



EUKARISTIA

“Do this in memory of Me”

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Eucharist, Greek, gratitude, from eucharistos grateful, from eu + charizesthai

to show favor, from charis favor, grace, gratitude; akin to Greek chairein to rejoice.

Cover: The Last Supper, Leonardo da Vinci, c.1495-97
Refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan (Italy)

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“Do This in Memory of Me”

PART ONE

The first “Passover Supper” took place in Egypt as the Israelites were about to be dramatically released from enslavement. Very specific instructions were given to them by Yahweh for this hurried feast before their deliverance from the Pharaoh. After it was successfully brought about: “Moses said to the people, ‘Remember this day, on which you came out of Egypt, from the place of slave-labor, for by the strength of his hand Yahweh brought you out of it; no leavened bread may be eaten’”: etc.

“The Feast of Unleavened Bread” was communicated to Moses and Aaron: “You must keep it as a feast-day for all generations; this is a decree for all time.”

Although the center of the feast was the Paschal Lamb or Goat whose blood was to mark the doorposts and lintels, the bread, wine and bitter herbs as described in the books of Exodus and Leviticus were important to the paschal-miracle as well. The biblical narratives written much after the event are historical in form, and they became the foundation on which the structure of the feast was built.

“On the first day you must clean the leaven out of your houses, for anyone who eats leavened bread from the first to the seventh day must be outlawed from Israel.”

Leaven, of course, is yeast; the substance used to produce fermentation in dough or a liquid. The reason given as to why the bread of the memorial feast was to be “unleavened” was explained:

“And with the dough which they had brought from Egypt they baked unleavened cakes, because the dough had not risen, since they had been driven out of Egypt without time to linger or to prepare food for themselves.”

In the Second Commonwealth period, nothing is recorded about the first night of Passover. In Exodus 12, Yahweh let Moses and Aaron know precisely what they were to do before he brought the “tenth plague” on the Egyptians. It is clear from Ex:12,8 that unleavened bread was eaten with the feast.

That night, according to scripture, all the “first-born” in Egypt were “struck down,” this led the Pharaoh to say to Moses and Aaron:

“Up, leave my subjects, you and the Israelites! Go and worship Yahweh as you have asked! And take your flocks and herds as you have asked, and go! And bless me too! The Egyptians urged the people on and hurried them out of the country because they said, ‘Otherwise we shall all be dead.’ So the people carried off their dough still unleavened, their bowls wrapped in their cloaks, on their shoulders.”

Thus carrying the unleavened bread with them into the future of Israel.

It is well known that, in those days, leavening was accomplished by mixing some old dough with the new. The chemical process which had begun when the old dough started

to break down, caused the new dough to rise, and when baked, became a usual loaf, as we have said. It is believed that at the Pesach Seder, (according to scripture) unleavened bread was eaten with the meal but, certainly, every feast thereafter was celebrated with the Matzah which became known as the “bread of affliction.”

The Passover can not be disconnected from the blood of the sacrificed lamb, the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs. All three are inextricably linked to salvation and redemption; freedom for the “People of God.”

It would be difficult to overlook the prodigious symbolism in the order of this holiest of feasts. The unblemished young lamb or goat, a perfect sacrifice from the flock, is in true keeping with man's understanding of things pleasing to God in an archaic sense; a most precious offering of true innocence by a continuously needy humanity to get near to God. Bread, the staff of life, not just the usual bread of an ordinary meal, but the new bread, the bread without leavening, not mixed with the old dough of a putrified state of enslavement, but baked fresh from wholesome wheat-flour and water, is the bread of a new life of freedom. The bitter herbs from nature's garden signifies the harshness this earth has to offer, and reminds us of our alienation from the eventual goal in (the land of milk and honey) promised by God to Abraham, who kept the sacred covenant. The stories that come to us from scripture relate, in the truest artistic sense, the Genus Homo's slow transition through space and time arriving in freedom as “God's children,” with reason and understanding,

looking ahead to the arrival of a “triumphant” Messiah.

Philo, an ingenious Greek oriented Jew of Alexandria, gives us another reference to the bread of the paschal feast:

“Leavened food is forbidden (during Passover) because of the rising it produces. Here again we have a symbol of the truth, that none, as he approaches the altar, should be uplifted or puffed-up by arrogance; rather gazing on the greatness of God, let him gain a perception of the weakness which belongs to the creature, even though he may be superior to others in prosperity; and having been thus led to the reasonable conclusion, let him reduce the overweening exaltation of his pride by laying low that pestilent enemy, conceit.”

In 1988, Dr. Ron Wolfson gave us a wonderful seder outline of the Passover Haggadah in which he wrote: “The Pesach Seder is one of the most carefully constructed learning experiences ever created - all designed with one overall goal: to take each person at the Seder back to Egypt, to re-enact the dramatic Exodus story, to make each one of us feel as she or he had actually been redeemed from Mitzrayim (Egypt).”

