

The Eucharist in the Fathers of the Church

Real Presence

Fathers

“I have no taste for corruptible food nor for the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David; and for drink I desire his blood, which is love in corruptible.” [Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans* 7.3] 110 AD

“Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to the mind of God. . . . They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father, in his goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes”

[Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 6.2–7.1] 110 AD

Take heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to [show forth] the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants: that so, whatsoever you do, you may do it according to [the will of] God. [Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians* 4:1] 110 AD

“We call this food Eucharist, and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration [i.e., has received baptism] and is thereby living as Christ enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nurtured, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus.” [Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 66] ~ 151 AD

He took that created thing, bread, and gave thanks, and said, “This is My body.” (Mt 26:26ff) And the cup likewise, which is part of that creation to which we belong, He confessed to be His blood, and taught the new oblation of the new covenant; which the Church receiving from the apostles, offers to God throughout all the world, to Him who gives us as the means of subsistence the first-fruits of His own gifts in the New Testament, [St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.17.5] ~ 189 AD

Then, again, how can they say that the flesh, which is nourished with the body of the Lord and with His blood, goes to corruption, and does not partake of life? Let them, therefore, either alter their opinion, or cease from offering the things just mentioned. But our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion. For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit. For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity.

[St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.18.5]

Moreover, how could the Lord, with any justice, if He belonged to another father, have acknowledged the bread to be His body, while He took it from that creation to which we belong, and **affirmed the mixed cup [wine and water] to be His blood?** And why did He acknowledge Himself to be the Son of man, if He had not gone through that birth which belongs to a human being?
[St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.33.2]

“**He has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be his own blood**, from which he causes our blood to flow; **and the bread, a part of creation, he has established as his own body**, from which he gives increase unto our bodies. When, therefore, **the mixed cup [wine and water] and the baked bread receives the Word of God and becomes the Eucharist, the body of Christ**, and from these the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they say that the flesh is not capable of receiving the gift of God, which is eternal life--flesh which is nourished by the body and blood of the Lord, and is in fact a member of him?”
[St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, V.2.2-3]

“‘Eat my flesh,’ [Jesus] says, ‘and drink my blood.’ (Jn 6:53-53) The Lord supplies us with these intimate nutrients, he delivers over his flesh and pours out his blood, and nothing is lacking for the growth of his children.”
[St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 1.6] ~ 191 AD

The blood of the Lord is twofold. For there is the blood of His flesh, by which we are redeemed from corruption; and the spiritual, that by which we are anointed. And to drink the blood of Jesus, is to become partaker of the Lord’s immortality; the Spirit being the energetic principle of the Word, as blood is of flesh.

Accordingly, as wine is blended with water, so is the Spirit with man. And the one, the mixture of wine and water, nourishes to faith; while the other, the Spirit, conducts to immortality. And the mixture of both—of the water and of the Word—is called Eucharist, renowned and glorious grace; and they who by faith partake of it are sanctified both in body and soul.
[St. Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor* 2.2]

I [Jesus] am He who feeds you, giving Myself as bread, of which he who has tasted experiences death no more, and supplying day by day the drink of immortality. I am teacher of supercelestial lessons. For you I contended with Death, and paid your death, which you owed for your former sins and your unbelief towards God.
[St. Clement of Alexandria, *Quis Div.*, 23]

“[T]here is not a soul that can at all procure salvation, except it believe whilst it is in the flesh, so true is it that the flesh is the very condition on which salvation hinges. And since the soul is, in consequence of its salvation, chosen to the service of God, it is the flesh which actually renders it capable of such service. The flesh, indeed, is washed [in baptism], in order that the soul may be cleansed . . . the flesh is shadowed with the imposition of hands [in confirmation], that the soul also may be illuminated by the Spirit; **the flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ, that the soul likewise may be filled with God**. They cannot then be separated in their recompense, when they are united in their service.”
[Tertullian, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, 8] ~ 210 AD

Similarly, too, touching the days of Stations, most think that they must not be present at the sacrificial prayers, on the ground that the Station (fast) must be dissolved by reception of the Lord’s Body. Does, then the Eucharist cancel a service devoted to God, or bind it more to God?

[Tertullian, *On Prayer, Of Stations*, 19] “Stations” = Fasting

He (the prodigal who comes back to Christ) receives again the pristine garment,—the condition, to wit, which Adam by transgression had lost. The ring also he is then wont to receive for the first time, wherewith, after being interrogated, he publicly seals the agreement of faith, and thus thenceforward feeds upon the fatness of the Lord’s body—the Eucharist, to wit.

[Tertullian, *Of Modesty*, 9]

When He so earnestly expressed His desire to eat the passover, He considered it His own feast; for it would have been unworthy of God to desire to partake of what was not His own. Then, having taken the bread and given it to His disciples, He made it His own body, by saying, “This is my body,” that is, the figure of my body. A figure, however, there could not have been, unless there were first a veritable body. An empty thing, or phantom, is incapable of a figure. If, however, (as Marcion might say,) He pretended the bread was His body, because He lacked the truth of bodily substance, it follows that He must have given bread for us. It would contribute very well to the support of Marcion’s theory of a phantom body, that bread should have been crucified! But why call His body bread, and not rather (some other edible thing, say) a melon, which Marcion must have had in lieu of a heart! He did not understand how ancient was this figure of the body of Christ, who said Himself by Jeremiah: I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter, and I knew not that they devised a device against me, saying, Let us cast the tree upon His bread, which means, of course, the cross upon His body. And thus, casting light, as He always did, upon the ancient prophecies, He declared plainly enough what He meant by the bread, when He called the bread His own body. He likewise, when mentioning the cup and making the new testament to be sealed “in His blood,” Luke 22:20 affirms the reality of His body. For no blood can belong to a body which is not a body of flesh. If any sort of body were presented to our view, which is not one of flesh, not being fleshly, it would not possess blood. Thus, from the evidence of the flesh, we get a proof of the body, and a proof of the flesh from the evidence of the blood. [Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, IV.40]

“‘And she [Wisdom] has furnished her table’ [Prov. 9:2] . . . refers to his [Christ’s] honored and undefiled body and blood, which day by day are administered and offered sacrificially at the spiritual divine table, as a memorial of that first and ever-memorable table of the spiritual divine supper [i.e., the Last Supper]” [Hippolytus, Fragment from *Commentary on Proverbs*] ~217 AD

And then the deacons immediately bring the oblation to the bishop; and he eucharists the bread into the antitype [symbol] of the Body of Christ; and the cup of mixed wine, for an antitype of the Blood, which was shed for all who believe in Him; and milk and honey mixed together for the fulfillment of the promise made to the fathers, which spoke of a land flowing with milk and honey, that is, the very flesh of Christ which He gave and by which they who believe are nourished like little children, since He makes sweet the bitter things of the heart by the gentleness of His word; and water also, for an offering as signifying the washing, so that the inner part of the man, which is of the soul, may receive the same as the body.

[St. Hippolytus, *Apostolic Constitutions*, 23] ~215 AD

You are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries, so you know how, when you received the Body of the Lord, you reverently exercise every care lest a particle of it fall, and lest anything of the consecrated gift perish. You account yourself guilty, and rightly do you so believe, if any of it is lost through negligence. But if you observe such caution in keeping His Body, and properly so, how is it

that you think neglecting the word of God a lesser crime than neglecting His Body?

[Origen, *Homilies on Exodus*, 13.3]

“Formerly there was baptism in an obscure way . . . now, however, in full view, there is regeneration in water and in the Holy Spirit. Formerly, in an obscure way, there was manna for food; now, however, in full view, there is the true food, the flesh of the Word of God, as he himself says: ‘My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink’ (John 6:56)”

[Origen, *Homilies on Numbers* 7.2] [248 AD]

As the prayer goes forward, we ask and say, “Give us this day our daily bread.” And this may be understood both spiritually and literally, because either way of understanding it is rich in divine usefulness to our salvation. For Christ is the bread of life; and this bread does not belong to all men, but it is ours. And according as we say, “Our Father,” because He is the Father of those who understand and believe; so also we call it “our bread,” because Christ is the bread of those who are in union with His body. And we ask that this bread should be given to us daily, that we who are in Christ, and daily receive the Eucharist for the food of salvation, may not, by the interposition of some heinous sin, by being prevented, as withheld and not communicating, from partaking of the heavenly bread, be separated from Christ’s body, as He Himself predicts, and warns, “I am the bread of life which came down from heaven. If any man eat of my bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.” (Jn 6:51) When, therefore, He says, that whoever shall eat of His bread shall live for ever; as it is manifest that those who partake of His body and receive the Eucharist by the right of communion are living, so, on the other hand, we must fear and pray lest any one who, being withheld from communion, is separate from Christ’s body should remain at a distance from salvation; as He Himself threatens, and says, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall have no life in you.” (Jn 6:53) And therefore we ask that our bread — that is, Christ — may be given to us daily, that we who abide and live in Christ may not depart from His sanctification and body.

