



The Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist

The Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist

**From the writings of Saint
Alphonsus Liguori**

**Cover art taken from a hand painted pall. Courtesy of Servants of the
Holy Family**

“REFUTING ERRORS CONCERNING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST.”

From the writings of Saint Alphonsus Liguori.

From “THE HISTORY OF HERESIES, AND THEIR REFUTATION”; OR, “THE TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH.”

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN OF Saint ALPHONSUS LIGUORI,
BY THE REV. JOHN T. MULLOCK, OF THE ORDER OF Saint FRANCIS, in 1847.

REFUTATION OF THE HERESY OF BERENGARIUS AND THE PRETENDED ‘REFORMERS’,
CONCERNING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST.

1. The truth of the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the altar has been always established and universally embraced by the whole Church, as Saint Vincent of Lerins said, in 434 A.D.

Mosheim, the Protestant Ecclesiastical Historian, asserts that in the 9th century, the exact nature of the faith of the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist was not established, and that Pascasius Radbertus laid down in a book he wrote, two principal points concerning it; first, that after the consecration nothing remained of the substance of the bread and wine, and, secondly, that in the consecrated Host is the very body of Jesus Christ, which was born of Mary, died on the cross, and arose from the tomb, and this, Radbertus said, is "what the whole world believes and professes." This work was opposed by Retramn, and perhaps others, and hence Mosheim concludes that the dogma was not then established. In this, however, Mosheim is astray, for, as Selvaggi writes (note 79, volume 3), there was no controversy at all about the dogma, in which Retramn was agreed with Radbertus; Retramn only attacked some expressions in Radbertus' work.

Up to the ninth century, the Sacrament of the Eucharist never was impugned, till John Scotus Erigena, an Irishman, first published to the world the unheard-of heresy that the body and blood of Christ were not in reality in the Holy Eucharist, which, he said, was only a figure of Jesus Christ.

2. Berengarius, or Berenger, taught this same heresy in the year 1050, taking his opinions from the works of Scotus Erigena, and in the twelfth century, we find the heretics known as the Petrobrussians and Henricians, who said that the Eucharist was only a mere sign of the body and blood of our Lord. The Albigensian heretics held the same error in the thirteenth century, and finally, in the sixteenth century the modern Protestant Reformers all joined in attacking this Holy Sacrament. Zwingli and Karlstadt said that the Eucharist was a signification of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and Oecolampadius joined them afterwards, and Bucer, also, partially.

Luther admitted the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but said that the substance of the bread remained there also. Calvin several times changed his opinion on the matter; he said, in order to deceive the Catholics, that the Eucharist was not a mere sign, or naked figure of Christ, but was filled with his Divine Virtue, and sometimes he even admitted that the very substance of the body of Christ was there, but his general opinion was that the presence of Christ was not real but figurative, by the power placed there by our Lord. Hence Bossuet says in his "Variations," Calvin never wished to admit that the sinner, in communicating receives the body of Christ, for then he should admit the Real Presence. The Council of Trent (Session 13, canon 1), teaches, "that Jesus Christ, God and man, is really, truly, and substantially contained under the appearance of those sensible things in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine."

3. Before we prove the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, we must know that it is a true Sacrament, as the Council of Florence (1445) declares in its Decree or Instruction for the Armenians; and the Council of Trent (Session

8, canon 1), in opposition to the Socinians, who say that it is not a Sacrament, but merely a remembrance of the death of our Saviour. It is, however, an article of Faith that the Eucharist is a true Sacrament; for,

First, we have the sensible sign, the appearance of bread and wine.

Secondly, there is the institution of Christ: "Do this in commemoration of me" (Luke, 22).

Thirdly, there is the promise of Grace: "Who eats my flesh has eternal life."

We now have to inquire what in the Eucharist constitutes a Sacrament. The Lutherans say that it is in the use, with all the actions that Christ did, at the last Supper, that the Sacrament consists, as Saint Matthew tells us: "Jesus took bread, blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples" (Matthew 26). The Calvinists, on the other hand, say that it is in the actual eating that the Sacrament consists.

