

The Eucharist: Sacrament of Christ's Presence in the World

172

by Nicholas Lash

I want to take one aspect of the theology of the eucharist and try to show how a shift in our understanding of this leads to a corresponding shift in our understanding of the society in which we live. The aspect I have chosen concerns the *presence* of Christ in the world.

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST

We must begin by being quite clear about one thing. If Christ is simply absent from human history since Easter Day, then there is no such thing as Christianity. There are people for whom Jesus of Nazareth is simply an historical memory. Such people may acknowledge his nobility of character, respect the force of his ethical teaching; but they are not Christians. It is clear from the New Testament that what constituted the primitive Church was the consciousness of this community that it only existed, *as* a community, in the presence of the Spirit of the risen Christ. To put the point another way: to tell people, on the basis of the New Testament, *how* they ought to live, does not constitute the preaching of the gospel, the good news, of Jesus Christ. To announce to a society that its attitudes and structures are negative and inhuman, and to tell it that things ought to be otherwise, is hardly good news. It is a depressing statement of what most people are dimly aware of anyway. The witness of Christianity is only the announcement of good news if its primary statement concerns the here-and-now availability of the resources with which to revolutionize human society in the love of God. The witness of Christianity, in other words, is only the preaching of the gospel if it announces the fact and the presence of the risen Christ.

Article 7 of the Constitution on the Liturgy is a magnificent statement of the forms of the presence of the risen Christ in the worshipping assembly:

'To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical actions. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister . . . but especially under the eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes, it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his Word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings,

for he promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18, 20)

(i) *in the gathered community*

That article mentions a number of ways in which Christ is present in his Church. I want to concentrate on three of them: his presence in the gathered community, his presence in the word, his presence in the food. I think that there can be little doubt but that, if one asked many Catholics: in what way is Christ really present in the Church? the immediate answer would be: in the Blessed Sacrament. But the immediacy and ease of that reply shows a distortion in our Christian thinking. Here I have to pick my words with care, because, in current theological debate, to suggest that our understanding of the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is not correctly *situated* in terms of our wider understanding of the Christian mystery, is to touch a sensitive nerve, and to invite misunderstanding. It will, I hope, become clear that I am *not* denying that the risen Christ is really, truly and substantially present under the forms of bread and wine. What I said was, that if the question: in what way is Christ really present in the Church? draws the immediate and easy reply: in the Blessed Sacrament, then we have shown up a distortion in our Christian thinking.

To substantiate this charge, let me remind you of a line of thought that is commonly found in popular presentations, written and oral, of Catholic doctrine. Here is a quotation from a CTS pamphlet last printed in 1962: 'Thus it is that a Catholic church is seldom empty. It is always a home with one permanent resident, and he is the Sovereign Lord of all. This should not be surprising; after all, God in the Old Testament was with his people in the cloud and the pillar of fire; is it not to be expected that he would be present in an even better way in the New Testament?' (What the Catholic Church is and What She Teaches, by E. R. Hull, p. 27). Let us follow the author's invitation and turn to the New Testament. Certainly the apostolic Church was convinced that the Lord of history, whose guiding and saving presence to his people was symbolized, in the exodus, in the cloud and pillar of fire, was present in an even better way to his new people. But the most casual reading of the New Testament makes it clear that what they had in mind was his presence, in the Spirit, in the hearts and minds of the Christian community.

The message of the New Testament is about *people*, about humanity renewed, reborn to freedom and the love of God, through water and the Holy Spirit. In other words, the immediate and primary answer to the question: in what way is Christ really present in the Church? must be: in *us*. This is not to deny that there may be other modes of Christ's presence in the world; it is to affirm that whatever other

modes of presence there may be are *for the sake of* his presence in his people.

To imply, as the kind of popular theology to which I referred does, that apart from that particular presence of Christ which is his presence in the consecrated bread and wine, he is *absent* from this city or this town is to deny, by implication, the very heart of the Christian message. The 'even better way' of Christ's presence in the New Testament refers primarily to his presence in the people who live, now not they, but Christ lives in them.