[St. Cyprian of Carthage, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 18] aka *Treatise 4,18* 251 AD

“He [Paul] threatens, moreover, the stubborn and forward, and denounces them, saying, ‘Whosoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord’ (1 Cor. 11:27). All these warnings being scorned and contemned—[lapsed Christians will often take Communion] before their sin is expiated, before confession has been made of their crime, before their conscience has been purged by sacrifice and by the hand of the priest, before the offense of an angry and threatening Lord has been appeased, [and so] violence is done to his body and blood; and they sin now against their Lord more with their hand and mouth than when they denied their Lord”

[St. Cyprian of Carthage, *The Lapsed* 15–16] 251 AD

2. Know then that I have been admonished that, in offering the cup, the tradition of the Lord must be observed, and that nothing must be done by us but what the Lord first did on our behalf, as that the cup which is offered in remembrance of Him should be offered mingled with wine. For when Christ says, I am the true vine. (John 15:1) The blood of Christ is assuredly not water, but wine; neither can His blood by which we are redeemed and quickened appear to be in the cup, when in the cup there is no wine whereby the blood of Christ is shown forth, which is declared by the sacrament and testimony of all the Scriptures. [St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter* 62.2]

11. Since, then, neither the apostle himself nor an angel from heaven can preach or teach any otherwise than Christ has once taught and His apostles have announced, I wonder very much whence has originated this practice, that, contrary to evangelical and discipline, water is offered in some places in the Lord’s cup, which water by itself cannot express the blood of Christ. . . . and in the same way,

that by that common wine the mind is dissolved, and the soul relaxed, and all sadness is laid aside, so, when the blood of the Lord and the cup of salvation have been drunk, the memory of the old man is laid aside, and there arises an oblivion of the former worldly conversation, and the sorrowful and sad breast which before was oppressed by tormenting sins is eased by the joy of the divine mercy; because that only is able to rejoice him who drinks in the Church which, when it is drunk, retains the Lord's truth. [St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter* 62.11]

13. For because Christ bore us all, in that He also bore our sins, we see that in the water is understood the people, but in the wine is showed the blood of Christ. But when the water is mingled in the cup with wine, the people is made one with Christ, and the assembly of believers is associated and conjoined with Him on whom it believes; which association and conjunction of water and wine is so mingled in the Lord's cup, that that mixture cannot any more be separated. Whence, moreover, nothing can separate the Church— that is, the people established in the Church, faithfully and firmly persevering in that which they have believed— from Christ, in such a way as to prevent their undivided love from always abiding and adhering. Thus, therefore, in consecrating the cup of the Lord, water alone cannot be offered, even as wine alone cannot be offered. For if any one offer wine only, the blood of Christ is dissociated from us; but if the water be alone, the people are dissociated from Christ; but when both are mingled, and are joined with one another by a close union, there is completed a spiritual and heavenly sacrament. *Thus the cup of the Lord is not indeed water alone, nor wine alone, unless each be mingled with the other; just as, on the other hand, the body of the Lord cannot be flour alone or water alone, unless both should be united and joined together and compacted in the mass of one bread; in which very sacrament our people are shown to be made one, so that in like manner as many grains, collected, and ground, and mixed together into one mass, make one bread; so in Christ, who is the heavenly bread, we may know that there is one body, with which our number is joined and united.* [St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter* 62.13]

Cyprian to the presbyters, and deacons, and people abiding at Furni, greeting. I and my colleagues who were present with me were greatly disturbed, dearest brethren, as were also our fellow presbyters who sate with us, when we were made aware that Geminus Victor, our brother, when departing this life, had named Geminus Faustinus the presbyter executor to his will, although long since it was decreed, in a council of the bishops, that no one should appoint any of the clergy and the ministers of God executor or guardian by his will, since every one honoured by the divine priesthood, and ordained in the clerical service, *ought to serve only the altar and sacrifices*, and to have leisure for prayers and supplications. . . . Which plan and rule is now maintained in respect of the clergy, that they who are promoted by clerical ordination in the Church of the Lord may be called off in no respect from the divine administration, nor be tied down by worldly anxieties and matters; but in the honour of the brethren who contribute, receiving as it were tenths of the fruits, they may not withdraw from the altars and sacrifices, but may serve day and night in heavenly and spiritual things.

2. The bishops our predecessors religiously considering this, and wholesomely providing for it, decided that no brother departing should name a cleric for executor or guardian; and if anyone should do this, no offering should be made for him, nor any sacrifice be celebrated for his repose. *For he does not deserve to be named at the altar of God in the prayer of the priests, who has wished to call away the priests and ministers from the altar.* [St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter* 65.1-2]

[1] . . . Nevertheless to this your desire not so much our counsels as the divine precepts reply, in which it is long since bidden by the voice of Heaven and prescribed by the law of God, who and what sort of persons ought to *serve the altar and to celebrate the divine sacrifices*.

[5] . . . For which reason you must diligently observe and keep the practice delivered from divine tradition and apostolic observance, which is also maintained among us, and almost throughout all the provinces; that for the proper celebration of ordinations all the neighbouring bishops of the same province should assemble with that people for which a prelate is ordained. And the bishop should be

chosen in the presence of the people, who have most fully known the life of each one, and have looked into the doings of each one as respects his habitual conduct.

[St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter* 67.1 and 5]

18. It has come to the attention of this holy and great synod that in some places and cities deacons give communion [*sacrae communionis*] to presbyters, although neither canon nor custom allows this, namely that those who have no authority to offer should give the body of Christ [*Christi Corpus*; in Greek, *soma tou Christou*] to those who do offer. Moreover it has become known that some of the deacons now receive the eucharist even before the bishops. All these practices must be suppressed. [Council of Nicea, Canon 18]

“After having spoken thus [at the Last Supper], the Lord rose up from the place where he had made the Passover and had given his body as food and his blood as drink, and he went with his disciples to the place where he was to be arrested. But he ate of his own body and drank of his own blood, while he was pondering on the dead. With his own hands the Lord presented his own body to be eaten, and before he was crucified he gave his blood as drink” [Aphrahat the Persian Sage, *Treatises* 12.6] A.D. 340

“The bread and the wine of the Eucharist before the holy invocation of the adorable Trinity were simple bread and wine, but the invocation having been made, the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ.”

[St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 19.7] *On the Mysteries*, 1, 7 ~ 350 AD

“I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, how that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread, . . .” (1 Cor 11:23)

1. Even of itself the teaching of the Blessed Paul is sufficient to give you a full assurance concerning those Divine Mysteries, of which having been deemed worthy, you have become of *the same body* and blood with Christ. For you have just heard him say distinctly, *That our Lord Jesus Christ in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks He broke it, and gave to His disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is My Body: and having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, Take, drink, this is My Blood. Since then He Himself declared and said of the Bread, This is My Body, who shall dare to doubt any longer? And since He has Himself affirmed and said, This is My Blood, who shall ever hesitate, saying, that it is not His blood?*

2. He once in Cana of Galilee, turned the water into wine, akin to blood, and is it incredible that He should have turned wine into blood? . . .

3. Wherefore with full assurance let us partake as of the Body and Blood of Christ: for in the figure of Bread is given to you His Body, and in the figure of Wine His Blood; that you by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, may be made of the same body and the same blood with Him. For thus we come to bear Christ in us, because His Body and Blood are distributed through our members; thus it is that, according to the blessed Peter, *we become partakers of the divine nature* 2 Peter 1:4 .

. . .
6. Consider therefore the Bread and the Wine not as bare elements, for they are, according to the Lord’s declaration, the Body and Blood of Christ; for even though sense suggests this to you, yet let faith establish you. Judge not the matter from the taste, but from faith be fully assured without misgiving, that the Body and Blood of Christ have been vouchsafed to you.

. . .
9. Having learned these things, and been fully assured that the seeming bread is not bread, though sensible to taste, but the Body of Christ; and that the seeming wine is not wine, though the taste will have it so, but the Blood of Christ.

[St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 22.1-9] *On the Mysteries*, IV

7. Then having sanctified ourselves by these spiritual Hymns, we beseech the merciful God to send forth His Holy Spirit upon the gifts lying before Him; **that He may make the Bread the Body of Christ, and the Wine the Blood of Christ**; for whatsoever the Holy Ghost has touched, is surely sanctified and changed.

[St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 23.7] *On the Mysteries*, V

13. Now I ask those who bring forward a unity of will between Father and Son, whether Christ is in us today through verity of nature or through agreement of will. For if in truth the Word has been made flesh and we in very truth receive the Word made flesh as food from the Lord, are we not bound to believe that He abides in us naturally, Who, born as a man, has assumed the nature of our flesh now inseparable from Himself, and has conjoined the nature of His own flesh to the nature of the eternal Godhead in the sacrament by which His flesh is communicated to us? For so are we all one, because the Father is in Christ and Christ in us. Whosoever then shall deny that the Father is in Christ naturally must first deny that either he is himself in Christ naturally, or Christ in him, because the Father in Christ and Christ in us make us one in Them. Hence, if indeed Christ has taken to Himself the flesh of our body, and that Man Who was born from Mary was indeed Christ, and we indeed receive in a mystery the flesh of His body— (and for this cause we shall be one, because the Father is in Him and He in us)—how can a unity of will be maintained, seeing that the special property of nature received through the sacrament is the sacrament of a perfect unity?

14. The words in which we speak of the things of God must be used in no mere human and worldly sense, nor must the perverseness of an alien and impious interpretation be extorted from the soundness of heavenly words by any violent and headstrong preaching. Let us read what is written, let us understand what we read, and then fulfil the demands of a perfect faith. **When we speak of the reality of Christ's nature being in us, we would be speaking foolishly and impiously—had we not learned it from Him. For He Himself says: "My Flesh is truly Food, and My Blood is truly Drink. He that eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood will remain in Me and I in him." As to the reality of His Flesh and Blood, there is no room left for doubt, because now, both by the declaration of the Lord Himself and by our own faith, it is truly Flesh and it is truly Blood.** And these Elements bring it about, when taken and consumed, that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. Is this not true? Let those who deny that Jesus Christ is true God be free to find these things untrue. But He Himself is in us through the flesh and we are in Him, while that which we are in Him is in God.

15. Now how it is that we are in Him through the sacrament of the flesh and blood bestowed upon us, He Himself testifies, saying, *And the world will no longer see Me, but you shall see Me; because I live you shall live also; because I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* If He wished to indicate a mere unity of will, why did He set forth a kind of gradation and sequence in the completion of the unity, unless it were that, since He was in the Father through the nature of Deity, and we on the contrary in Him through His birth in the body, He would have us believe that He is in us through the mystery of the sacraments? And thus there might be taught a perfect unity through a Mediator, while, we abiding in Him, He abode in the Father, and as abiding in the Father abode also in us; and so we might arrive at unity with the Father, since in Him Who dwells naturally in the Father by birth, we also dwell naturally, while He Himself abides naturally in us also.

16. Again, how natural this unity is in us He has Himself testified on this wise— *He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.* (Jn 6:56) For no man shall dwell in Him, save him in whom He dwells Himself, for the only flesh which He has taken to Himself is the flesh of those who have taken His. Now He had already taught before the sacrament of this perfect unity, saying, ***As the living Father sent Me, and I live through the Father, so he that eats My flesh shall himself also live through Me.*** So then He lives through the Father, and as He lives through the Father in like manner we live through His flesh. For all comparison is chosen to shape our understanding, so that we may grasp the subject of which we treat by help of the analogy set before us. This is the cause of our life that we

have Christ dwelling within our carnal selves through the flesh, and we shall live through Him in the same manner as He lives through the Father. If, then, we live naturally through Him according to the flesh, that is, have partaken of the nature of His flesh, must He not naturally have the Father within Himself according to the Spirit since He Himself lives through the Father? And He lives through the Father because His birth has not implanted in Him an alien and different nature inasmuch as His very being is from Him yet is not divided from Him by any barrier of an unlikeness of nature, for within Himself He has the Father through the birth in the power of the nature.