We Catholics believe:

that the consecration is not the Sacrament, because that is a transitory action, and the Eucharist is a permanent Sacrament, as can be shown;

nor the use or communion, for this regards the effect of the Sacrament, which is a Sacrament before it is received at all;

nor in the species alone, for these do not confer Grace;

nor the body of Jesus Christ alone, because it is not there in a sensible manner;

but the sacramental species, together with the body of Christ, form the Sacrament, inasmuch as they contain the body of our Lord.

I. OF THE REAL PRESENCE OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST.

4. We have already said that the Council of Trent (Session 13, canon 3) teaches that Jesus Christ is contained in the sacramental species, truly, really, and substantially;

truly, rejecting the figurative presence, for the figure is opposed to truth;

really, rejecting the imaginary presence which Faith makes us aware of, as the Sacramentarians assert;

and substantially, rejecting the doctrine of Calvin, who said that in the Eucharist it was not the body of Christ, but his virtue or power, that was present, by which he communicates himself to us; but in this he erred, for the whole substance of Jesus Christ is in the Eucharist.

Hence, the Council of Trent (Canon 1), condemns those who assert that Christ is in the Sacrament as a sign, or figure, 'signo, vel figura.'

5. The Real Presence is proved, first, by the words of Christ himself: "Take and eat, this is my body," words which are quoted by Saint Matthew (26:26); Saint Mark (14:22); Saint Luke (22:19); and Saint Paul (1 Corinth 11:24). It is a certain rule, says Saint Augustine, and is commonly followed by the Holy Fathers, to take the words of Scripture in their proper literal sense, unless some absurdity would result from doing so; for if it were allowed to explain every thing in a mystic sense, it would be impossible to prove any article of Faith from the Scripture, and it would only become the source of a thousand errors, as every one would give it whatever sense he pleased. Therefore, says the Council (Chapter 1), it is an enormous wickedness to distort the words of Christ by feigned figurative explanations, when three of the Evangelists and Saint Paul give them just as he expressed them. Who will dare to doubt that it is his body and blood, says Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Catechetical Discourses, when Christ has said so? We put this question to the heretics: Could Jesus Christ turn the bread into his body or not? We believe not one of them will deny that he could, for every Christian knows that God is all-powerful, "because no word shall be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

But they will answer, perhaps: We do not deny that he could, but perhaps he did not wish to do it. Did not wish to do it, perhaps? But tell me, if he did wish to do so, could he have possibly declared more clearly what his will was, than by saying: "This is my body"? When he was asked by Caiphas: "Are you the Christ the Son of the blessed God?"

And Jesus said to him: I am" (Mark, 14:61-62), we should say, according to their mode of explanation, that he spoke figuratively also.

Besides, if you allow, with the Sacramentarians, that the words of Christ: "This is my body," are to be taken figuratively, why, then, do you object to the Socinians, who say that the words of Christ, quoted by Saint John (10:30): "I and the Father are one," ought to be taken not literally, but merely showing that between Christ and the Father there existed a moral union of the will, but not a union of substance, and, consequently denied his Divinity. We now pass on to the other proofs.

6. The Real Presence is proved, secondly, by that text of Saint John where Christ says: "The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (John, 6:52). Our adversaries explain away this text, by saying, that here our Redeemer does not in this chapter speak of the Eucharist, but of the Incarnation of the Word. We do not say that in the beginning of the chapter it is the Incarnation that is spoken of; but there cannot be the least doubt but that from the 52nd verse out it is the Eucharist, as even Calvin admits; and it was thus the Fathers and Councils always understood it, as the Council of Trent, which (Chapter 2, Session 13, and Chapter 1, Session 22) quotes several passages from that chapter to confirm the Real Presence; and the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 (Act. 6) quotes the 54th verse of the same chapter: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, (and so on)", to prove that the true body of Christ is offered up in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