The first stage, then, is to acknowledge that the fundamental presence in the world of the risen Christ is his presence in people. But the second stage is to realize that this presence is not first achieved in individuals, who then happen to come together to acknowledge the fact. It may be true that some groups of human beings are structured in this way: free associations of individuals who decide to meet to further some common interest. But the Church as she exists in the concrete, the eucharistic assembly, is not that sort of get-together.

Sin separates; it separates men from each other and from God; it fractures human community, warping individuals into isolated pockets of mutual fear, ignorance and antagonism. Love, the redemptive love of God, unites; it unites men with each other and with God; it creates human community, opening individuals out into fully developed personal relationships of mutual trust, knowledge and love. The work of our redemption is the work of building human community. It is the work of *God*, and therefore, in Christ, renewed human community pre-exists the recognition and acceptance of it by the individual. We are *called* to renewed community by God, through Christ, in the Spirit. Our coming together as the community of believers is the expression of our *acceptance* of this call; our recognition of the situation in which, by faith, we find ourselves: a situation of community in the love of God.

Now you see why it is that the Constitution, when it refers to that fundamental presence of Christ in the world which is his presence in *people*, does not say that he is present in 393 individuals, who meet together to compare notes about it. It says, quoting Matthew: 'Where two or three *are gathered* together in my name (by my power), there am I in the midst of them'.

(ii) *in the word proclaimed.*

Men are brought to recognize, and to become involved in, the structure of salvation, as the construction of renewed human community, by *faith*. And faith is the response of the individual to the personal message of God's redeeming love. One person can only respond, in trust and love, to the message of another, if that other is making his appeal, his declaration of love, here and now. If I read in a novel that John said to Bertha: 'I love you', I may say 'good

for Bertha', but the declaration of love does not affect, does not implicate, *me*. If I read in the paper that some great and good man has said: 'All men are my brothers; I love all men', I may appreciate his solicitude, but I may still not feel myself personally involved in this declaration of love. The only way in which I can be unavoidably implicated in a declaration of love, forced either to accept or reject it, is if the other person, here and now, makes that declaration to *me*.

In other words faith, as a personal commitment to the risen Christ, is only possible if, in the proclamation of the gospel, Christ is really present.

Because the gospel the Church has to proclaim concerns the announcement of the fact and possibility of renewed human community in the love of God, 'the teaching of the Church' is, basically, the *Church herself*, as the sign and the beginning of this renewed community. The *verbal* proclamation of the message is merely the articulation of the community's self-consciousness, of the community's reality. The initial statement of this self-consciousness, which remains normative for all future generations, is the Scriptures. The Scriptures remain normative because they are the articulation of faith by that initial community which received the fullness of the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth. But this written word is not a dead word. Christ continues to be present in the message, *as* the message, in the proclamation of that message throughout history. Because the verbal message was born of the community, as that community's self-expression, because it is the continual call to community, therefore the fullest realization of Christ's real presence as word, as declaration of love, is the proclamation (which includes the preaching) of the Scriptures in the context of the eucharistic assembly. This is why the Constitution says: 'He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church'.

(iii) *in the food shared*

I hope you will agree that if most Catholics were really alive to the two forms of Christ's real presence in the eucharistic assembly that I have mentioned so far, his presence in the *community* and his presence in the *word*, then their understanding of that activity known as 'going to Mass' would already have been profoundly transformed and deepened. And it is this sort of transformation of people and their attitudes that the phrase 'liturgical reform' primarily refers to; not changes from Latin to English, or from six candles to two.

If a group of people are gathered for a specific purpose, the purpose of their gathering can be declared in several ways. The most obvious way would be for one of them to say what they were doing: 'Ladies and gentlemen, we are here this evening . . .'. But they could declare the purpose of their meeting by gestures, without using words. One person meets another who has just undergone some great sadness or

disappointment: a squeeze of the hand, a facial expression, could perhaps say more than words could; the gesture would be a sort of language. A Romeo meets his Juliet for a brief second (neither of them have time to stop); he gives her a box of whatever chocolates the television advertisers currently decide are suitable for the purpose. The gift of the chocolates says something: it is a form of language.

