of thinking and the exteriority of the world, but rather a unity of reciprocal implication. The word is permeated with the "light" of the subject-as-*cogito*, and the subject-as-*cogito* is a "light" only in and through the word.<sup>91</sup> Just as a person comes into full existence through embodiment, so the thought, the idea, exists in the word.<sup>92</sup> Thus the idea that thought becomes itself in speech is concordant with the deeper essence of man.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Moran, p. 120.   <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120-21.

<sup>84</sup> P. de Haes, "The Presences of the Lord Christ," *Lumen vitae* 20 (1965) 440; cf. Constitution on the Liturgy, no. 7.

<sup>85</sup> H. McCabe, "The Real Presence," *Clergy Review* 49 (1964) 752 ff.

<sup>86</sup> De Haes, p. 440.   <sup>87</sup> McCabe, p. 754.   <sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 753.

<sup>89</sup> R. G. Kwant, *Encounter* (Pittsburgh, 1965) pp. 4-5.   <sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> W. A. Luijpen, *Phenomenology and Metaphysics* (Pittsburgh, 1965) p. 127.

<sup>92</sup> Kwant, p. 37.   <sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

The naming of objects, therefore, does not follow their recognition, but *is* this recognition itself.<sup>94</sup> There is a coexistence of our consciousness with the "thing."<sup>95</sup>

Thus we cannot divorce subject and meaning from each other; they are inseparable.<sup>96</sup> The subject-as-*cogito* refers to the meaning, and the meaning refers to the subject-as-*cogito*. This unity of reciprocal implication of subject and meaning *is* the coming-to-be, the occurrence of truth, and this occurrence is equiprimordially speech, language.<sup>97</sup> It is speaking that lets meaning be, that brings about the truth of meaning. In the word the subject lives and dwells in the meaning; through the word the meaning is called forth and appeals to the subject.<sup>98</sup>

In other words, and perhaps at the danger of oversimplification, instead of thinking of words in terms of ideas, we think rather of ideas in terms of words.<sup>99</sup> A word does not have meaning because it stands for an idea, but to have an idea is to know the meaning of a word, and to know the meaning of a word is to know how to use it in communication.<sup>100</sup> If I can use the word "bread" properly in conversation, then I have the same idea of bread as everyone else who uses it properly; whatever else goes on in my mind is not part of the meaning of the word. Thus communication is primary and in it there is no dichotomy between interiority and exteriority, between mind and body, in terms of privacy and publicity. They are rather to be seen in terms of two different kinds of publicity.<sup>101</sup> We are bodily in so far as we can be physically present to each other by causal interaction; we have an interior mental life in so far as we can be present to each other by communication, by language.<sup>102</sup> This latter is an activity, the presence of

<sup>94</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris, 1945) p. 207.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 367-68.      <sup>96</sup> Luijpen, pp. 121, 125.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126. These statements in no way deny the idea of essence, the need to strive for universal and necessary truth, that knowledge has its norm in reality. Some metaphysicians say that phenomenology, in stating that there *is* only a world for man and that without man there can be no world, is the denial of the authentic consciousness of reality and of realism. This objection could be disposed of by pointing out that anyone who claims that there *is* a world without man can *really* make this claim only by *de facto* not making the supposition that there is no man. Real affirmations presuppose the subject. This is why authentic thinking is equiprimordially the speaking word (cf. Luijpen, pp. 120-26).

<sup>98</sup> M. Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt a. M., 1950) pp. 60-61.

<sup>99</sup> McCabe, p. 753.      <sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*      <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.* It might be objected that a person who can talk to others can also talk aloud or silently to himself. But any such use of words in private depends for their meaning



heart and mind that is love in action. This presence is personal relation, active communion.<sup>103</sup> Personal presence is established by communication of one person to another.<sup>104</sup>