[St. Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity*, 8.13-16] ~ 360 AD

Our Lord Jesus took in His hands what in the beginning was only bread; and He blessed it, and signed it, and made it holy in the name of the Father and in the name of the Spirit; and He broke it and in His gracious kindness He distributed it to all His disciples one by one. **He called the bread His living Body, and did Himself fill it with Himself and the Spirit.**

And extending His hand, He gave them the Bread which His right hand had made holy: "Take, all of you eat of this, which My word has made holy. Do not now regard as bread that which I have given you; but take, eat this Bread, and do not scatter the crumbs; **for what I have called My Body, that it is indeed.** One particle from its crumbs is able to sanctify thousands and thousands, and is sufficient to afford life to those who eat of it. **Take, eat, entertaining no doubt of faith, because this is My Body, and whoever eats it in belief eats in it Fire and Spirit.** But if any doubter eat of it, for him it will be only bread. And whoever eats in belief the Bread made holy in My name, if he be pure, he will be preserved in his purity; and if he be a sinner, he will be forgiven." **But if anyone despise it or reject it or treat it with ignominy, it may be taken as a certainty that he treats with ignominy the Son, who called it and actually made it to be His Body.**

After the disciples had eaten the new and holy Bread, and when they understood by faith that they had eaten of Christ's body, Christ went on to explain and to give them the whole sacrament. He took and mixed a cup of wine. **Then He blessed it, and signed it, and made it holy, declaring that it was His own Blood, which was about to be poured out, . . . Christ commanded them to drink, and He explained to them that the cup which they were drinking was His own Blood: "This is truly My Blood, which is shed for all you. Take all of you, drink of this, because it is a new covenant in My Blood. As you have seen me do, do you also in My memory. Whenever you are gathered together in my name in Churches everywhere, do what I have done, in memory of Me. Eat my Body, and drink my Blood, a covenant new and old."**

[St. Ephraim, *Sermons in Hebdomadam sanctam*, 4.4-6] 306-373 AD

Rightly, then, do we believe that now also the bread which is consecrated by the Word of God is changed into the Body of God the Word. For that Body was once, by implication, bread, but has been consecrated by the inhabitation of the Word that tabernacled in the flesh. Therefore, from the same cause as that by which the bread that was transformed (μεταποιούμενος) in that Body was changed to a Divine potency, a similar result takes place now. For as in that case, too, the grace of the Word used to make holy the Body, the substance of which came of the bread, and in a manner was itself bread, so also in this case the bread, as says the Apostle (1 Tim 4:5), "is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer"; not that it advances by the process of eating to the stage of passing into the body of the Word, but it is at once changed into the body by means of the Word, as the Word itself said, "This is My Body." Seeing, too, that all flesh is nourished by what is moist (for without this combination our earthly part would not continue to live), just as we support by food which is firm and solid the solid part of our body, in like manner we supplement the moist part from the kindred element; and this, when within us, by its faculty of being transmitted, is changed to blood, and especially if through the wine it receives the faculty of being transmuted into heat. Since, then, that God-containing flesh partook for its substance and support of this particular nourishment also, and since the God who was manifested infused Himself into perishable humanity for this purpose, viz. that by this communion with Deity mankind might at the same time be deified, for this end it is that, by dispensation of His grace,

He disseminates Himself in every believer through that flesh, whose substance comes from bread and wine, blending Himself with the bodies of believers, to secure that, by this union with the immortal, man, too, may be a sharer in incorruption. **He gives these gifts by virtue of the benediction through which He transelements (μεταστοιχειώσας) the natural quality of these visible things to that immortal thing.** [St. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism*, 37]

The bread again is at first common bread; but when the mystery sanctifies it, it is called and actually becomes the Body of Christ. So too the mystical oil, so too the wine; if they are things of little worth before the blessing, after their sanctification by the Spirit each of them has its own superior operation. [St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermon on the Day of Lights OR On the Baptism of Christ*] *In baptismo Christi*

43. The cleansed people, rich with these adornments, hastens to the altar of Christ, saying: I will go to the altar of God, to God Who makes glad my youth; for having laid aside the slough of ancient error, renewed with an eagle's youth, it hastens to approach that heavenly feast. It comes, and seeing the holy altar arranged, cries out: You have prepared a table in my sight. . . .

44. We must now pay attention, lest perchance any one seeing that what is visible (for things which are invisible cannot be seen nor comprehended by human eyes), should say, God rained down manna and rained down quails upon the Jews, Exodus 16:13 but for the Church beloved of Him the things which He has prepared are those of which it is said: That eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for them that love Him. 1 Corinthians 2:9 So, lest any one should say this, we will take great pains to prove that the sacraments of the Church are both more ancient than those of the synagogue, and more excellent than the manna. . . .

47. We have proved the sacraments of the Church to be the more ancient, now recognize that they are superior. In very truth it is a marvellous thing that God rained manna on the fathers, and fed them with daily food from heaven; so that it is said, So man ate angels' food. But yet all those who ate that food died in the wilderness, but that food which you receive, that living Bread which came down from heaven, furnishes the substance of eternal life; and whosoever shall eat of this Bread shall never die, and it is the Body of Christ.

48. **Now consider whether the bread of angels be more excellent or the Flesh of Christ, which is indeed the body of life.** That manna came from heaven, this is above the heavens; that was of heaven, this is of the Lord of the heavens; that was liable to corruption, if kept a second day, this is far from all corruption, for whosoever shall taste it holily shall not be able to feel corruption. For them water flowed from the rock, for you **Blood flowed from Christ**; water satisfied them for a time, the Blood satiates you for eternity. The Jew drinks and thirsts again, you after drinking will be beyond the power of thirsting; that was in a shadow, this is in truth.

[Ambrose of Milan, *The Mysteries* 8,43-48] 390 AD *De Mysteriis*

Perhaps you will say, "I see something else, how is it that you assert that I receive the Body of Christ?" And this is the point which remains for us to prove. And what evidence shall we make use of? Let us prove that this is not what nature made, but what the blessing consecrated; and the power of blessing is greater than that of nature, because by blessing nature itself is changed.

[Ambrose of Milan, *The Mysteries* 9, 50] 390 AD *De Mysteriis*

We observe, then, that grace has more power than nature, and yet so far we have only spoken of the grace of a prophet's blessing. But if the blessing of man had such power as to change nature [*naturam converteret*], what are we to say of that divine consecration where the very words of the Lord and Saviour operate? **For that sacrament which you receive is made what it is by the word of Christ.** But if the word of Elijah had such power as to bring down fire from heaven, shall not the word of Christ have power to change the nature of the elements? You read concerning the making of the whole world: "He spake and they were made, He commanded and they were created." (Ps 3:5) **Shall not the word of Christ, which was able to make out of nothing that which was not, be able to change [*mutare*]**

things which already are into what they were not? For it is not less to give a new nature to things than to change them. [Ambrose of Milan, *The Mysteries* 9, 52]

Wherefore, too, the Church, beholding so great grace, exhorts her sons and her friends to come together to the sacraments, saying: “Eat, my friends, and drink and be inebriated, my brother.” (Cant 5:1) What we eat and what we drink the Holy Spirit has elsewhere made plain by the prophet, saying, “Taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that hopeth in Him.” (Ps 34:9) Christ is in that sacrament, because it is the Body of Christ, it is therefore not bodily food but spiritual. [Ambrose of Milan, *The Mysteries* 9, 58]

You may perhaps say: “My bread is ordinary.” But that bread is bread before the words of the sacraments; where the consecration has entered in, the bread becomes the flesh of Christ. And let us add this: How can what is bread become the Body of Christ? By the consecration. The consecration takes place by certain words; but whose words? Those of the Lord Jesus. Like all the rest of the things said beforehand, they are said by the priest.

[Ambrose of Milan, *The Sacraments* 4, 4, 14] 390-1 AD *De sacramentis*

Before it be consecrated it is bread; but where the words of Christ come in, it is the body of Christ. Finally, hear him say: “Take all of you and eat this; for this is my body.” And before the words of Christ the chalice is full of wine and water; but where the words of Christ have been operative it is made the blood of Christ, which redeems the people. [Ambrose of Milan, *The Sacraments* 4, 5, 23]

“[Christ] took bread and the cup, each in similar fashion, and said: ‘This is My Body and this My Blood.’ Not a figure of his body nor a figure of his blood, . . . but in truth the Body and Blood of Christ, seeing that his body is from the earth, and the bread and wine are likewise from the earth.”

[Macarius the Magnesian, *Answer-Book* 3, 23] ~ 400 AD

We see that the Savior took in His hands, as it is in the Gospel, when He was reclining at the supper; and He took this, and giving thanks, He said: “This is really Me.” And He gave to His disciples and said: “This is really Me.” And we see that It is not equal nor similar, not to the incarnate image, not to the invisible divinity, not to the outline of His limbs. For It is round of shape, and devoid of feeling. As to Its power, He means to say even of Its grace, “This is really Me;” and none disbelieves His word. For anyone who does not believe the truth in what He says is deprived of grace and of Savior. [St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Man Well-Anchored*, 57]

“When [Christ] gave the bread he did not say, ‘This is the symbol of my body,’ but, ‘This is my body.’ In the same way, when he gave the cup of his blood he did not say, ‘This is the symbol of my blood,’ but, ‘This is my blood’; for he wanted us to look upon the [Eucharistic elements] after their reception of grace and the coming of the Holy Spirit not according to their nature, but receive them as they are, the body and blood of our Lord. We ought . . . not regard [the elements] merely as bread and cup, but as the body and blood of the Lord, into which they were transformed by the descent of the Holy Spirit”

[Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homilies* 5:1] 405 AD

“Christ was carried in his own hands when, referring to his own body, he said, ‘This is my body’ [Matt. 26:26]. For he carried that body in his hands”

[St. Augustine, *Ennarationes in Psalmos* 34, 1] 405 AD

I turn unto Christ, since I am herein seeking Himself: and I discover how the earth may be worshipped without impiety, how His footstool may be worshipped without impiety. For He took upon Him earth from earth; because flesh is from earth, and He received flesh from the flesh of Mary. And because He walked here in very flesh, and gave that very flesh to us to eat for our salvation; and no one eats that flesh, unless he has first worshipped: we have found out in what sense such a footstool of our Lord's may be worshipped, and not only that we sin not in worshipping it, but that we sin in not worshipping. . . . But He instructed them, and says unto them, "It is the Spirit that quickens, but the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (Jn 6:63) Understand spiritually what I have said; you are not to eat this body which you see; nor to drink that blood which they who will crucify Me shall pour forth. I have commended unto you a certain mystery; spiritually understood, it will quicken. Although it is needful that this be visibly celebrated, yet it must be spiritually understood.