It is in this chapter, also, that our Saviour promises to give to the Faithful, at a future time, his own flesh as food: "The bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world" (verse 52), and here he sets totally aside the false explanation of the sectarians, who say that he only speaks of the spiritual eating by means of Faith, in believing the Incarnation of the Word; for if that was our Lord's meaning, he would not say: "The bread which I will give," but "the bread which I have given," for the Word was already incarnate, and his disciples might then spiritually feed on Jesus Christ; therefore he said: "I will give," for he had not as yet instituted the Sacrament, but only promised to do so, and as Saint Thomas remarks, he says, "the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world;" he did not say, 'it means my flesh' (as the Zwinglians afterwards explained it), but 'it is my flesh', because it is truly the body of Christ which is received. Our Lord next says: "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (John, 6:56); and, therefore, Saint Hilary says he leaves us no room to doubt of the truth of his body and blood. In fact, if the real body and blood of Christ were not in the Eucharist, this passage would be a downright falsehood. We should not forget, also, that the distinction between meat and drink can only be understood as referring to the eating of the true body, and drinking the true blood of Christ, and not of spiritual eating by faith, as the Reformers assert; for, as that is totally internal, the meat and the drink would be only one and the same thing, and not two distinct things.

7. We have another strong proof (the third) in the same chapter of Saint John (chapter 6); for the people of Capernaum, hearing Christ speak thus, said: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (verse 53); and they even thought it so unreasonable, that "after this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (verse 67). Now, if the flesh of Christ was not really in the Eucharist, he could remove the scandal from them at once, by saying that it was only spiritually they were called on to eat his flesh by faith; but, instead of that, he only confirmed more strongly what he said before, for he said: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you" (verse 54). And he then turned to the twelve disciples, who remained with him, and said: "Will you also go away? And Peter answered him: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have known that you are the Christ the Son of God" (verses 69-70).

8. The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is proved also from the words of Saint Paul: "For let a man prove himself for he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord" (1 Corinth 11:28-29). Now, mark these words, "the body of the Lord." Does not that prove how erroneously the sectarians act, in saying that in the Eucharist we venerate, by faith, the figure alone of the body of Christ; for if that was the case, the Apostle would not say that they who received in sin were deserving of eternal condemnation; but he

clearly states that one who communicates unworthily is so, for he does not distinguish the body of the Lord from the common earthly food.

9. Fourthly, it is proved again from Saint Paul, for speaking of the use of this Holy Sacrament, he says: "The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?" (1 Corinth 10:16). Mark the words, "the bread which we break"; that which is first offered to God on the altar, and afterwards distributed to the people, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? Do not, in a word, those who receive it partake of the true body of Christ?

10. Fifthly, it is proved by the Decrees of Councils. We find it first mentioned in the Council of Alexandria, which was afterwards approved of by the first Council of Constantinople (381). Next, the Council of Ephesus (431) sanctioned the twelve anathemas of Saint Cyril against Nestorius, and in this, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is taught. The Second Council of Nicaea in 787 (Act. 6) condemns, as an error against Faith, the assertion that the figure alone, and not the true body of Christ, is in the Eucharist; for, says the Council, Christ said, take and eat, this is my body, but he did not say, take and eat, this is the image of my body. In the Roman Council, under Gregory VII, in 1079, Berengarius, in the Profession of Faith which he made, confesses that the bread and wine are, by the consecration, substantially converted into the body and blood of Christ. The Fourth Council of Lateran, under Innocent III., in the year 1215 (chapter 1), says: "We believe that the body and blood of Christ are contained under the species of bread and wine, the bread being transubstantiated into the body, and the wine into the blood." In the Council of Constance (1418), the Propositions of Wickliffe and Huss were condemned, which said that (in the Eucharist) the bread was present in reality, and the body figuratively, and that the expression "this is my body" is a figure of speech, just like the expression, "John is Elias". The Council of Florence (1445), in the Decree of Union for the Greeks, decrees, "that the body of Christ is truly consecrated (*veraciter confici*) in bread of wheat, either leavened or unleavened."

11. It is proved, sixthly, by the perpetual and uniform Tradition of the Holy Fathers.

Here is an incomplete list:

Saint Ignatius the Martyr, in his letter to Smyrna;

Saint Iræneus, in his work Against the Heresies in chapter 18, and in another place, in chapter 34;

Saint Justin, Martyr, in his Apology where he argues that the same flesh which the Word assumed is in the Eucharist;

Tertullian;

Origen;

Saint Ambrose;

and Saint John Chrysostom.