The sacramental, guaranteed presence of Christ, therefore, should not be the focus of our attention, but it should decrease in our awareness to let Him increase, in all His personal immediacy.<sup>105</sup> His real presence as food achieves the purpose intended only when He is present to the believer as one person is to another.<sup>106</sup> "To concentrate on his sacramental presence would be like meeting him in the flesh, only to concern ourselves with his appearance, or even the physical possibility of his being there at all."<sup>107</sup> In other words, we miss the point if we do not use His sacramental presence as an occasion for the meeting of two "I's" present to each other for real person-to-person exchange.<sup>108</sup> True encounter reveals the other to me as "not a thing," but as an existence, as a source of sense and meaning. Because the other is not a thing, he is a companion, and therefore I can speak of "we." A thing does not accompany me.<sup>109</sup> The more ancient way of regarding the sacramental elements was to treat them as things and not as a person, as media of worship and not as objects of worship.<sup>110</sup>

The symbolism of the Eucharistic celebration lies not so much in the elements as in the action, the entire action, word and deed,<sup>111</sup> as we have seen above. It lies in action first on Christ's part, then on the part of the community. The Last Supper was a meal, but more importantly it was Christ gathering His close friends together.<sup>112</sup> It was their relationship to each other that counted more than the meal as such which they ate or the utensils which they used. Preoccupation with the meal could detract from its real meaning, which lies in our relationship to one another, our genuine sharing of Christ's life.<sup>113</sup>

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on the public use. Language begins as a way in which persons live together. Moreover, even personal thought is a dialogue.

<sup>103</sup> De Haes, p. 449.      <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 441.

<sup>105</sup> R. P. Kuhn, "Reforming the Liturgy," *Perspectives* 9 (1964) 167.

<sup>106</sup> G. S. Sloyan, "Debate on the Eucharist," *Commonweal* 84 (1966) 360.

<sup>107</sup> Kuhn, p. 167.      <sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> W. A. Luijpen, *Existential Phenomenology* (Pittsburgh, 1963) p. 191.

<sup>110</sup> Kuhn, p. 167. In part two above we saw that the Fathers placed the emphasis elsewhere, namely, on the active presence of Christ throughout the celebration.

<sup>111</sup> P. T. Forsyth, *The Church and the Sacraments* (2nd ed.; London, 1953) p. 234.

<sup>112</sup> P. F. D'Arcy and E. C. Kennedy, *The Genius of the Apostolate* (New York, 1965) p. 219.      <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

But this relationship and sharing of Christ's life, or communication, as we prefer to call it, is not possible in the Hebraic mode of thought without corporality. The body was the means of interchange among persons. "One never reaches anyone without the intermediary of a certain corporality, without choosing a body as the organ of expression and communication. This whole philosophy of the body—which is both a theology of the body and an anthropology—is evoked by the use of the Hebrew expression 'all flesh' . . ." <sup>114</sup> Whereas in the anthropology of classical Greece the essential characteristic of the body is its limitation and individuation through its form and proportions, for Paul, on the other hand, it is the possibility of communication: as body, man exists in relationship to others. <sup>115</sup> We know the case he presents in which man is given the choice of being one body with a prostitute or with Christ (1 Cor 6:15 ff.). Our point is that this potential can only ever become act in the body, that is, either by sexual intercourse with the prostitute or by that total concrete bodily obedience to Christ which is grounded in the sacramental transaction. <sup>116</sup> "Just because he is the one who has risen in the body, there is for Christ both the potential and the actuality of communication with us. For what he now is, he is, not as a person in the sense of a separate individual, but in relationship to us and on our behalf. . . ." <sup>117</sup> The dead have no bodies and therefore we cannot communicate with them. This is not to say that communication is bodily interaction, but it involves bodies. There would be no living interaction with Christ if He were dead; we could think of Him and remember Him, but there would be no communication between us. <sup>118</sup>

From the Hebraic and Pauline point of view, the corporal existence of Jesus Christ becomes a matter of importance, <sup>119</sup> to say the least. Jesus Himself lived this point of view, and at the Last Supper He chose bread to serve as an expression of His will to continue His presence with His disciples after His departure. He will be seen no more, but His presence will continue, and it will continue to be as now, corporal. "He does not wish his presence to be only an inner thought. He wishes this bread to *say* that he is there, as his body still *tells* them so for a few minutes longer." <sup>120</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Leenhardt, pp. 41–42.

<sup>115</sup> E. Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes* (Naperville, Ill., 1964) p. 133.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>118</sup> McCabe, p. 754. <sup>119</sup> Leenhardt, p. 42. <sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42–43.