[St. Augustine, *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, 99, 8]

I promised you [new Christians], who have now been baptized, a sermon in which I would explain the sacrament of the Lord's Table. . . . That Bread which you see on the altar, having been sanctified by the word of God is the Body of Christ. That chalice, or rather, what is in that chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the Blood of Christ. Through that bread and wine the Lord Christ willed to commend his body and blood, which he poured out for us unto the forgiveness of sins.

[St. Augustine, *Sermon* 227] ~ 411 AD

The Lord Jesus wanted those whose eyes were held lest they should recognize him, to recognize him in the breaking of the bread (Lk 24:16,30-35). The faithful know what I am saying. They know Christ in the breaking of the bread. For not all bread, but only that which receives the blessing of Christ, becomes Christ's body.

[St. Augustine, *Sermon* 234, 2]

What you see is the bread and the chalice; that is what your own eyes report to you. But what your faith obliges you to accept is that the bread is the body of Christ and the chalice [wine] the blood of Christ. This has been said very briefly, which may perhaps be sufficient for faith; yet faith does desire instruction.

[St. Augustine, *Sermon* 272]

The sacrament of this thing, namely, of the unity of the body and blood of Christ, is prepared on the Lord's table in some places daily, in some places at certain intervals of days, and from the Lord's table it is taken, by some to life, by some to destruction: but the thing itself, of which it is the sacrament, is for every man to life, for no man to destruction, whosoever shall have been a partaker thereof.

[St. Augustine, *Tractates on John* 26,15] commenting on Jn 6:41-59

18. In a word, He now explains how that which He speaks of comes to pass, and what it is to eat His body and to drink His blood. "He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him." This it is, therefore, for a man to eat that meat and to drink that drink, to dwell in Christ, and to have Christ dwelling in him. Consequently, he that dwells not in Christ, and in whom Christ dwells not, doubtless neither eats His flesh [spiritually] nor drinks His blood [although he may press the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ carnally and visibly with his teeth], but rather does he eat and drink the **sacrament** of so great a thing to his own judgment, because he, being unclean, has presumed to come to the sacraments of Christ, which no man takes worthily except he that is pure: of such it is said, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Mt 5:8)

[St. Augustine, *Tractates on John* 26,18] 416-7 AD commenting on Jn 6:41-59

Such also is doubtless the meaning of what we read in the Proverbs of Solomon (23:1): “If you sit down to supper at the table of a ruler, consider wisely what is set before you; and so put to your hand, knowing that you are bound to make similar preparations.” For what is the table of the ruler, but that from which we take the body and blood of Him who laid down His life for us? And what is it to sit thereat, but to approach in humility? And what is it to consider intelligently what is set before you, but worthily to reflect on the magnitude of the favor? And what is it, so to put to your hand, as knowing that you are bound to make similar preparations, but as I have already said, that, as Christ laid down His life for us, so we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren? For as the Apostle Peter also says, Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps. (1 Pt 2:21) This is to make similar preparations. This it was that the blessed martyrs did in their burning love; and if we celebrate their memories in no mere empty form, and, in the banquet whereat they themselves were filled to the full, approach the table of the Lord, we must, as they did, be also ourselves making similar preparations.

[St. Augustine, *Tractates on John*, 84,1] 416-7 AD commenting on Jn 15:13

Further, bread and wine are employed: for God knows man’s infirmity: for in general man turns away discontentedly from what is not well-worn by custom: and so with His usual indulgence He performs His supernatural works through familiar objects: and just as, in the case of baptism, since it is man’s custom to wash himself with water and anoint himself with oil, He connected the grace of the Spirit with the oil and the water and made it the water of regeneration, in like manner since it is man’s custom to eat and to drink water and wine, He connected His divinity with these and made them His body and blood in order that we may rise to what is supernatural through what is familiar and natural.

The body which is born of the holy Virgin is in truth body united with divinity, not that the body which was received up into the heavens descends, but that the bread itself and the wine are changed into God’s body and blood. But if you enquire how this happens, it is enough for you to learn that it was through the Holy Spirit, just as the Lord took on Himself flesh that subsisted in Him and was born of the holy Mother of God through the Spirit. And we know nothing further save that the Word of God is true and effective and is omnipotent, but the manner of this is inscrutable. But one can put it well thus, that just as in nature the bread by the eating and the wine and the water by the drinking are changed into the body and blood of the eater and drinker, and do not become a different body from the former one, so the bread of the table and the wine and water are supernaturally changed by the invocation and presence of the Holy Spirit into the body and blood of Christ, and are not two but one and the same.

Wherefore to those who partake worthily with faith, it is for the remission of sins and for life everlasting and for the safeguarding of soul and body; but to those who partake unworthily without faith, it is for chastisement and punishment, just as also the death of the Lord became to those who believe life and incorruption for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness, while to those who do not believe and to the murderers of the Lord it is for everlasting chastisement and punishment.

The bread and the wine are not merely figures of the body and blood of Christ (God forbid!) but the deified body of the Lord itself: for the Lord has said, “This is My body,” not, this is a figure of My body: and “My blood,” not, a figure of My blood. And on a previous occasion He had said to the Jews, “Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. For My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed.” And again, “He that eats Me, shall live (Jn 6:51-55).”

[St. John Damascene, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, IV,13] 743 AD may also be cited as *The Source of Knowledge*, III,IV,13.

2167. Above the Evangelist set down the celebration of the old Pasch; here he sets down the institution of the sacrament of the altar. And first, the sacrament is instituted; second, the disciples’ future scandal is foretold, at *then Jesus said to them: you will all be scandalized* (Matt 26:31). First, he does two

things: first, the paschal sacrament is instituted; . . . And concerning the first, he does two things: first, he sets down the institution of the sacrament under the appearance of bread; . . . [St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Matthew*, 26.3.2167] re 26:26, 1270-72 AD

2190. Above, he treated of the institution of the new sacrament with regard to the sacrament of the Lord's body; here he treats of the institution of the same sacrament with regard to the sacrament of the blood.

2191. Hence it says, *and taking the chalice*, which indicates that it was not instituted that the sacrament be done under one appearance, but under two. And what is the reason for this? One reason is that there are three things in this sacrament: one which is a sacrament only, another which is a reality only, and another which is both sacrament and reality. The appearances of bread and wine are a sacrament only, the spiritual effect is a reality only, and the body contained is both reality and sacrament. If therefore we consider that which is a sacrament only, in this way it is quite fitting that the body be signified under the appearance of bread, and the blood under the appearance of wine, for it is signified as indicating spiritual refreshment; but refreshment is found properly in food and drink. Likewise, if it be taken as both reality and sacrament, it pertains to this that the sacrament is commemorative of the Lord's passion. And it could not signify better than in this way, that it signify the blood as poured out and separated from the body. It is likewise with regard to that which is taken as reality only, for the blood pertains to the soul, not because the blood is the soul, but because life is preserved in the blood. Hence it signifies that, since this sacrament is for the health of the faithful, the bread is offered for the health of the body, and the blood for the health of the soul. *Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you* (Prov 9:5), for this refreshment is with bread and wine. Likewise another reason, because the whole Christ is contained in the body.

2192. What need then is there that the blood be by itself? Hence one should consider what was said above, that one thing is there directly, by the strength of the sacrament, and another by a natural concomitance. The body of Christ is contained under the appearance of bread by the strength of the sacrament, and the blood by concomitance. But it is the other way around with the blood contained under the appearance of wine, for the blood is there by the strength of the sacrament, and the body by concomitance. Hence when the blood of Christ was poured out on the ground, if the sacrament had been celebrated, the blood would only have been present separately. So, since some had not understood this, they said that this form is continued. Hence they say that when the body is consecrated, the blood is not there until the wine has been consecrated. But this is not so, because if the priest were to die before he consecrated the wine, both the body and the blood would be present in the host.

[St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Matthew*, 26.4.2190-2] re 26:27

972. . . . Accordingly, he says, *eternal life*, because one who eats this bread has within himself Christ, who is *the true God and eternal life*, as John says (1 John 5:20). *Now one has eternal life who eats and drinks, as it is said, not only in a sacramental way, but also in a spiritual way. One eats and drinks sacramentally or in a sacramental way, if he receives the sacrament; and one eats and drinks spiritually or in a spiritual way, if he attains to the reality of the sacrament. This reality of the sacrament is twofold: one is contained and signified, and this is the whole Christ, who is contained under the species of bread and wine. The other reality is signified but not contained, and this is the mystical body of Christ, which is in the predestined, the called, and the justified. Thus, in reference to Christ as contained and signified, one eats his flesh and drinks his blood in a spiritual way if he is united to him through faith and love, so that one is transformed into him and becomes his member: for this food is not changed into the one who eats it, but it turns the one who takes it into itself, as we see in Augustine, when he says: *I am the food of the robust. Grow and you will eat me. Yet you will not change me into yourself, but you will be transformed into me.* And so this is a food capable of making man divine and inebriating him with divinity. The same is true in reference to the mystical body of*

Christ, which is only signified, if one shares in the unity of the Church. Therefore, one who eats in these ways *has eternal life*. That this is true of the first way, in reference to Christ, is clear enough. In the same way, in reference to the mystical body of Christ, one will necessarily have eternal life if he perseveres: for the unity of the Church is brought about by the Holy Spirit: *one body, one Spirit . . . the pledge of our eternal inheritance* (Eph 4:4; 1:14). So this bread is very profitable, because it gives eternal life to the soul; but it is so also because it gives eternal life to the body.