Saint Athanasius, Saint Basil, and Saint Gregory of Nazianzen, express the same sentiments in their writings.

To this list we could go on and add names such as:

Saint Augustine;

Saint Remigius (440-533);

and Saint Gregory the Great.

From the later East we have Saint John of Damascus. Thus, we see an uninterrupted series of Fathers for the first seven centuries proclaiming, in the clearest and most forcible language, the doctrine of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

12. By this we see how false is the interpretation which Zwingli put on that text, "This is my body," when he said that the word 'is' means 'signifies', founding his heresy on a verse of Exodus (12:11): "For it is the Pasch (that is the

passage) of the Lord." Now, said he, the eating of the paschal lamb was not itself the passage of the Lord; it only meant it, or signified it. The Zwinglians alone follow this interpretation, for we never can take the sense of the word 'is' for the word 'means' or 'signifies', unless in cases, where reason itself shows that the word 'is' has a figurative meaning; but in this case the Zwinglian explanation is contrary to the proper literal sense, in which we should always understand the Scriptures, when that sense is not repugnant to reason. The Zwinglian explanation is also opposed to Saint Paul, relating to us the very words of Christ: "This is my body, which shall be delivered up for you" (1 Corinth 11:24). Our Lord, we see, did not deliver up, in his Passion, the sign or signification of his body, but his real and true body.

The Zwinglians say, besides, that in the Syro-Chaldaic or Hebrew, in which our Redeemer spoke, when instituting the Eucharist, that there is no word corresponding in meaning to our word 'signify', and hence, in the Old Testament, we always find the word 'is' used instead of it, and, therefore, the words of Christ, "This is my body," should be understood, as if he said, "This signifies my body."

We answer: First: It is not the fact that the word signifies is never found in the Old Testament, for we find in Exodus: "Manhu! which signifies: What is this" (Exodus 16:15 – [hence it was called manna]); and in Judges (14:15): "Persuade him to tell you what the riddle means;" and in Ezekiel (17:12): "Know you not what these things mean."

Secondly: Although even if the words 'mean' or 'signify' were not found in the Hebrew or Syro-Chaldaic, still the word 'is' must not always be taken for it, only in case that the context should show that such is the intention of the speaker; but in this case the word has surely its own signification, as we learn, especially from the Greek version; this language has both words, and still the Greek text says, "This is my body," and not "This means my body."

13. The opinion of those sectarians, who say that in the Eucharist only a figure exists, and not the body of Christ in reality, is also refuted by these words of our Lord, already quoted: "This is my body, which shall be delivered up for you" (1 Corinth 11:24); for Jesus Christ delivered up his body to death, and not the figure of his body. And, speaking of his sacred blood, he says (Saint Matthew 26:28): "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins." Christ, then, shed his real blood, and not the figure of his blood; for the figure is expressed by speech, or writing, or painting, but the figure is not shed. Someone might object that Saint Augustine, speaking in *On Christian Doctrine*, of that passage of Saint John, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man." says that the flesh of our Lord is a figure, bringing to our mind the memory of his passion. We answer, that we do not deny that our Redeemer instituted the Holy Eucharist, in memory of his death, as we learn from Saint Paul (1 Corinth 11:26): "For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink this chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until he come;" but still we assert, that in the Eucharist there is the true body of Christ, and there is, at the same time, a figure, commemorative of his death; and this is Saint Augustine's meaning, for he never doubted that the body and blood of Christ were in the Eucharist really and truly, as he elsewhere expresses it in his 83rd Sermon.

14. There is, I should say, no necessity of refuting Calvin's opinions on the Real Presence, for he constantly refutes himself, changing his opinion a thousand times, and always cloaking it in ambiguous terms. Bossuet and Du Hamel may be consulted on this point.