*A Communication of Himself*

Any call from one person to another, and a fortiori the call of the bodily-risen Christ who is invisible, must of necessity be embodied in a word or gesture. Christ communicates with us in a fashion conformable to that of a body-person. But the form His communication takes at the Last Supper as encapsulating His whole life is that of self-giving.<sup>121</sup> Christ gives Himself under the form of bread and wine. We have seen from our treatment of the power of the word that for the Hebrew mind symbolism does not exclude realism. The sign performs what it signifies. Therefore, Christ would have to be present, because the word and gesture signify Christ giving *Himself*. Moreover, as we have seen, the speaker is himself the goal which is to be fulfilled in his verbal communication; and in the case of God's speech He Himself must be the aim of His communication. It would also seem that Christ's presence, mystery though it is, would be more perfect where the sign is more perfect.<sup>122</sup> And here we "see" Christ giving Himself in His greatest act of love: it expresses the complete gift of Himself to His Father and to us.

Although the bread and wine become the sacramental means of Christ's self-giving, we must not view them only from what Christ our Head does with them. He is here enacting this with the community in which He dwells. The Eucharistic memorial is as well a proclamation by the Church,<sup>123</sup> an action constituted by Christ and the assembly. By means of her prayer the Church makes explicit the action which is itself thanksgiving and intercession.<sup>124</sup> She has the power to actualize herself in an event. She declares what she is doing,<sup>125</sup> and since signs are effective in the real order, she does what she declares. Christ did

<sup>121</sup> The Bible never gives a definition of sacrifice. In fact, there is no single term that embraces all the various kinds of sacrifices in Israel's history. The Israelites regarded the "giving" of something to God as the essential element in a sacrifice (L. F. Hartman, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* (McGraw-Hill, 1963) cols. 2082-83). Matthew's and Mark's "the blood which is poured out for many" and Luke's "for you" indicate the self-giving nature of Christ's act at the Last Supper.

<sup>122</sup> We have said above that the assembly is already united, being identifiable with Christ. This unity comes not only from the action of Christ, but from the fact that we *are* Christ, members of His one Body. The Eucharistic celebration—a common meal, unified song, a single prayer of praise—is what most perfectly manifests this unity, of which the reality is Christ. This reality alone argues for a "special" presence of Christ in the celebration. The Eucharistic bread is a symbol of and reflects this reality present.

<sup>123</sup> M. Thurian, *The Eucharistic Memorial 2: The New Testament* (Richmond, 1961) p. 36.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*      <sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

not come to take our place but to enable us to raise ourselves through Him to God.<sup>126</sup> Revelation and redemption are bound up together.<sup>127</sup> Through Christ, God planted in mankind the seed of its own regeneration. We must recall again the injunction of the Constitution on the Liturgy: "the Eucharist is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the Church."

Out of this background we can see that the community is creative of the Eucharist, makes it be what it is. Although Christ is the chief actor here and the relationship He seeks must be according to His terms, communication is still a matter not of one but of at least two parties. The community must itself intend to have Christ present to itself. We are always present to Christ, but His presence to us depends upon us. The presence of person A to person B is not just the doing of person A. We can "shut off" a person who wants to be present to us.<sup>128</sup> The point is that the sacramental event is essentially relational. Persons are present in so far as they communicate, and for true communication there must be mutual intentionality, which puts the two parties in indispensable relationship. If communication on either side breaks down, the very reason of the sacrament is defeated.

The intention of the Church is to commune with Christ. If the elements used in this effort achieve a different signification, it is for the sake of this communion and not for themselves. In the Eucharist the bread acquires a new purpose from that of temporal nourishment. This is so because the community has designated this matter as a sign of Christ; it knows that in this revelatory event in which God speaks and communicates Himself to man, Christ's real self can be reached by man through this outward form. At Mass, man is not a spectator at a play but is enacting a mystery. The only way we can Christianize is to put Christ there, to put Christ in man's world,<sup>129</sup> and this man does in

<sup>126</sup> H. de Lubac, *Catholicism* (New York, 1958) p. 113; H. Cox, *The Secular City* (New York, 1965) pp. 255-59.