[St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, 6.7.972] re 6:55, 1270-72 AD

Synod of Jerusalem (1672 AD)

We believe the All-holy Mystery of the Sacred Eucharist, which we have enumerated above, fourth in order, to be that which our Lord delivered in the night wherein He gave Himself up for the life of the world. For taking bread, and blessing, He gave to His Holy Disciples and Apostles, saying: “Take, eat ye; This is My Body.” {Matthew 26:26} And taking the chalice, and giving thanks, He said: “Drink ye all of It; This is My Blood, which for you is being poured out, for the remission of sins.”

{Matthew 26:28} In the celebration whereof we believe the Lord Jesus Christ to be present, not typically, nor figuratively, nor by superabundant grace, as in the other Mysteries, nor by a bare presence, as some of the Fathers have said concerning Baptism, or by impanation, so that the Divinity of the Word is united to the set forth bread of the Eucharist hypostatically, as the followers of Luther most ignorantly and wretchedly suppose, but truly and really, so that after the consecration of the bread and of the wine, the bread is transmuted, transubstantiated, converted and transformed into the true Body Itself of the Lord, Which was born in Bethlehem of the ever-Virgin {Mary ELC}, was baptised in the Jordan, suffered, was buried, rose again, was received up, sitteth at the right hand of the God and Father, and is to come again in the clouds of Heaven; and the wine is converted and transubstantiated into the true Blood Itself of the Lord, Which as He hung upon the Cross, was poured out for the life of the world. {John 6:51}

Further [we believe] that after the consecration of the bread and of the wine, there no longer remaineth the substance of the bread and of the wine, but the Body Itself and the Blood of the Lord, under the species and form of bread and wine; that is to say, under the accidents of the bread.

Further, that the all-pure Body Itself, and Blood of the Lord is imparted, and entereth into the mouths and stomachs of the communicants, whether pious or impious. Nevertheless, they convey to the pious and worthy remission of sins and life eternal; but to the impious and unworthy involve condemnation and eternal punishment.

Further, that the Body and Blood of the Lord are severed and divided by the hands and teeth, though in accident only, that is, in the accidents of the bread and of the wine, under which they are visible and tangible, we do acknowledge; but in themselves to remain entirely unsevered and undivided.

Wherefore the Catholic Church also saith: “Broken and distributed is He That is broken, yet not severed; Which is ever eaten, yet never consumed, but sanctifying those that partake,” that is worthily.

Further, that in every part, or the smallest division of the transmuted bread and wine there is not a part of the Body and Blood of the Lord — for to say so were blasphemous and wicked — but the entire whole Lord Christ substantially, that is, with His Soul and Divinity, or perfect God and perfect man. So that though there may be many celebrations in the world at one and the same hour, there are not many Christs, or Bodies of Christ, but it is one and the same Christ that is truly and really present; and His one Body and His Blood is in all the several Churches of the Faithful; and this not because the Body of the Lord that is in the Heavens descendeth upon the Altars; but because the bread of the Prothesis set forth in all the several Churches, being changed and transubstantiated, becometh, and is, after consecration, one and the same with That in the Heavens. For it is one Body of the Lord in many places, and not many; and therefore this Mystery is the greatest, and is spoken of as wonderful, and

comprehensible by faith only, and not by the sophistries of man's wisdom; whose vain and foolish curiosity in divine things our pious and God-delivered religion rejecteth.

Further, that the Body Itself of the Lord and the Blood That are in the Mystery of the Eucharist ought to be honoured in the highest manner, and adored with latria. For one is the adoration of the Holy Trinity, and of the Body and Blood of the Lord. Further, that it is a true and propitiatory Sacrifice offered for all Orthodox, living and dead; and for the benefit of all, as is set forth expressly in the prayers of the Mystery delivered to the Church by the Apostles, in accordance with the command they received of the Lord.

Further, that before Its use, immediately after the consecration, and after Its use, What is reserved in the Sacred Pixes for the communion of those that are about to depart [*i.e.* the dying] is the true Body of the Lord, and not in the least different therefrom; so that before Its use after the consecration, in Its use, and after Its use, It is in all respects the true Body of the Lord.

Further, we believe that by the word "transubstantiation" the manner is not explained, by which the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of the Lord, — for that is altogether incomprehensible and impossible, except by God Himself, and those who imagine to do so are involved in ignorance and impiety, — but that the bread and the wine are after the consecration, not typically, nor figuratively, nor by superabundant grace, nor by the communication or the presence of the Divinity alone of the Only-begotten, transmuted into the Body and Blood of the Lord; neither is any accident of the bread, or of the wine, by any conversion or alteration, changed into any accident of the Body and Blood of Christ, but truly, and really, and substantially, doth the bread become the true Body Itself of the Lord, and the wine the Blood Itself of the Lord, as is said above. Further, that this Mystery of the Sacred Eucharist can be performed by none other, except only by an Orthodox Priest, who hath received his priesthood from an Orthodox and Canonical Bishop, in accordance with the teaching of the Eastern Church. This is compendiously the doctrine, and true confession, and most ancient tradition of the Catholic Church concerning this Mystery; which must not be departed from in any way by such as would be Orthodox, and who reject the novelties and profane vanities of heretics; but necessarily the tradition of the institution must be kept whole and unimpaired. For those that transgress the Catholic Church of Christ rejecteth and anathematiseth.

[Synod of Jerusalem (1672 AD), *The Confession of Dositheus, Decree XVII*]

(Chapter VI of *Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem, 1672 AD*)

In response to a Calvinistic Creed drawn up by Cyril Lucar (or Lucaris), Patriarch of Constantinople in 1629.

The Longer Catechism of The Orthodox, Catholic, Eastern Church

338. What is the most essential act in this part of the Liturgy?

The utterance of the words which Jesus Christ spake in instituting the Sacrament: *Take, eat; this is my body. Drink ye all of it; for this is my Blood of the New Testament.* Matt. xxvi. 26, 27, 28. And after this the invocation of the Holy Ghost, and the blessing the gifts, that is, the bread and wine which have been offered.

339. Why is this so essential?

Because at the moment of this act the bread and wine are changed, or transubstantiated, into the very Body of Christ, and into the very Blood of Christ.

340. How are we to understand the word *transubstantiation*?

In the exposition of the faith by the Eastern Patriarchs, it is said that the word transubstantiation is not to be taken to define the manner in which the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of the Lord; for this none can understand but God; **but only thus much is signified, that the bread truly,**

really, and substantially becomes the very true Body of the Lord, and the wine the very Blood of the Lord. In like manner John Damascene, treating of the Holy and Immaculate Mysteries of the Lord, writes thus: *It is truly that Body, united with Godhead, which had its origin from the Holy Virgin; not as though that Body which ascended came down from heaven, but because the bread and wine themselves are changed into the Body and Blood of God. But if thou seekest after the manner how this is, let it suffice thee to be told that it is by the Holy Ghost; in like manner as, by the same Holy Ghost, the Lord formed flesh to himself, and in himself, from the Mother of God; nor know I ought more than this, that the Word of God is true, powerful, and almighty, but its manner of operation unsearchable.* (J. Damasc. Theol. lib. iv. cap. 13, § 7.)
 [The Longer Catechism of The Orthodox, Catholic, Eastern Church, 1830, QQ. 338-340]

Ecumenical Councils

“It has come to the knowledge of the holy and great synod that, in some districts and cities, the deacons administer the Eucharist to the presbyters [i.e., priests], whereas neither canon nor custom permits that they who have no right to offer [the Eucharistic sacrifice] should give the Body of Christ to them that do offer [it].” [Council of Nicaea I, Canon 18] 325 AD

We will necessarily add this also. Proclaiming the death according to the flesh [σάρχα] of the only begotten Son of God, that is Jesus Christ, and professing his return to life from the dead and his ascension into heaven, **we offer the unbloody worship [sacrificii servitutem] in the churches and so proceed to the mystical thanksgivings and are sanctified having partaken of the holy flesh [σάϋρϋος] and precious blood of Christ, the saviour of us all.** This we receive not as ordinary flesh, heaven forbid, nor as that of a man who has been made holy and joined to the Word by union of honour, or who had a divine indwelling, **but as truly the life-giving and real flesh of the Word.** For being life by nature as God, when he became one with his own flesh [σάρχα], he made it also to be life-giving, as also he said to us: “Amen I say to you, unless you eat the **flesh [σάρχα]** of the Son of man and drink his **blood.**” (Jn 6:53) For we must not think that it is the flesh of a man like us (for how can the flesh of man be life-giving by its own nature?), but as being made the true flesh of the one who for our sake became the son of man and was called so.

[Council of Ephesus (431 AD), Session 1, *Third Letter of Cyril to Nestorius*]

The approval of the letters of Cyril was promulgated by the Council of Chalcedon in the Sixth Session:

“[This Council] has accepted the synodical letters of the blessed Cyril, pastor of the church in Alexandria, to Nestorius and to the Orientals, as being well-suited to refuting Nestorius’s mad folly and to providing an interpretation for those who in their religious zeal might desire understanding of the saving creed.”

[Council of Chalcedon, Definition of Faith, 451 AD] Tanner, I:85.

The 6th Ecumenical also recognized and approved the letters of Cyril to Nestorius in the 18th Session.

“the same holy and universal synod accepts and welcomes. . . the synodal letters written by the blessed Cyril against the impious Nestorius and addressed to the bishops of the east.”

[Third Council of Constantinople, Exposition of Faith, 16 Sept 681 AD] Tanner, I:127.

There is indeed one universal church of the faithful, outside of which nobody at all is saved, in which Jesus Christ is both priest and sacrifice. His body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms [*speciebus*] of bread and wine, the bread and wine having been changed in substance [*transsubstantiatis*], by God’s power, into his body and blood, so that in order to achieve this mystery of unity we receive from God what he received from us.

[Fourth Lateran Council, (1215), Constitution 1: “On the Catholic Faith”, DS 430/802]

The same Roman Church carries out the sacrament of the Eucharist with unleavened bread; she holds and teaches that in this sacrament the bread is truly transubstantiated (*transsubstantiat*) into the body of our Lord Jesus Christ and the wine into His blood.

[*Profession of Faith of the Emperor Michael Paleologus* read at the 4th Session of the Council of Lyon, 1274, DS 860]

The form of this sacrament [the Eucharist] are the words of the Saviour with which he effected this sacrament. A priest speaking in the person of Christ effects this sacrament. For, in virtue of those words, the substance [*substantia*] of bread is changed into the body of Christ and the substance [*substantia*] of wine into his blood. In such wise, however, that the whole Christ is contained both under the form [*specie*] of bread and under the form [*specie*] of wine, under any part of the consecrated host as well as after division of the consecrated wine, there is the whole Christ.