In the ordinary way, we use a combination of words and gestures with which to declare our meaning. This is the way in which the sacraments operate. In the case of the sacraments, however, we do not decide what words and gestures shall be the language of our Christian encounter. The language has already, in its essentials, been given to us by Christ. This is necessary, since our purpose in coming together is not simply to encounter each other, but to encounter each other *in Christ*. We can only be sure that our encounter is an encounter in Christ, an encounter with Christ, if the language we employ, the words and gestures we use, is the language we have been given by Christ for this purpose. To preserve the objective reality of our sacramental assemblies, to prevent them from being the ineffectual expression of our subjective attitudes and desires, it is necessary that we do the things he told us to do in memory of him.

When we gather, then, to celebrate the eucharist, the preordained language is that complex of words and gestures that goes to make up the last supper, the supper of covenant sacrifice, in the celebration of which we are, here and now, incorporated into the paschal mystery through our incorporation into the person of the risen Christ.

Notice that word 'incorporation'. To be embodied in Christ, to become more fully the body of Christ, is the very meaning of the Church. I made this point earlier when I said that the meaning of the Church was renewed human community in the Spirit of the risen Christ.

We are gathered *because* we are the body of Christ. We gather to *become* more fully the body of Christ. Therefore the meaning of the language we employ to declare what we are doing, must *be* the body of Christ. Language is a means of communication; the purpose of our gathering, which we declare and achieve in word and gesture, is communion in the body of Christ.

What are the *terms* of the language we employ in the eucharist? They are, apart from the words of the Canon of the Mass, bread broken and shared, the language of a fraternal meal, a common expression of human community. Therefore any unbeliever, who happens to drop in to Mass, should be able to realize that what we have here is a fraternity, expressing their brotherhood through sharing in a fraternal meal. If he further listens to the words of the canon, specifying this general gesture, he will realize that this

fraternal meal is closely linked to the death and resurrection of someone called the Son of God. But only the gift of faith enables a man to say, as he points to the assembled group of people: 'this is the body of Christ; what makes this group of people a community is their union in Christ'. Only the gift of faith enables a man to say, as he points to the consecrated bread and wine, the food for the meal: 'this is the body of Christ; what makes this group of people a community is their sharing in the body of Christ'.

But to say that the real presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine is a presence to *faith* is not to say that it is something 'merely subjective'; the real presence of Christ in people is a presence to faith, but this does not reduce its objective reality. I emphasised earlier that if the use of this language, of these words, gestures and objects, is to be, in objective fact, an encounter with the risen Christ, it can only be so because he has ordained that this language shall have this meaning, shall have this reality; it can only be so because, on the night before he suffered, he took bread into his holy and venerable hands, blessed, broke, and said: 'Take and eat, this is my body'.

Moreover, to say that the real presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine is a presence to faith is not to say that it is a 'merely spiritual' presence, whatever that would mean. People only become present to each other, communicate with each other, through bodily words and bodily gestures, through a bodily sharing.

That fundamental presence of Christ in the community which I began by describing would not be a reality, it would only be an idea, if we did not bodily *meet* to know each other, to love each other, to serve each other.

That presence of Christ in the proclaimed word which I went on to describe would not be a reality, it would only be an idea, if we did not *hear* the word, with our bodily ears, as it was proclaimed by someone's bodily voice.

Similarly, the presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine would not be a reality, it would only be an idea, if we did not share, as our bodily food, through bodily eating processes, a food that *is* Christ bodily present.

One way of describing, in traditional language, the bodiliness of a *thing*, is to speak of its substantial reality. If this thing which is the bread we use as part of that complex of words and gestures that go to make up the language of our communication in Christ, is not in fact Christ substantially present then, once again, our sharing would not be a sharing in the body of Christ.