<sup>127</sup> De Lubac, p. 113.

<sup>128</sup> Kuhn, p. 167; also cf. above, the treatment of the Hebrew notion of word and the explanation of personal presence born out of communication.

<sup>129</sup> P. Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe* (New York, 1965) pp. 86-87: "For Christian humanism . . . there is no real independence or discordance but a logical subordination between the genesis of humanity in the world and the genesis of Christ, through his Church, in humanity."

the Eucharist. If man lives within history, it is not so much to suffer it as to create it.<sup>130</sup>

Since the bread has been removed from an earthly function and given a totally new finality, its fundamental meaning has been changed. It gets its new meaning from its relation to the community. Just as bread exists as bread only in relation to man, so what now is before him stands to him as the Body of Christ because of the new and essential relationship it has with Him.<sup>131</sup> The "thing" gets its meaning from the thing done, that is, from the word and from the event. The believing community signifies that through it she intends to commune with her ever-present Lord. Because of her faith in the power of the word to bring about what it signifies, her people act out the mystery and so communicate with Him really present.

The actual physical composition of the changed bread, therefore, is of no consequence. A conglomeration of paint and a masterpiece can each have an identical physico-chemical make-up, but the sense and unity or lack of it comes from the relation it has to man. There has been a change in what this thing called bread means and does for the community, and consequently a change in what it *is* for the community:<sup>132</sup> the Body of Christ.

Man could not, of course, arbitrarily choose to make bread the sign of Christ's Body and have that become effective; it is clearly beyond his power to do so. But this is not simply man acting; it is Christ already present and dwelling in the community who constitutes this. Although we distinguish Christ and the community to clarify our thoughts, in the Mystical Body they are united and it is this Body that is actualized in the Eucharistic celebration.

It must be clear that we are not treating the bread *as though* it were the Body of Christ, nor does the bread remain bread, with Christ using it for a higher purpose.<sup>133</sup> In the real order, by the words of Christ, the change is brought about. The Church has always insisted that on the experiential level (employing even sophisticated scientific instruments), the material elements after the consecration remain the same as bread. They look the same, act the same, and nourish the same as food. In

<sup>130</sup> A. Dondeyne, *Contemporary European Thought and Christian Faith* (Pittsburgh, 1958) p. 5.

<sup>131</sup> C. Davis, "The Theology of Transubstantiation," *Sophia* 3 (1964) 19-21.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.      <sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

fact, if this material can no longer be called bread, we know that there ceases to be the Body of Christ. Christ did not wish to destroy this material consistency in the Eucharist, but wanted to use it as such. It was precisely the designating of bodily nourishment to be His Body, which is now the transignifying power of His Church, that made it a sacrament of communicating His own life to us. But in making the material elements a sacrament, Christ changed the intrinsic course of their being. This is so true that it cannot even be called bread.<sup>184</sup>

The point we wish to make here is that the reality now present, the Body of Christ, does not demand a change in the material substance of the physico-chemical elements. This is a mystery of faith, as we are reminded at the prayer over the cup. Philosophically, our concept of presence is connected with effecting something; this certainly seems valid, but a materialistic interpretation of it can be an obstruction to a proper understanding of Real Presence and actually work our faith harm.

If our starting point is local presence, we will be inclined to think of a new presence coming about in terms of a displacement in space.<sup>185</sup> The Scholastic starts out from local presence and, of course, faces the great danger of "materialization," the idea of a body as a thing which is either present or not. Theology tries to avoid this danger by a series of negations.<sup>186</sup> St. Thomas says, for example, that Christ is not in the sacrament as in a place; He is present after the manner of a substance.<sup>187</sup> But in spite of the keen dialectics of the theologians to draw away from this starting point, it seems that local presence has seized our imagination, which does not express that the Eucharist is a presence from Person to person. And although a Christian knows that it is, even when studying theology, it does not seem that it will be integrated into his thinking as long as he starts from local presence alone.<sup>188</sup> If our philosophical outlook has been influenced by Hellenism, which knows no energy without a material substratum,<sup>189</sup> we can see how this could easily affect our notion of the Real Presence. Hellenism itself, however, offers somewhat of a corrective that could benefit us: the material substratum of the energy serves only as a basis, as a mode of subsistence, for the energy which operates through it.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>187</sup> *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 76, a. 5.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> De Haes, pp. 439-40.