[Council of Basil, Ferrara, Florence, (Session 8, 22 Nov 1439) “Bull of Union With the Armenians”, DS 698/1321]

Nor are the two assertions incompatible, that our Savior **sits always at the right hand of the Father in heaven according to the natural mode of existing**, and **yet is in many other places sacramentally present to us in His own substance by a manner of existence which**, though we can scarcely express in words, yet with our understanding illumined by faith, we can conceive and ought most firmly to believe is possible to God.

[Council of Trent, *Decree on the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist*, Chapter 1]

Norman P. Tanner, SJ, ed. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*. 2 vols. Washington, DC: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990.

Papal Statements

For other things we commemorate we embrace in mind and spirit, but we do not thereby obtain their real presence. But in this sacramental memorial of Christ, Jesus Christ is present to us in another form: in fact, in His own substance (*vero substantia*).

[Urban IV, Bull *Transiturus de hoc mundo*, 11 August 1264, DS 846. establishing the feast of Corpus Christi]

You should firmly hold what the church holds in common . . . , that is, that under the appearances (*speciebus*) of bread and wine, after the sacred words uttered by the mouth of the priest according to the rite of the Church, the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are truly, really, and essentially (*vere, realiter, et essentialiter*) present, even though in terms of place he is in heaven.

[Clement IV, Letter *Quanto sincerius* to Archbishop Maurinus of Narbonne, 28 October 1267, DS 849]

67. Likewise, the Armenians do not say that, after the aforesaid words of the Consecration of bread and wine are said, the transubstantiation (*transsubstantiatio*) of the bread and wine into the true Body and Blood of Christ, which was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, and rose again is accomplished.

[Benedict XII, *Cum dudum* to the Armenians, 1341, #67, DS 1018]

Sacrifice

“Assemble on the Lord’s day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until he has been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your sacrifice [Matt. 5:23–24]. For this is the offering of which the Lord has said, ‘Everywhere and always bring me a sacrifice that is undefiled, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is the wonder of nations’ [Mal. 1:11, 14]” [*Didache* 14] ~ 70 AD

“Our sin will not be small if we eject from the episcopate those who blamelessly and holily have offered its sacrifices. Blessed are those presbyters who have already finished their course, and who have obtained a fruitful and perfect release”
[Pope Clement I, *Letter to the Corinthians* 44,4–5] ~ 80 AD

“Make certain, therefore, that you all observe one common Eucharist; for there is but one Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and but one cup of union with his Blood, and one single altar of sacrifice—even as there is also but one bishop, with his clergy and my own fellow servitors, the deacons. This will ensure that all your doings are in full accord with the will of God”
[St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians* 4] ~ 110 AD

“God speaks by the mouth of Malachi, one of the twelve [minor prophets], as I said before, about the sacrifices at that time presented by you: ‘I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord, and I will not accept your sacrifices at your hands; for from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name has been glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering, for my name is great among the Gentiles . . . [Mal. 1:10–11]. He then speaks of those Gentiles, namely us [Christians] who in every place offer sacrifices to him, that is, the bread of the Eucharist and also the cup of the Eucharist.”
[Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 41] ~ 155 AD

“He took from among creation that which is bread, and gave thanks, saying, ‘This is my body.’ The cup likewise, which is from among the creation to which we belong, he confessed to be his blood. He taught the new sacrifice of the new covenant, of which Malachi, one of the twelve [minor] prophets, had signified beforehand: ‘You do not do my will, says the Lord Almighty, and I will not accept a sacrifice at your hands. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure sacrifice; for great is my name among the Gentiles, says the Lord Almighty’ [Mal. 1:10–11]. By these words he makes it plain that the former people will cease to make offerings to God; but that in every place sacrifice will be offered to him, and indeed, a pure one, for his name is glorified among the Gentiles”
[St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4,17,5] ~ 189 AD

1. Cyprian to Caecilius his brother, greeting. Although I know, dearest brother, that very many of the bishops who are set over the churches of the Lord by divine condescension, throughout the whole world, maintain the plan of evangelical truth, and of the tradition of the Lord, and do not by human and novel institution depart from that which Christ our Master both prescribed and did; yet since some, either by ignorance or simplicity in sanctifying the cup of the Lord, and in ministering to the people, do not do that which Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, the founder and teacher of this sacrifice, did and

taught, I have thought it as well a religious as a necessary thing to write to you this letter, that, if any one is still kept in this error, he may behold the light of truth, and return to the root and origin of the tradition of the Lord. Nor must you think, dearest brother, that I am writing my own thoughts or man's; or that I am boldly assuming this to myself of my own voluntary will, since I always hold my mediocrity with lowly and modest moderation. But when anything is prescribed by the inspiration and command of God, it is necessary that a faithful servant should obey the Lord, acquitted by all of assuming anything arrogantly to himself, seeing that he is constrained to fear offending the Lord unless he does what he is commanded.

2. Know then that I have been admonished that, in offering the cup, the tradition of the Lord must be observed, and that nothing must be done by us but what the Lord first did on our behalf, as that the cup which is offered in remembrance of Him should be offered mingled with wine.

[Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter* 63, 1-2] 253 AD Some sources call this *Letter* 62.

Also in the priest Melchizedek we see prefigured the sacrament of the sacrifice of the Lord, according to what divine Scripture testifies, and says, "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine." Now he was a priest of the most high God, and blessed Abraham. And that Melchizedek bore a type of Christ, the Holy Spirit declares in the Psalms, saying from the person of the Father to the Son: "Before the morning star I begat Thee; Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek;" which order is assuredly this coming from that sacrifice and thence descending; that Melchizedek was a priest of the most high God; that he offered wine and bread; that he blessed Abraham. For who is more a priest of the most high God than our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered a sacrifice to God the Father, and offered that very same thing which Melchizedek had offered, that is, bread and wine, to wit, His body and blood?

[Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter* 63, 4]

For if Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, is Himself the chief priest of God the Father, and has first offered Himself a sacrifice to the Father, and has commanded this to be done in commemoration of Himself, certainly that priest truly discharges the office of Christ, who imitates that which Christ did; and he then offers a true and full sacrifice in the Church to God the Father, when he proceeds to offer it according to what he sees Christ Himself to have offered.

[Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter* 63, 14]

"Accept therewith our hallowing too, as we say, 'Holy, holy, holy Lord Sabaoth, heaven and earth is full of your glory.' Heaven is full, and full is the earth, with your magnificent glory, Lord of virtues. Full also is this sacrifice, with your strength and your communion; for to you we offer this living sacrifice, this unbloody oblation"

[Serapion, *Prayer of the Eucharistic Sacrifice* 13,12-16] ~ 350 AD

8. Then, after the spiritual sacrifice, the bloodless service, is completed, over that sacrifice of propitiation we entreat God for the common peace of the Churches, for the welfare of the world ; for kings; for soldiers and allies; for the sick; for the afflicted; and, in a word, for all who stand in need of succour we all pray and offer this sacrifice.

9. Then we commemorate also those who have fallen asleep before us, first Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, that at their prayers and intercessions God would receive our petition. Then on behalf also of the Holy Fathers and Bishops who have fallen asleep before us, and in a word of all who in past years have fallen asleep among us, believing that it will be a very great benefit to the souls , for whom the supplication is put up, while that holy and most awful sacrifice is set forth.

10. And I wish to persuade you by an illustration. For I know that many say, what is a soul profited, which departs from this world either with sins, or without sins, if it be commemorated in the prayer?

For if a king were to banish certain who had given him offense, and then those who belong to them should weave a crown and offer it to him on behalf of those under punishment, would he not grant a remission of their penalties? In the same way we, when we offer to Him our supplications for those who have fallen asleep, though they be sinners, weave no crown, but offer up Christ sacrificed for our sins, propitiating our merciful God for them as well as for ourselves.

[St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 23, 8-10] *On the Mysteries*, V

“Cease not to pray and plead for me when you draw down the Word by your word, when in an unbloody cutting you cut the Body and Blood of the Lord, using your voice for a sword”

[St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Letter to Amphilocheus* 171] 383 AD

“We saw the prince of priests coming to us, we saw and heard him offering his blood for us. We follow, inasmuch as we are able, being priests, and we offer the sacrifice on behalf of the people. Even if we are of but little merit, still, in the sacrifice, we are honorable. Even if Christ is not now seen as the one who offers the sacrifice, nevertheless it is he himself that is offered in sacrifice here on Earth when the body of Christ is offered. Indeed, to offer himself he is made visible in us, he whose word makes holy the sacrifice that is offered”

[St. Ambrose of Milan, *Commentaries on Twelve Psalms of David* 38,25] 389 AD

“Jesus therefore said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have not eternal life in yourselves. Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has life in himself.”

1. When we converse of spiritual things, let there be nothing secular in our souls, nothing earthy, let all such thoughts retire, and be banished, and let us be entirely given up to the hearing the divine oracles only. For if at the arrival of a king all confusion is driven away, much more when the Spirit speaks with us do we need great stillness, great awe. And worthy of awe is that which is said today. How it is so, hear. “Verily I say unto you, Except a man eat My flesh, and drink My blood, he has not eternal life in him.” *Since the Jews had before asserted that this was impossible, He shows not only that it is not impossible, but that it is absolutely necessary. Wherefore He adds, “He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood, has eternal life.”*

“And I will raise him up at the last day.” For since He had said, “He that eats of this bread shall not die for ever” (Jn 6:50). . . He brings forward the Resurrection to solve the question, and to show that (the man who eats) shall not die at the last. *He continually handles the subject of the Mysteries, showing the necessity of the action, and that it must by all means be done.*

[St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 47 on the Gospel of John*, 1] 391 AD re Jn 6:53-4

“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.”