Pope Paul, apparently convinced that some Catholics were coming to conceive of Christ's presence in the consecrated bread and wine as a 'merely spiritual' or 'merely symbolic' presence, devoted several paragraphs of *Mysterium Fidei* (39 to 45 in CTS ed.) to a defence of the *bodiliness* of this presence. He then went on to

say: 'Beneath these appearances Christ is present whole and entire, bodily present too, in his physical "reality", although not in the manner in which bodies are present in *place*' (par. 46). If we conceive of the presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine as a 'local' presence, we tear the heart out of sacramental theology. The teaching authority in the Church has always reacted sharply against the idea that Christ is locally present, but it can hardly be denied that many Catholics, not helped by the sort of distorted popular theology to which I referred earlier, do conceive of his presence in this way. The story of the child who, after making her first communion, refused an ice-cream because she 'did not want to make Jesus' head cold' is only a bizarre illustration of a widespread malaise.

This distortion has come about through a failure to appreciate that this particular presence of Christ can only be understood in the *context* in which it comes about and in which it is employed; and that context is a community, in which Christ is really present, who have assembled, in their consciousness of *being* the body of Christ, to express and to deepen their reality as human community in the love of God through *sharing* the body of Christ.

It is sometimes suggested that such a contextual approach to the theology of the real presence does not sufficiently safeguard our belief in the *permanence* of Christ's presence in the consecrated bread and wine. This objection seems to overlook something of central importance: namely that although we, the Church, the body of Christ, are *most fully* the Church when we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, we do not *cease* to be the body of Christ between Masses. We are, if you like, always 'standing-by' to be assembled in Christ. The permanence of the presence of Christ in the members of his body is what the doctrine of baptismal character is all about. Similarly, once bread has been consecrated for eucharistic communion, it does not *cease* to be the body of Christ between Masses. It is always 'standing-by' to be used in the Christian assembly (whether for communicating the sick and other absent members, or as a focus of praise and adoration by people deeply grateful for the last celebration of the eucharist and looking forward to the next one).

This insistence that the sacramental presence, sign-presence of Christ, in the form of bread and wine, can only be understood in the context of his presence in the believing community, the context of a people who need a language to express and to deepen their reality, is no new-fangled theory thought up by modern theologians:

'The cup of blessing,' says St Paul, 'which we bless, is it not a communion in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread . . . just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For

by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit' (1 Cor. 10, 16–17: 12, 12–13).

If the celebration of the eucharist is the fullest sacramental achievement of the Church, the body of Christ; if the form this celebration takes is the sharing of a sacred meal; then the food we share must, in objective fact, be a food adequate to the reality of the assembly. The assembly is the body of Christ, really and truly (and not 'merely symbolically') present in human community. The only food adequate to this assembly is the body of Christ, really, truly and substantially present in the form of food.

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

We have now briefly considered three modes of Christ's presence in the eucharist: his presence in the gathered community, his presence in the word proclaimed, and his presence in the food shared. I said at the beginning that I wanted to indicate how a shift in our understanding of the eucharist leads to a corresponding shift in our understanding of the society in which we live. Before doing so it is necessary to outline the relationship of the Church, the eucharistic community, to the world as a whole.

The first point to be made is that the death and resurrection of Christ is the redemptive event for the whole world: there is only one process of redemption. The death and resurrection of Christ is the founding of the kingdom of God. This kingdom, which consists in the achievement of human community in the knowledge and love of God, will only be a completed reality at the end of history: it is what the end of history means. But, between Easter and the second coming of Christ, the redemptive process is at work. What is the function, in this time between, of the Church on earth? It is, according to the teaching of the Vatican Council, to be the *sign* of the kingdom; the sign that God has founded his kingdom in a past event, the sign that God is continuing to bring about his kingdom through all the present vicissitudes of human history, the sign of promise that God will bring his kingdom to its successful future achievement. The Church is not an empty, dead sign: she is a living, effective sign, a sacrament. This is why the opening article of the Constitution on the Church says that the Church 'exists in Christ as the sacrament or instrumental sign of intimate union with God and of unity for the whole human race'.

I said earlier that, considering the sacraments as a form of language, we can distinguish between the terms used, and the meaning the terms have in this language, a meaning given to them by Christ. For my present purpose, I should like to rephrase that slightly, and say that we can distinguish, in the sacraments, the *sign*, and the *reality* for which the sign exists. The reality is renewed human community in the Spirit of the risen Christ. The sign is the

visible society of believers, who hear the word proclaimed and who assemble to celebrate the eucharist. The infallibility of the Church means that God will not allow the sign of the kingdom to disappear; there will always be a visible society of believers, the word will always be proclaimed, the eucharist will always be celebrated. But, unless the language is going to be meaningless, the infallibility of the Church also entails that to *some* extent the sign will be effective; that the society of the Church will show forth, in its quality of life, that renewed human community for which it exists.