As the Seder comes to a close, the fourth cup of wine is consumed with a prayer that “our seder be accepted and our redemption be fulfilled.” It ends with the messianic hope spoken by generations of Jews: “Next year in Jerusalem!”

All through history, the “Chosen People” (The People of God) kept their promise to celebrate the Passover every year on the fourteenth day of the month of Abib (Pre Exilic) or Nisan (Post-Exilic), right up to this present day. Though there have been changes to the rite through the centuries, the same prayers for redemption are echoed in every part of the world where Jews have settled.

On the Christian calendar, the year of the Exodus is reckoned to be about 1250 BCE (Before the Christian Era). The destruction of the Second Temple— Herod's Temple —is 70 CE

(Christian Era), leaving a total of 1320 years plus one (1) for the lapse of the year zero (0); that would be 1321 years. That time was filled with internecine wars, invasions, destruction, a second slavery (Babylonian Captivity), dispersal, treachery, desecration; every horrendous event that can be known. Still, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was and is celebrated yearly commemorating the salvation and redemption of the Jewish people. Finally, under Roman occupation the great temple of Jerusalem fell. The Jewish people, barred from Judah, were dispersed. Torah took the place of the temple and Levitical Judaism began. The rabbinate replaced the priesthood, the Sadducees disappeared and synagogues became the centers of Jewish life and culture.

About the time Caesar Augustus died, 14 CE, Joseph, Mary and Jesus made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Passover as they had done every year before. After the seven day feast was over, the parents set off for home in Nazareth, but missed the child who had stayed behind without their knowledge. Frantically, they looked for him among relatives and friends; not finding him they returned to Jerusalem to look further:

"Three days later they found him in the Temple sitting among the teachers; listening to them, and asking them questions; and those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you!' He replied, 'why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he meant."

It is interesting that this story of Jesus among the elders and scribes of the temple following the feast of “unleavened bread,” was included in Luke's narrative. He reports Mary and Joseph looking for the child Jesus for three days, a significant number. It is also the first time Jesus speaks in the gospels.

According to the editors of the NJB (New Jerusalem Bible): “Luke writes a more sophisticated Greek than the other evangelists, giving the impression that he is providing a history for the civilized Greek reader.” “But in spite of his attention to Greek readers, Luke is very much aware that Jesus is the completion of the Old Testament.”

It is from Jerusalem that belief in Jesus, as the Messiah, spreads. In St. Paul's exhortation to the Galatians, he writes:

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then an heir, through God.”

I have often thought, why was the “fullness of time” framed in this period of world history, and not another? Why wasn't the time right in the great civilizations from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Greeks, etc. It is true though, they all played their part. It was (as I know now) primarily the “fullness of time” for the Jews. The one people chosen by God, to be a conduit through whom the unseen Creator of the Cosmos was to become known, who, up to that time, had revealed himself in the events of Hebrew/Jewish history. Now he would continue to be revealed in the flesh and in the tremendous cultural and

spiritual expansion that was about to take place. The Jews were to receive their king in both a physical and spiritual way and, through them, all the world would receive their king as well. A generation later the temple fell to Titus in 70 CE, the ancient order changed and true freedom from (customary law) which Paul speaks about, began. A cult of the Jewish faith, Christianity, was growing. The "Good News" was known. The Gospel was to be promulgated by the followers of Jesus, who was, eventually believed to be the prophesied Messiah, the Christ. There was a new Jerusalem coming, a kingdom not "of this world" where an unseen God was manifest in Jewish history, but; Emmanuel: "God with us," "The (bread of affliction) was to become the (bread of life).

The founder of the cult was executed by Romans on behalf of many of the people who were threatened by his prominence. He was crucified as a traitor, a blasphemer and seditionist, and died on the cross as a criminal; while his executioners cast lots for his clothing. One person pleaded for his innocence, a thief on his right who was being "raised up" with him. All who followed him, save for his mother, a few women and the "beloved" disciple, scattered and denied knowing him; particularly Peter, whom he had named the "rock," and who had earlier said: "Lord, to whom shall we go, you have the message of eternal life." Those words were spoken after the discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum where a great many walked away from him having heard him say:

"In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life and I shall raise that person up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink, whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person. As the

living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, whoever eats me will also draw life from me. This is the bread which has come down from heaven; it is not like the bread our ancestors ate; they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live forever."

He spent approximately three years preaching and teaching about the "Kingdom of God" which was to come (if not already arrived) using many analogies (parables) to explain it clearly. He corroborated the truth of what he was saying with miraculous deeds. Even (according to scripture) the revival of Lazarus from the tomb, a supernatural reality and symbol combined; was certainly much more than an extraordinary event.