They treat the subject extensively, and quote Calvin's opinion, who says, at one time, that the true substance of the body of Christ is in the Eucharist, and then again, that Christ is united to us by Faith; so that, by the presence of Christ, he understands a presence of power or virtue in the Sacrament; and this is confirmed by him in another part of his works, where he says that Christ is just as much present to us in the Eucharist as he is in Baptism. At one time, he says the Sacrament of the Altar is a miracle, and then again, the whole miracle, he says, consists in this, that the Faithful are vivified by the flesh of Christ, since a virtue so powerful descends from heaven on earth. Again, he says that even the unworthy receive in the Supper the body of Christ, and then, in another place, he says that he is received by the elect alone. In fine, we see Calvin struggling, in the explanation of this dogma, not to appear a heretic with the Zwinglians, nor a Catholic with the Roman Catholics.

Here is the Profession of Faith which the Calvinist Ministers presented to the Prelates, at the Conference of Poissy, as Bossuet gives it: "We believe that the body and blood are really united to the bread and wine, but in a sacramental

manner that is, not according to the natural position of bodies, but inasmuch as they signify that God gives his body and blood to those who truly receive him by Faith." It was remarkable in that Conference, that Theodore Beza, the first disciple of Calvin, and who had hardly time to have imbibed all his errors, said publicly, as De Thou relates, "that Jesus Christ was as far from the Supper as the heavens were from the earth." The French Prelates then drew up a true Confession of Faith, totally opposed to the Calvinists: "We believe," said they, "that in the Sacrament of the Altar there is really and transubstantially the true body and blood of Jesus Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine, by the power of the Divine Word pronounced by the Priest," and so on.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE REAL PRESENCE ANSWERED.

15. They object, first, the words of Christ:

"It is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing.

"These words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John, 6: 64).

See there, they say, the words which you make use of to prove the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist are figurative expressions, which signify the celestial food of life, which we receive by Faith.

We answer, with Saint John Chrysostom, that when Christ says the flesh profits nothing, he spoke not of his own flesh, God forbid! but of those who carnally receive it, as the Apostle says: "The sensual man perceives not those things that are of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinth 2:14), and those who carnally speak of the Divine Mysteries, and to this Saint John refers when Christ says: "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John, 6:64), meaning that these words refer not to carnal and perishable things, but to spiritual things and to eternal life. But even supposing these words to refer to the flesh of Christ itself, they only mean, as Saint Athanasius and Saint Augustine explain them, that the flesh of Christ, given to us as food, sanctifies us by the Spirit, or the Divinity united to it, but that the flesh alone would be of no avail. These are Saint Augustine's words in his 27th Tract on John's Gospel.

16. They object, secondly, that when Jesus Christ said: "This is my body," the word this in the sentence has reference to the bread alone, which he then held in his hand, but bread is only a figure of the body of Christ, but not the body itself.

We answer that if we do not consider the proposition "This is my body" as complete in itself, that might be the case if he said, for example, 'this is', and did not say any more, then the word 'this' would have reference to the bread alone, which he held in his hand; but taking the whole sentence together, there can be no doubt but that the word 'this' refers to the body of Christ. When our Lord changed water into wine, if he had said, this is wine, everyone would understand that the word 'this' referred not to the water but to the wine, and in the same way in the Eucharist the word 'this', in the complete sense of the sentence, refers to the body, because the change is made when the whole sentence is completed. In fact, the word 'this' in the sentence has no meaning at all, till the latter part is pronounced, 'is my body'; then alone the sense is complete.

17. They object, thirdly, that the sentence, " This is my body" is just as figurative as other passages in the Scriptures, as for example, when Christ says: "I am the true vine," "I am the gate," or when it is said that he is the Rock.

We reply that it is a matter of course that these propositions should be taken figuratively, for that Christ should be literally a vine, a door, or a rock is repugnant to common sense, and the words "I am," therefore, are figurative. In the words of consecration, however, there is nothing repugnant to reason in joining the predicate with the subject, because, as we have remarked already, Christ did not say 'this bread is my body', but "This is my body;" this, that is what is contained under the appearance of this bread, is my body; here there is nothing repugnant to reason.

18. They object, fourthly, that the Real Presence is opposed to the words of Christ himself, for he said (John 12:8): "The poor you have always with you, but me you have not always." Our Saviour, therefore, after his ascension, is no longer on earth.