The importance of stressing that Christ died and rose again for all men is that, although the *limits* of the Church at the level of sign can be drawn with some degree of accuracy (I say 'some' degree, because most of the major ecumenical problems arise in this area), it is far less easy to set limits to the existence, at any given moment, of the reality for which the sign exists, the reality of renewed human community (cf arts 14–16 of the Constitution on the Church). We must say, however, unless we are to commit ourselves to a totally untenable theory of two processes of redemption, that *wherever* this reality exists, there is the risen Christ effectively present in his Spirit and, therefore, there in some sense is the Church.

Our relationships with other people are by no means limited to our relationships with our fellow-Catholics, or even our fellow-Christians. Although our relationships can only be expressed and deepened eucharistically in a certain direction (in conjunction with our fellow-Catholics or, in certain special circumstances, with our other fellow-Christians), if we really believe in the universality of the redemption event in Christ, then *all* our relationships, every form of human community cries out for eucharistic expression. And the fact that it cannot attain this expression (until the king's Great Supper of the kingdom), should be a principal source of pain, challenge, and longing, for the Christian in the world.

If there is only one redemptive process, then the Church and the world are not totally distinct realities, existing in watertight compartments. The Church is an aspect of the world, and it is by no means always easy to delineate that aspect. This is only another way of saying that, if there is only one redemptive process, then the history of the Church and the history of the world are not totally distinct realities, existing in watertight compartments. The history of the Church is an aspect of the history of the world, because the *whole* history of the world is the history of salvation. God has 'distinguished this particular part of the one history from the rest of history and has made it the actual, official and explicit history of salvation' (Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 5, p. 106).

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD

In the light of such an interpretation of the relationship of Church to world, what are the implications, for our general situation, of the

threefold analysis of Christ's presence which I earlier discussed in relation to the celebration of the eucharist? If I restrict myself to very broad statements of principle, this is not because I am opposed to the drawing of detailed and concrete conclusions. It is partly because I do not feel myself competent to do more, and partly because there is a very real danger, in drawing concrete conclusions too swiftly from an insight into one aspect of the Christian mystery, that one will distort that mystery by overlooking other, and equally fundamental aspects. At a period when all of us in the Church are attempting the sort of breakthrough which Bernard Lonergan would describe as the 'shift to a higher viewpoint', there is a need for caution (and not all caution is identifiable with pusillanimity).

(i) *in all brotherhood*

In discussing the presence of Christ in the gathered community, I said that the work of our redemption, the work of building human community in the love of God, pre-exists the recognition and acceptance of it by the individual. We are called to renewed community by God, through Christ, in the Spirit. Now, although this fact of being-gathered, this fact that the call of God to brotherhood pre-exists our recognition and acceptance of it, is most fully verified, in sacramental terms, in the eucharistic assembly, this primacy of God's call cannot *only* be verified there. To claim that it were, would be to deny that God calls *all* men to the brotherhood of the kingdom. In other words, *wherever* the Christian recognizes human brotherhood, however 'secular' or 'non-religious' its form, he necessarily recognizes the presence of Christ in the Spirit. Correlatively, wherever the Christian recognizes the denial of human brotherhood, whether in individual attitudes and activities, or in social, political and economic structures, he recognizes the denial of Christ, the presence of the 'world' in the dark, condemnatory sense in which St John usually uses the term. It follows from this that wherever the Christian recognizes the presence of Christ in the Spirit, he recognizes the authoritative demand of the saving God that he demonstrate his solidarity in this brotherhood. But it also follows from this that wherever the Christian recognizes the denial of Christ in social, political or economic divisiveness, he recognizes the authoritative demand of the saving God that he protest, in the name of Christ, against this denial. And since his protest, if it is not to be sterile, cannot be restricted to withdrawal or merely verbal disapproval, it will usually be the case that only through his involvement in the forces that are building brotherhood will he be able to exercise his responsibility of protest against the forces of denial. And because the church on earth, the sacramental sign of the future kingdom, only to a very imperfect degree succeeds in actualizing the reality, it will often be the case that his simultaneous affirmation and denial will cut right across the borders of denominational