That is, they are divine and spiritual, have nothing carnal about them, are not subject to the laws of physical consequence, but are free from any such necessity, are even set above the laws appointed for this world, and have also another and a different meaning. Now as in this passage He said “spirit,” instead of “spiritual,” so when He speaks of flesh, He meant not carnal things, but carnally hearing, and alluding at the same time to them, because they ever desired carnal things when they ought to have desired spiritual. For if a man receives them carnally, he profits nothing. What then, is not His flesh, flesh? Most certainly. How then says He, that the flesh profits nothing? He speaks not of His own flesh, (God forbid!) but of those who received His words in a carnal manner. *But what is understanding carnally? It is looking merely to what is before our eyes, without imagining anything beyond. This is understanding carnally. But we must not judge thus by sight, but must look into all mysteries with the eyes within. This is seeing spiritually. “He that eats not His flesh, and drinks not*

His blood, has no life in him.” How then does the flesh profit nothing, if without it we cannot live? Do you see that the words, the flesh profits nothing, are spoken not of His own flesh, but of carnal hearing?

[St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 47 on the Gospel of John*, 2] 391 AD re Jn 6:63

“It is not the power of man which makes what is put before us the Body and Blood of Christ, but the power of Christ himself who was crucified for us. The priest standing there in the place of Christ says these words but their power and grace come from God. ‘This is my Body,’ he says, and these words transform what lies before him.” [John Chrysostom, *Homiliae 2 Prodit. Judiae* 6] 386 AD

When you see the Lord immolated and lying upon the altar, and the priest bent over that sacrifice praying, and all the people empurpled by that precious blood, can you think that you are still among men and on earth? Or are you not lifted up to heaven?

[St. John Chrysostom, *Treatise Concerning the Christian Priesthood*, III, 4] 387 AD

“Reverence, therefore, reverence this table, of which we are all communicants! Christ, slain for us, the sacrificial victim who is placed thereon!” [St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 8,8] 391 AD

“‘The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not communion of the blood of Christ?’ Very trustworthy and awesomely does he [Paul] say it. For what he is saying is this: What is in the cup is that which flowed from his side, and we partake of it. He called it a cup of blessing because when we hold it in our hands that is how we praise him in song, wondering and astonished at his indescribable gift, blessing him because of his having poured out this very gift so that we might not remain in error; and not only for his having poured it out, but also for his sharing it with all of us. ‘If therefore you desire blood,’ he [the Lord] says, ‘do not redden the platform of idols with the slaughter of dumb beasts, but my altar of sacrifice with my blood.’ What is more awesome than this? What, pray tell, more tenderly loving?”

[St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on First Corinthians* 24,1(3)] 392 AD

“In ancient times, because men were very imperfect, God did not scorn to receive the blood which they were offering . . . to draw them away from those idols; and this very thing again was because of his indescribable, tender affection. But now he has transferred the priestly action to what is most awesome and magnificent. He has changed the sacrifice itself, and instead of the butchering of dumb beasts, he commands the offering up of himself” (Ibid., 24,2).

“What then? Do we not offer daily? Yes, we offer, but making remembrance of his death; and this remembrance is one and not many. How is it one and not many? Because this sacrifice is offered once, like that in the Holy of Holies. This sacrifice is a type of that, and this remembrance a type of that. We offer always the same, not one sheep now and another tomorrow, but the same thing always. Thus there is one sacrifice. By this reasoning, since the sacrifice is offered everywhere, are there, then, a multiplicity of Christs? By no means! Christ is one everywhere. He is complete here, complete there, one body. And just as he is one body and not many though offered everywhere, so too is there one sacrifice”

[St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Hebrews* 17, 3(6)] 403 AD

Was not Christ once for all offered up in His own person as a sacrifice? And yet, is He. not likewise offered up in the sacrament as a sacrifice, not only in the special solemnities of Easter, but also daily

among our congregations; so that the man who, being questioned, answers that He is offered as a sacrifice in that ordinance, declares what is strictly true? For if sacraments had not some points of real resemblance to the things of which they are the sacraments, they would not be sacraments at all. In most cases, moreover, they do in virtue of this likeness bear the names of the realities which they resemble. As, therefore, in a certain manner the sacrament of Christ's body is Christ's body, and the sacrament of Christ's blood is Christ's blood.

[St. Augustine, *Letter* 98, 9] To Boniface, 408 AD

Thus a true sacrifice is every work which is done that we may be united to God in holy fellowship, and which has a reference to that supreme good and end in which alone we can be truly blessed. And therefore even the mercy we show to men, if it is not shown for God's sake, is not a sacrifice. For, though made or offered by man, sacrifice is a divine thing, as those who called it sacrifice meant to indicate. . . . Since, therefore, true sacrifices are works of mercy to ourselves or others, done with a reference to God, and since works of mercy have no other object than the relief of distress or the conferring of happiness, and since there is no happiness apart from that good of which it is said, It is good for me to be very near to God, it follows that the whole redeemed city, that is to say, the congregation or community of the saints, is offered to God as our sacrifice through the great High Priest, who offered Himself to God in His passion for us, that we might be members of this glorious head, according to the form of a servant. For it was this form He offered, in this He was offered, because it is according to it He is Mediator, in this He is our Priest, in this the Sacrifice. Accordingly, when the apostle had exhorted us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service, and not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed in the renewing of our mind, that we might prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, that is to say, the true sacrifice of ourselves, he says, For I say, through the grace of God which is given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith. For, as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another, having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us. (Rom 12:3-6) *This is the sacrifice of Christians: we, being many, are one body in Christ. And this also is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar [sacramento altaris], known to the faithful, in which she teaches that she herself is offered in the offering she makes to God.* [St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 10.6]

For when he says in another book, which is called Ecclesiastes, 'There is no good for a man except that he should eat and drink' [Eccles. 2:24], what can he be more credibly understood to say [prophetically] than what belongs to the participation of this table which the Mediator of the New Testament himself, the priest after the order of Melchizedek, furnishes with his own body and blood? For that sacrifice has succeeded all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, which were slain as a shadow of what was to come. . . . Because, instead of all these sacrifices and oblations, his body is offered and is served up to the partakers of it. [St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 17.20]

But by the prayers of the Holy Church, and by the salvific sacrifice, and by the alms which are given for their spirits, there is no doubt that the dead are aided that the Lord might deal more mercifully with them than their sins would deserve. For the whole church observes this practice which was handed down by the fathers that it prays for those who have died in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, when they are commemorated in their own place in the Sacrifice itself; and the Sacrifice is offered also in memory of them, on their behalf. If, the works of mercy are celebrated for the sake of those who are being remembered, who would hesitate to recommend them, on whose behalf prayers to God are not offered in vain? It is not at all to be doubted that such prayers are of profit to the dead; but for such of them as lived before their death in a way that makes it possible for these things to be useful to them after death." [St. Augustine, *Sermon* 172, 2]

Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Why does He not say, You are clean through the baptism wherewith you have been washed, but through the word which I have spoken unto you, save only that in the water also it is the word that cleanses? Take away the word, and the water is neither more nor less than water. The word is added to the element, and there results the sacrament, as if itself also a kind of visible word.

[St. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 80, 3]

For material symbols are nothing else than visible speech, which, though sacred, is changeable and transitory. For while God is eternal, the water of baptism, and all that is material in the sacrament, is transitory: the very word “God,” which must be pronounced in the consecration, is a sound which passes in a moment. The actions and sounds pass away, but their efficacy remains the same, and the spiritual gift thus communicated is eternal.

[St. Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, 19, 16]

See Third Letter of Cyril at the Council of Ephesus above.

“Hold most firmly and never doubt in the least that the only-begotten God the Word himself became flesh [and] offered himself in an odor of sweetness as a sacrifice and victim to God on our behalf; to whom . . . in the time of the Old Testament animals were sacrificed by the patriarchs and prophets and priests; and to whom now, I mean in the time of the New Testament . . . the holy Catholic Church does not cease in faith and love to offer throughout all the lands of the world a sacrifice of bread and wine. In those former sacrifices what would be given us in the future was signified figuratively, but in this sacrifice which has now been given us is shown plainly. In those former sacrifices it was fore-announced that the Son of God would be killed for the impious, but in the present sacrifice it is announced that he has been killed for the impious”

[St. Fulgentius of Ruspe, *The Rule of Faith* 62] 524 AD

There can be no more effective way to pray for this spiritual growth than for the Church, itself Christ's body, to make the offering of His body and blood in the sacramental form of bread and wine.

(St. Fulgentius of Ruspe, *a book addressed to Monimus*, 2, 11)

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Secondary Sources

If such was the Church's understanding of baptism, [the eucharist was regarded as the distinctively Christian sacrifice from the closing decade of the first century, if not earlier](#). Malachi's prediction (1:10-11) that the Lord would reject the Jewish sacrifices and instead would have 'a pure offering' made to Him by the Gentiles in every place was early seized upon by Christians as a prophecy of the eucharist. The *Didache* indeed actually applies the term *thusia*, or sacrifice, to the eucharist, and the idea is presupposed by Clement in the parallel he discovers between the Church's ministers and the Old Testament priests and levites, . . . Ignatius's references to 'one altar, just as there is one bishop' (*Phil.*, 4), reveals that he too thought in sacrificial terms. Justin speaks of 'all the sacrifices in this name which Jesus appointed to be performed, viz. in the eucharist of the bread and the cup, and which are celebrated in every place by Christians.' (*Dial.* 117, 1) Not only here but elsewhere too, he identifies 'the bread of the eucharist, and the cup likewise of the eucharist,' (*Dial.* 41, 3) with the sacrifice foretold by Malachi. For Irenaeus the eucharist is 'the new oblation of the new covenant' (*Haer.*

4,17,5), which the Church has received from the apostles and offers to God throughout the whole world.

It was natural for early Christians to think of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. The fulfillment of prophecy demanded a solemn Christian offering, and the rite itself was wrapped up in the sacrificial atmosphere with which Our Lord invested the Last Supper. The words of institution, 'Do this' (*touto poieite*), must have been charged with sacrificial overtones for second-century ears; Justin at any rate understood them to mean, 'Offer this.' . . . The bread and wine, moreover, are offered 'for a memorial (*eis anamnasin*) of the passion,' a phrase which in view of his identification of them with the Lord's body and blood implies much more than an act of purely spiritual recollection. [J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th , revised ed., 1977, p. 196]

"Ignatius roundly declares that . . . The bread **is** the flesh of Jesus, the cup His blood. Clearly he intends this **realism** to be taken strictly, for he makes it the basis of his argument against the Docetists' denial of the reality of Christ's body. . . . Irenaeus teaches that the bread and wine are **really** the Lord's body and blood. His witness is, indeed, all the more impressive because he produces it quite incidentally while refuting the Gnostic and Docetic rejection of the Lord's real humanity." [J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th , revised ed., 1977, pp. 197-98]

In the third century the early Christian identification of the eucharistic bread and wine with the Lord's body and blood continued unchanged, although a difference of approach can be detected in East and West. The outline, too, of a more considered theology of the eucharistic sacrifice begins to appear.