Our Lord, we reply, then spoke of his visible presence as man receiving honour from Magdalen. When Judas, therefore, murmured against the waste of the ointment, our Lord reproves him, saying, you have not me always with you, that is, in the visible and natural form of man, but there is here nothing to prove that after his ascension into heaven he does not remain on earth in the Eucharist, under the appearance of bread and wine, invisibly, and in a supernatural manner. In this sense we must understand also, all similar passages, as, "I leave the world and go to my Father" (John, 16:18): "He was taken up into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God" (Mark, 16:19).

19. They object, fifthly, these words of the Apostle: "Our fathers were all under the cloud and did all eat the same spiritual food" (1 Corinth 10:1-3); therefore, they say, we only receive Christ in the Eucharist by Faith, just as the Hebrews received him.

We answer, that the sense of the words is, that the Hebrews received spiritual food, the Manna, of which Saint Paul speaks, the figure of the Eucharist, but did not receive the body of Christ in reality, as we receive it. The Hebrews received the figure, but we receive the real body, already prefigured.

20. Sixthly, they object that Christ said: "I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it with you new, in the kingdom of my Father" (Matthew 26:29), and these words he expressed, after having previously said, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins" (verse 28). Now, say they, take notice of the words, 'fruit of the vine'. That is a proof that the wine remains after the consecration.

We answer, first, that Christ might have called it wine, even after the consecration, not because the substance, but because the form of wine was retained, just as Saint Paul calls the Eucharist bread after the consecration: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord" (1 Corinth 11, verse 29).

Secondly, we reply, with Saint Fulgentius, who supposes that Christ took two chalices, one the Paschal chalice, according to the Jewish Rite, the other according to the Sacramental Rite. Our Lord then, he says, when using the words they found the objection on, spoke of the first chalice, and not of the second, and that he did so is clear from the words of another of the Evangelists, Saint Luke (22:17), who says that "having taken the chalice, he gave thanks, and said: Take and divide it among you. For I say to you that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, till the kingdom of God come." Now, if we read on to the 20th verse of the same chapter, we find that Jesus took the chalice of wine and consecrated it: "In like manner the chalice also, after he had supped, saying: This is the chalice, the New Testament, in my blood which shall be shed for you." Hence, it is manifest that the words, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine," were expressed by our Redeemer previous to the consecration of the chalice.

21. They object, seventhly, that the doctrine of the Real Presence cannot be true, for it is opposed to all our senses.

But to this we reply, with the Apostle, that matters of faith are not manifest to the senses, for "Faith is the evidence of things that appear not" (Hebrews 11:1). And we have another text, also, which disposes of this feeble argument: "The sensual man perceives not the things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him" (1 Corinth 2:14). All this can be answered more extensively if time permits.

II. OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION, THAT IS, THE CONVERSION OF THE SUBSTANCE OF THE BREAD AND OF THE WINE INTO THE SUBSTANCE OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST.

22. Luther at first left it as a matter of choice to each person, either to believe in Transubstantiation or not, but he changed his opinion afterwards, and in 1522, in the book which he wrote against Henry VIII, he says: "I now wish to transubstantiate my own opinion. I thought it better before to say nothing about the belief in Transubstantiation, but now I declare, that if any one holds this doctrine, he is an impious blasphemer", and he concludes by saying, that in the Eucharist, along with the body and blood of Christ, remains the substance of the bread and wine: "that the body of Christ is in the bread, with the bread, and under the bread, just as fire is in a red-hot iron." He, therefore, called the

Real Presence "Impanation," or "Consubstantiation," that is, the association of the substance of bread and wine with the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

23. The Council of Trent, however, teaches, that the whole substance of the bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ. It issued a Decree to that effect (Chapter 4, Session 13), and says, that the Church most aptly calls this change Transubstantiation.