allegiance. The situation will occasionally be clear. If a Catholic finds himself a member of a local Catholic community which refuses to allow white and coloured people to worship together in the eucharistic assembly, then it is fairly clear that he has a responsibility to join forces with local organizations which are fighting against racial discrimination, however 'secular' their forms or origins.

But the situation, even locally (let alone internationally), will often be far less clear than this. The contemporary social, cultural and political transformation of the world is immensely complex. There can be no excuse for the Christian systematically opting out because 'it is all so difficult and the experts probably know best', but it does seem that the courage to see, judge and act needs to include the courage to listen, to be often undecided as to where love lies, and to go on listening. The Lord of the Flies lives in each of us, in every individual and in every pattern of relationships; carrying the Cross of Christ includes the very real pain of being unable to distinguish, in the dark, between wheat and cockle, before the daylight of the kingdom comes.

In view of its importance in current theological debate, I can hardly conclude this section without a glance at the question of violence. For centuries Christians seemed not to find it queer to praise God, pass the ammunition and turn the enemy's other cheek. It seems ironic that a mood of revulsion against this legacy should go hand-in-hand with a preparedness to employ violent means to bring about that rapid change of social structures which the building of brotherhood demands of us today. Certainly the Christian must be prepared to undergo violence for the sake of the kingdom. But is not the decision to *inflict* violence a decision against universal brotherhood, a declaration of unbelief in the victory of Christ, a human attempt to perform that act of liberation which only God's love can effect, a rationalising denial of the fundamental folly of the Cross? The Christian is committed to act against the denials of Christ's presence in human community, but he can only do so through an existential affirmation of Christ's presence in *all* members of the human race, even those in whom the likeness of Christ is so disfigured as to be hardly recognizable even to faith.

(ii) *in all truth*

In discussing the presence of Christ in the word proclaimed, I said that the fullest realisation of Christ's real presence as *word*, as declaration of love, is the proclamation of the scriptures in the eucharistic assembly. But Christ, the Word made flesh, is truth. Not 'something true', not some partial aspect of truth, but the human manifestation of the very truth, the total truth of God. Therefore, although the proclamation of the scriptures in the eucharist may be the *primary* verbal articulation of that truth which is Christ, it cannot be the *only* articulation. To claim that it were

would be to deny that God is the source of *all* truth. In other words, wherever the Christian recognizes truth, he necessarily recognizes the presence of Christ in the Spirit. Correlatively, wherever the Christian recognizes the denial of truth, he recognizes the denial of Christ. Therefore, as in the previous case, the Christian will recognize in the presence or absence of truth, the authoritative demand of the saving God to either affirmation or protest in the name of Christ.

The problem of the discernment of truth, and the problem of authority, are one and the same problem. Some of the difficulties we all currently experience in this field are due to false or inadequate statements of the question. But even when the problem of authority is stated with the greatest accuracy and clarity, it remains a problem. To deny that this is the case is either to have failed to see the point, or to have sold out on one's personal integrity. And if a man sells out, it matters little whether he does so in the direction of Eichmann or in the direction of the private hell of personal infallibility.

It is important to bear in mind that the search for the presence of Christ in all truth is far wider than an examination of merely *verbal* statements. I said earlier that 'the teaching of the Church' is, basically, the Church herself, as the sign of renewed community; and that the verbal proclamation of the message is only the articulation of the community's self-consciousness, of the community's reality. In other words, when I say that wherever the Christian recognizes truth, he necessarily recognizes the presence of Christ, I am not referring exclusively, or even primarily, to the recognition of certain *statements* as true, but rather to the recognition of *true living*, of human brotherhood. And so this section covers the same ground as the previous one, from a slightly different point of view.