<sup>188</sup> De Haes, p. 439.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 440.

<sup>189</sup> Käsemann, p. 116.

But presence as effecting something is not the same as, and need not involve, materially changing something. If our concept is material-bound, the all-important aspect of intentionality necessarily suffers. A spirit-driven being can transcend the barriers of matter. As St. Thomas says, this is a spiritual presence, invisible, according to the manner and by the power of the spirit.<sup>141</sup>

To concentrate on the thing involved instead of the action would be false to the twin Hebraic views of the signifying value operative here and that which sees history and nature as events. The symbolism of the entire rite in no way excludes its realism, but the realism is to be understood in the order of action. Accordingly, as we saw earlier, the thing is always the thing enacted, and even spatial images do not depict the correct state of affairs in space. In the action-memorial of the Eucharist, a past *event* becomes really present now. The starting point, however, is not the sign of the bread; for the event is creative of the sign, and the event is Christ. If ultimately the sign of bread finds its full meaning only when directed toward human existence, this too is to be considered primarily as part of this redeeming-revelatory event.

If our understanding of sacrament shifts from action to thing, from time to space, God's revelatory event, in which He speaks and acts to personally communicate with us, suffers markedly; the unlimited time dimension (which the sign also points to) reverts to a space localization, and spatial substance becomes the object of our concentration. Christ's real self is His available self. He is asking us to accept that we be at His disposal. Christ is a person-towards, and so His presence is a presence-for.

There is a loss in Christian outlook and devotion if a permanent external presence of Christ among Christians comes to be the most usually entertained idea of the manner of His "abiding with us," instead of the indwelling Christ in the members of His Body, of which it is the glory of the sacrament to be the earthly instrument.<sup>142</sup> It seems a reversal of values; for Christ can be more truly present to me than He can to bread, simply because a person can be more truly present to another person than he can to a thing.

There is a fanaticism which treats a formula, drawn up to delimit some obscure question and leave it as such, as a solution penetrating

<sup>141</sup> *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 75, a. 1.

<sup>142</sup> N. Hook, *The Eucharist in the New Testament* (London, 1964) p. 121.

to the heart of the mystery. Error lies in simplification.<sup>143</sup> Part of the reality must not be taken for the whole. The task and function of the constraint of faith is to prevent imprisonment within the merely partial. Faith liberates because it opens out into the absolute fulness of reality. "The official belief of the Church should not be conceived of as an un-surveyable collection of individual propositions like the tangle of prescriptions in a code of law. What we have to do is, both in our thinking and in our living, so to penetrate into this reality of faith that we experience it at once in its unity and its infinity."<sup>144</sup> Faith anathematizes nothing but that "no" by which a man would lock himself in and prevent himself and others from attaining to greater and more all-embracing reality.<sup>145</sup> Such indeed would isolate him, but perhaps worse still it would be a danger to the basic complexity of truth and hence to truth itself, to the realization of the incompleteness of all human knowledge, to what is great and vital in contemporary philosophy and humanism, to the necessity of renewing over and over again our scale of values in order to adapt them to the new possibilities which arise as man's situation in the world is transformed.<sup>146</sup>

We can lock ourselves in the Real Presence, therefore, unless we see that the Real Presence is there under sign to express the realness of God's movement toward us in love. The real presence of Christ in the whole of the Eucharistic celebration is no static presence like an object in a given place. It surpasses all we can imagine, for the presence of the risen spirit-filled Christ transcends all our natural ways of speaking about the presence of a person. But we know that He is present. Christ working in and through the community assures this. The purpose of His presence here is the same as His presence anywhere, but here it is made explicit and signified. By the action of the word a power has been unleashed giving meaning to reality in a divine-human event at which Christ Himself is actively constituting this, together with the assembly, for the purpose of personally communicating with His own in love.

<sup>143</sup> K. Rahner, *Theology for Renewal* (New York, 1964) p. 77.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>146</sup> Dondeyne, pp. 39-40.