The words are in the Second Canon. Remark the words, 'mirabilem ilium, et singularem conversionem totius substantiæ', 'the wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance'. It is called 'wonderful', for it is a mystery hidden from us, and which we never can comprehend. It is 'singular', because in all nature there is not another case of a similar change; and it is called a 'conversion', because it is not a simple union with the body of Christ, such as was the hypostatic union by which the Divine and human Natures were united in the sole person of Christ. Such is not the case, then, in the Eucharist, for the substance of the bread and wine is not united with, but is totally changed and converted into, the body and blood of Jesus Christ. We say a 'conversion of the whole substance', to distinguish it from other conversions or changes, such as the change of food into the body of the person who partakes of it, or the change of water into wine by our Redeemer at Cana, and the change of the rod of Moses into a serpent, for in all these changes the substance remained, and it was the form alone that was changed; but in the Eucharist the matter and form of the bread and wine is changed, and the species alone remain, that is, the appearance alone, as the council explains it.

24. The general opinion is, that this conversion is not performed by the creation of the body of Christ, for creation is the production of a thing out of nothing; but this is the conversion of the substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ. It does not take place either by the annihilation of the matter of the bread and wine, because annihilation means the total destruction of a thing, and the body of Christ, then, would be changed, we may say, from nothing; but in the Eucharist the substance of the bread passes into the substance of Christ, so that it is not from nothing. Neither does it take place by the transmutation of the form alone (as a certain author endeavours to prove); the same matter still remaining, as happened when the water was changed into wine, and the rod into a serpent.

John Duns Scotus says that Transubstantiation is an act adducing the body of Christ into the Eucharist (actio adductiva); but this opinion is not followed by others, for adduction does not mean conversion by the passage of one substance into the other. It cannot be called, either, a unitive action, for that supposes two extremes in the point of union. Hence, we say, with Saint Thomas, that the consecration operates in such a manner, that if the body of Christ was not in heaven, it would commence to exist in the Eucharist. The consecration really, and in the instant, 'instanti', as the same Doctor says in the Summa, reproduces the body of Christ under the present species of bread, for as this is a sacramental action, it is requisite that there should be an external sign, in which the rationale of a Sacrament consists.

25. The Council of Trent has declared (Session 13, chapter 3), that the body of Christ alone is under the appearance of bread, and the blood alone under the appearance of wine; that by natural and proximate concomitance the soul of our Saviour is under both species, with his body and his blood; by supernatural and remote concomitance the Divinity of the Word is present, by the hypostatic union of the Word with the body and soul of Christ; and that the Father and the Holy Ghost are present, by the identity of the essence of the Father and the Holy Ghost with the Word. You might wish to examine the words of the Council.

26. Transubstantiation is proved by the very words of Christ himself: "This is my body." The word 'this', according to the Lutherans themselves, proves that Christ's body was really present. If the body of Christ was there, therefore the substance of the bread was not there; for if the bread was there, and if by the word 'this' our Lord meant the bread, the proposition would be false, taking it in this sense, 'This is my body', that is, 'this bread is my body', for it is not true that the bread was the body of Christ. But perhaps they will then say, before our Lord expressed the word 'body', what did the word 'this' refer to? We answer, as we have done already, that it does not refer either to the bread

or to the body, but has its own natural meaning, which is this: This which is contained under the appearance of bread is not bread, but is my body.

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem explains it in his Catechetical Discourses. The doctrine is upheld by Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Ambrose, and Saint John of Damascus in his treatise On the Orthodox Faith. Tertullian, Saint John Chrysostom, and Saint Hilary use the same language.

27. Transubstantiation is also proved by the authority of Councils, and especially, first, by the Roman Council, under Gregory VII, in which Berengarius made his profession of Faith, and retracted his errors.

Secondly: By the Fourth Council of Lateran in 1215 (chapter 1).

Thirdly: By the Council of Trent (Session 13, canon 2), which condemns all who deny this doctrine.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST TRANSUBSTANTIATION ANSWERED.

28. The Lutherans say, first, that the body of Christ is locally in the bread as in a vessel, and, as we say, showing a bottle in which wine is contained, "This is the wine," so, say they, Christ, showing the bread, said: "This is my body"; and hence, both the body of Christ and the bread are, at the same time, present in the Eucharist.

We answer, that, according to the common mode of speech, a bottle is a fit and proper thing to show that wine is there, because wine is usually kept in bottles, but it is not the case with bread, which is not a fit and proper thing to designate or point out a human body, for it is only by a miracle that a human body could be contained in bread.