Considerable damage has been done by people behaving as if 'orthodoxy' consisted exclusively in the affirmation of certain propositions as true, and 'unorthodoxy' in the denial of these propositions. If this were the case, then most Catholics would undoubtedly be orthodox, and most other people would undoubtedly be not. And yet, an honest examination of the current structures of the Church in the light of the New Testament, an honest examination of the relationships, attitudes and understanding of Catholics in the light of the New Testament, suggest that things are not quite so straightforward. This suspicion amounts to certainty when we notice that many people who 'say all the wrong things', so far as verbal orthodoxy is concerned, nevertheless manifest, in their effective concern for human brotherhood, an understanding of the human task which seems far closer to New Testament orthodoxy.

In brief, if the relationship between right *living* and right *speaking* is that the latter should be the expression of the former, then not only is it inadequate to identify the proclamation of Christ's truth with right statement, but also our search for the real presence of Christ in the word proclaimed in the world will be *primarily* a search for

signs of right living, and only secondarily a search for correct statements. In our fight for the preservation and the realization of the unchanging truth of Christ, we shall not think we have won the battle when we persuade other people, or ourselves, to talk in a certain way. I shall, of course, have been seriously misunderstood if I have given the impression that the correct articulation in words of the living reality of Christ's truth *does not matter*.

(iii) *in all sharing of things*

In discussing the presence of Christ in the food shared, I said that the only food adequate to that assembly which is the fullest sacramental expression of the Church, the body of Christ, is the body of Christ, really, truly and substantially present in the form of food.

But although the sacramental presence of Christ in the eucharistic bread and wine is the *fullest* presence of Christ in 'a thing shared', it cannot be the *only* such presence. To claim that it were, would be to claim that the only form of human brotherhood in which Christ is present is the eucharistic assembly. The reason for this is that human brotherhood is always achieved and expressed in the *sharing of things*. This sharing of things is not something peripheral and unimportant to human community: it is an integral part of the language of human community. To think otherwise is to have a very 'angelic', disembodied view of human nature.

We have already seen that Christ is present, in some way, in all human brotherhood. Therefore we must say that Christ is present, in some way, in all human sharing. Therefore we must say that Christ is present, in some way, in all the things we share. The kingdom of God will consist in a 'new heavens and a *new earth*'; the Lord of history is the Lord of the world; the Word made flesh is the creating Word, the ground of meaning for *all* creation, not only for human beings. Therefore, wherever the Christian recognizes that things are being used (and this is a general statement about economics) for sharing by people, he recognizes the presence of Christ. Correlatively, wherever the Christian recognizes that things are being used in such a way as formally to *exclude* somebody, anybody, from the sharing, he recognizes a denial of Christ. Perhaps the current attempts in the Church to work out a 'theology of poverty', a theology of the presence of Christ in the starving man, the oppressed man, the enslaved man, would do well to include a consideration of this sort. That cup of cold water is not without sacramental significance.

CONCLUSION

I have been concerned with the *presence* of Christ in the Eucharist. Therefore I used as my text article 7 of the Constitution on the Liturgy, with its affirmation of Christ's real presence in the people gathered to form the eucharistic assembly, in the word proclaimed in that assembly, in the food shared by that assembly. I have tried

to show that, if we take seriously the fact that the Church in the world, and especially the Eucharist, is the *sacrament* of the kingdom, the sacrament of renewed human community in the love of God, then our understanding of, and our participation in this assembly has profound implications for our recognition of the presence of Christ in all brotherhood, in all truth, in all sharing of things. The Constitution on the Liturgy is not indulging in empty rhetoric when it says, in article 10, that 'the liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed, and the source from which all her power flows'.

Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation

FRANCIS CLARK S.J.

With a foreword by CARDINAL HEENAN

The meaning of the Eucharist is still one of the thorny questions in the path of Christian reunion. Dr. Clark provides a detailed and scholarly discussion of its theology, together with a readable account of the present state of Roman Catholic thought on the subject. *55s. net*

Living the Mystery

N. W. PORTEOUS

A collection of articles from journals and Festschriften, mainly on Old Testament themes, showing how biblical studies illuminate contemporary existential and theological problems. *About 30s. net*

BASIL BLACKWELL