In the West the equation of the consecrated elements with the body and blood was quite straightforward, although the fact that the presence is sacramental was never forgotten. Hippolytus speaks of 'the body and the blood' (through which the Church is saved, and Tertullian regularly describes the bread as 'the Lord's body'. The converted pagan, he remarks, 'feeds on the richness of the Lord's body, that is, on the eucharist.' (*De Pud.* 9) The realism of his theology comes to light in the argument, (*De res. carn.* 8) based on the intimate relation of body and soul, that just as in baptism the body is washed with water so that the soul may be cleansed, so in the eucharist 'the flesh feeds on Christ's body and blood so that the soul may be filled with God.' Clearly his assumption is that the Saviour's body and blood are as real as the baptismal water. Cyprian's attitude is similar. Lapsed Christians who claim communion without doing penance, he declares, (*De laps.* 16: cf *Ep.* 15,1) 'do violence to His body and blood.

[J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th , revised ed., 1977, p. 211]

Occasionally these writers use language which has been held to imply that, for all its realist sound, their use of the terms 'body' and 'blood' may after all be merely symbolical. Tertullian, for example, refers (e.g., *Marc.* 3,19; 4,40) to the bread as 'a figure' (*figura*) of Christ's body, and once speaks (*Ibid.*, 1,14) of 'the bread by which He represents (*repraesentat*) His very body'. Yet we should be cautious about interpreting such expressions in a modern fashion. According to ancient modes of thought a mysterious relationship existed between the thing symbolized and its symbol, figure or type; the symbol in some sense was the thing symbolized. Again, the verb *repraesentare*, in Tertullian's vocabulary (*Ibid.*, 4,22; *de monog.* 10), retained its original significance of 'to make present.' **All that his language really suggests is that, while accepting the equation of the elements with the body and blood, he remains conscious of the sacramental distinction between them.** In fact, he is trying, with the aid of the concept of *figura*, to rationalize to himself the apparent contradiction between (a) the dogma that the elements are now Christ's body and blood, and (b) the empirical fact that for sensation they remain bread and wine. Similarly, when Cyprian states (*Ep.* 62,13; cf. 63,2) that 'in the wine Christ's blood is shown' (*in vino vero ostendi sanguinem Christi*), we should recall that in the context he is arguing against heretics who willfully use water instead of wine at the eucharist. In choosing **{213}** the term 'is shown', he is not hinting that the wine merely symbolizes the sacred blood. His point is

simply that wine is an essential ingredient of the eucharist, since numerous Old Testament texts point to it as a type of the precious blood. It is significant that only a few lines above (Ibid., 63,11) he had spoken of ‘drinking the Lord’s blood.’

[J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th , revised ed., 1977, pp. 212-13]

Eucharistic teaching [at the beginning of the period from Nicea to Chalcedon], it should be understood at the outset, was in general unquestioningly realist, i.e., the consecrated bread and wine were taken to be, and were treated and designated as, the Saviour’s body and blood. Among theologians, however, this identity was represented in our period in at least two different ways In the first place, the figurative or symbolic view, which stressed the distinction between the visible elements and the reality they represented, still claimed a measure of support. . . . Secondly, however, a new and increasingly potent tendency becomes observable to explain the identity as being the result of an actual change or conversion in the bread and wine. . . . It must not be supposed, of course, that this ‘symbolical’ language implied that the bread and wine were regarded as mere pointers to, or tokens of, absent realities. Rather they were accepted as signs of realities which were somehow actually present though apprehended by faith alone.

[J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th , revised ed., 1977, pp. 440-442]

The same [that like baptism the church had a fully-developed and explicit doctrine] cannot be said in any sense about the doctrine of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, which did not become the subject of controversy until the ninth century. The definitive and precise formulation of the crucial doctrinal issues concerning the Eucharist had to await that controversy and others that followed even later. This does not mean at all, however, that the church did not yet have a doctrine of the Eucharist; it does mean that the statements of its doctrine must {167} not be sought in polemical and dogmatic treatises devoted to sacramental theology. It means also that the effort to cross-examine the fathers of the second or third century about where they stood in the controversies of the ninth or sixteenth century is both silly and futile.

Perhaps the best illustration of such futility is the controversy that has been carried on, at least since the sixteenth century, over the eucharistic teaching of Irenaeus, especially over one passage. Since it unites the basic themes of eucharistic doctrine, this passage may serve the same function in this discussion of the Eucharist that was served by the passage from Tertullian in our summary of the doctrine of baptism. Arguing, just as Tertullian did, against a dualistic disparagement of creation, Irenaeus used the sacramental practice and teaching of the church to refute Gnostic claims; it was over bread which belonged to the creation that Christ had pronounced his blessing and said, “This is my body.” The church had received this tradition from the apostles, and all over the world it made this offering to God: “We offer to him the things that are his own, consistently announcing and confessing the fellowship and unity of flesh and spirit. For as the bread taken from the earth, when it has received the consecration from God, is no longer common bread but is the Eucharist, which consists of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but have the hope of the resurrection into eternal (life).” (*Haer.* 4,18,5) In the light of the controversy over these words it does seem an exaggeration to say that “nothing can be more express and clear than the language of the fathers upon this point.”

Yet it does seem “express and clear” that no orthodox father of the second or third century of whom we have record either declared the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist to be no more than symbolic (although Clement and Origen came close to doing so) or specified a process of substantial change by which the presence was effected (although Ignatius and Justin came close to doing so). Within the limits of those excluded extremes was the doctrine of the real presence. . . . {168} Yet the adoration of Christ in the Eucharist through the words and actions of the liturgy seems to have presupposed that this was a special presence, neither distinct from nor merely illustrative of his presence in the church. In some early Christian writers that presupposition was expressed in strikingly realistic language. Ignatius called the Eucharist “the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered

for our sins,” asserting the reality of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist against docetists, who regarded his flesh as a phantasm both in the incarnation and in the Eucharist; Ignatius combined the realism of his eucharistic doctrine with a symbolic implication when he equated the “bread of God” with “the flesh of Jesus Christ,” but went on to equate “his blood” with “incorruptible love.” Tertullian spoke of the eucharistic bread as a “figure” of the body of Christ, but he also taught that in the Eucharist the flesh of the communicant fed on the flesh and blood of Christ. **The theologians did not have adequate concepts within which to formulate a doctrine of the real presence that evidently was already believed by the church even though it was not yet taught by explicit instruction or confessed by creeds.**

[Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*. vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971, pp. 166-8]

The prayer of thanksgiving was the basis for the extensive employment of sacrificial language in reference to the eucharist, for it was viewed as a thank offering (Justin, *Dial.* 41; Irenaeus. *Haer.* 4.17.5; 4.18.4). Malachi 1:11f, with its reference to the Lord’s table and a pure offering, and the greatness of the Lord’s name among the nations, made it the favorite eucharistic text of the second-century church. The Lord’s death was itself viewed as a sacrifice and Cyprian combined the ideas of prayer as the pure sacrifice, the offering of bread and wine, and the association of the elements with the body and blood of Christ into the interpretation that ‘the Lord’s passion is the sacrifice that we offer’ (*Ep.* 63.17). The idea that the eucharist participated in and in some way perpetuated the sacrifice of Christ on the cross was to dominate later western thinking, giving the eucharist the character of a redemptive sacrifice (cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 23.8-10) as well as a thank offering.

Jesus had identified the bread and the fruit of the vine with his body and blood (Mark 14:22). and this identification continued in Christian thought (Justin, *I Apol* 66), especially in arguments against Docetists and Gnostics who denied the reality of Jesus’ human nature (Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 7; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.18.41; 5.21.). Although some authors preferred to speak of the elements as a figure (*figura*--Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.40) or symbol (*symbolon*--Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.2.191.; Origen, *Comm. in Mt.* 11.14), ancient thought gave a close correspondence between the symbol and that which was symbolized. Two strands of thought about the real presence were transmitted in the later tradition of the church. One line of interpretation maintained the symbolism of the visible signs and the reality of the supernatural and invisible gift of grace and divine life imparted through the symbols (dynamic symbolism--maintained in the Middle Ages especially through the influence of Augustine; cf. *In evang. Ioh.* 26.11 [13]. Another strand of thought emphasized a change by which the sign and the reality became virtually identical (Ambrose, *Sacram.* 4.4.14-5.23). The two strands intermingled in the same authors, who probably did not see them as alternatives but as different ways of expressing the spiritual significance of the elements.

By the sacrificial aspect of the eucharist, human beings were brought to God through the offering of the memorial of Christ’s sacrifice, and by the real presence, God was brought to human beings in the spiritual food of the communion.

[Everett Ferguson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., New York: Routledge, 1999, s.v., Eucharist” by Everett Ferguson]

Some Thoughts

Through our communion in his body and blood, Christ also grants us his Spirit. Saint Ephrem writes: “He called the bread his living body and he filled it with himself and his Spirit... He who eats it with faith, eats Fire and Spirit... Take and eat this, all of you, and eat with it the Holy Spirit. For it is truly

my body and whoever eats it will have eternal life.” (*Sermo IV in Hebdomadam Sanctam*: CSCO 413/Syr. 182, 55.)
[JPII, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 17]

Every celebration of the Eucharist is a ray of that never setting sun that is the Risen Jesus. Taking part in the Mass, particularly on Sunday, means entering the victory of the Risen One, being illuminated by his light, warmed by his compassion. Through the Eucharistic celebration the Holy Spirit makes us participants in the divine life that is able to transfigure our whole mortal being. In his passage from death to life, from time to eternity, the Lord Jesus also draws us with him to experience the Passover. In the Mass we celebrate Passover. We, during Mass, are with Jesus, who died and is Risen, and he draws us forth to eternal life. In the Mass we unite with him. Rather, Christ lives in us and we live in him: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ”, Saint Paul states, “who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). This is what Paul thought.
[Pope Francis, *General Audience*, Wednesday, 22 November 2017]