29. Just to confound one heresy by another, we will quote the argument of the Zwinglians against the Impanation or Consubstantiation of the bread and the body of Christ, invented by the Lutherans. If, say they, the words "This is my body" are to be taken in a literal sense, as Luther says they are, then the Transubstantiation of the Catholics is true. And this is certainly the case. Christ did not say, this bread is my body, or here is my body, but this thing is my body. Hence, say they, when Luther rejects the figurative meaning, that it is only the signification of the body of Christ, as they hold, and wishes to explain the words "this is my body" after his own fashion, that is, this bread is really my body, and not the frame of my body, this doctrine falls to the ground of itself, for if our Saviour intended to teach us that the bread was his body, and that the bread was there still, it would be a contradiction in itself.

The true sense of the words "This is my body," however, is that the word 'this' is to be thus understood: this, which I hold in my hands is my body. Hence, the Zwinglians concluded that the conversion of the substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ should be taken either totally figuratively or totally in substance, and this was Beza's opinion in the Conference of Monbeliard, held with the Lutherans.

Here, then, is, according to the true dogma, the conclusion we should come to in opposition to Luther. When our Lord says, "This is my body," he intended that of that bread should be formed either the substance, or the figure of his body; if the substance of the bread, therefore, be not the mere simple figure of Christ's body, as Luther says, then it must become the whole substance of the body of Jesus Christ.

30. The Lutherans object, secondly, that in the Scripture the Eucharist is called bread, even after the consecration: "One body . . . who all partake of one bread" (1 Corinth 10:17); "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the Chalice of the Lord unworthily" etc. (1 Corinth 11:27); the bread, therefore, remains.

Such, however, is not the case; it is called bread, not because it retains the substance of bread, but because the body of Christ is made from the bread. In the Scriptures we find that those things which are miraculously changed into other things are still called by the name of the thing from which they were changed, as the water which was changed by Christ into wine, at the marriage of Cana in Galilee was still called water, by Saint John, even after the change: "When the Chief Steward had tasted the water made wine" (John, 2:9); and in Exodus also we read that the rod of Moses changed into a serpent was still called a rod: "Aaron's rod devoured their rods" (Exodus 7:12).

In like manner, then, the Eucharist is called bread after the consecration, because it was bread before, and still retains the appearance of bread. Besides, as the Eucharist is the food of the soul, it may be justly called bread, as the

Manna made by the angels is called bread, that is, spiritual bread: "Man ate the bread of angels" (Psalm 77:25 in the Vulgate, or Psalm 78:25 in the Hebrew).

The sectarians, however, say, the body of Christ cannot be broken, it is the bread alone that is broken, and still Saint Paul says: "And the bread which we break is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?" (1 Corinth 10:16).

We answer, that the breaking is understood to refer to the species of the bread which remain, but not to the body of the Lord, which, being present in a sacramental manner, cannot be either broken or injured.

31. They object, thirdly, that Christ says, in Saint John: "I am the bread of life" (John, 6:48); still he was not changed into bread.

The very text, however, answers the objection itself. Our Lord says: "I am the bread of life:" now the word "life" shows that the expression must be taken not in a natural but a metaphorical sense. The words "This is my body" must, however, be taken in quite another way; in order that this proposition should be true, it was necessary that the bread should be changed into the body of Christ, and this is Transubstantiation, which is an article of our Faith, and which consists in the conversion of the substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ, so that in the very instant in which the words of consecration are concluded, the bread has no longer the substance of bread, but under its species exists the body of the Lord. The conversion, then, has two terms, in one of which it ceases to be, and in the other commences to be, for otherwise, if the bread was first annihilated, and the body then produced, it would not be a true conversion or Transubstantiation.

It is of no consequence to say that the word Transubstantiation is new, and not found in the Scriptures, when the thing signified, that is, the Eucharist, really exists. The Church has always adopted new expressions, to explain more clearly the truths of the Faith when attacked by heretics, as she adopted the word Consubstantial to combat the heresy of Arius.