On the night Jesus was betrayed, he and the apostles were on the Mount of Olives. We do not know the exact time the soldiers and Herod's men went to arrest him. Conjecture points to it being the night of the 13th of Nisan. The next day, the 14th, would correspond with the day the sacrificial lambs or kids were being slaughtered in the temple's precincts. The "last supper" would have taken place the evening before, so the last supper or the Lord's Supper, was not a re-enactment (per se) of the Passover feast, but a pre-emption of it. The feast itself was celebrated on Friday evening following Moses' prescriptions. Jesus was executed before the traditional passover feast took place. The prosecutors needed to have everything over with by sundown to enjoy the feast and keep the Sabbath holy. Amnesty had to be given, in this case to Barabbas, the bandit, before the feast was celebrated.

No one knows for sure whether unleavened bread was eaten at the Last Supper, but one could surmise it must have been, since there was much of it around for the next evening. Was there

roasted meat and bitter herbs? Luke tells us that the Lord asked Peter and John to go and prepare for them to eat the Passover, so that it is altogether conceivable that the Matzoh was consumed Obviously, the traditional wine would have been present.

The words Jesus spoke over the bread and the wine are written in slightly different ways in Matthew, Mark, Luke and in I Corinthians. It is not the purpose of this little essay to do an in-depth study of the differences, or to present arguments of interpretation. We must leave that to the proper scholars. It suffices to say that the Last Supper or Lord's Supper, along with Baptism, remains the very core of the Christian faith. They are sacraments: outward signs instituted by Christ for us to attain grace. Grace: A supernatural benevolence (gift) from God (who should always be thought of as Trinitarian) for the purpose of gaining our salvation; that is (rescued from going down the tubes against our own better judgment) and our redemption from death (sin) to “eternal life” (heaven) by following Christ, who is the Word of God, and God himself.

It is not possible to think of Jesus as a great prophet, and consider oneself a Christian. An individual who derives a certain satisfaction from Christ's teaching as a sage or prophet but has neither been baptized nor shows interest in being in “communion” with the “body of Christ,” is not truly speaking a Christian. If he or she does not see Jesus as the literal Son of God, he or she is neither thoroughly reading the scriptures nor hearing the (gospel truth) by other means. Still, the Lord says: “Whosoever is not against us is for us.” (Luke 9:50)

It is difficult to imagine that there are people in the civilized world today who have not heard of the person Jesus of Nazareth in one way or another. Merely being aware of the

ideas encompassed in Jesus' teaching of God's kingdom is not being "born in Christ" or "dying with Christ." Christianity is literally a communion with Christ himself as a result of his life, death and resurrection. This communion has been brought to fruition in the community he founded and carried forward after his resurrection, by his apostolic followers. It is inevitable that those who have true faith in the new covenant with Jesus Christ, will eventually be joined in one communion by him in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

"And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and I must lead these too. They will listen to my voice and there will be only one flock, one shepherd."

PART TWO

Returning to the "Lord's Supper," I will quote the words Jesus spoke as recorded by Luke. Although Luke is quite specific about the meal being the passover meal, most scholars through the centuries have concluded that the meal had to be eaten (the evening before) as has been said.

“When the time came he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, ‘I have ardently longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; because, I tell you, I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.’ Then taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, ‘Take this and share it among you because from now on, I tell you, I shall never drink wine again until the Kingdom of God comes.’”

“Then he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ He did the same with the cup after supper, and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for you.’”

Now we begin to understand that this feast is the final meal of Jesus’ presence un-resurrected. It is a new Passover; a passover from the old covenant to the new covenant, a transition at the "fullness of time" for all mankind; and it is the very establishment of the “Kingdom of God” which we can understand is internal to us as well as in the “community.” It will culminate in the future (in glorious reality rather than in faith) for hopefully many of us at a feast in the “new Jerusalem” with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as Jesus promises.

The repetition of this final meal from its origination has been diligently carried on by all those faithful in Christ at Jesus' request. It is the center of Christianity because it is the most direct source (Christ himself) of super-natural grace extended to us by his sacrifice for us all. A human sacrifice with all the implications of man's ancient evolutionary roots, now ameliorated by Jesus' resurrection.

The new covenant in the blood of God himself came about through Jesus Christ (made man by the Spirit - through Mary at the Incarnation). This paschal meal was the initiation of the "exodus" from the rigidity of the "old law," in a levitical sense, to a new law based on love. It was the end of the daily sacrifice of animals and products of the earth, as had been the custom from the darkling past. On the Friday before the Passover the Son of God (who is God) was offered as the giver as well as the gift, and opened the gates of "paradise" for all believers. We have seen it happen. We call it salvation and redemption, just as the Israelites had called their release from bondage in Egypt. The Kingdom of God has been offered to all humanity. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul outlined all the monumental events brought about by faith, from the beginning of time. For now:

"Only faith can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of realities that are unseen."

As children, our imagination made many things "real" to us. The joy of fantasy was ours for the taking. Seeing with the eyes of a child, innocent and wholesome, reflected the enormous capacity for human creativity. The rigidity that comes with age and habituation seems so much less rewarding to us than the days of our childhood hopes and dreams.

In this sense faith is the gift from God that retains a capacity for wonder no matter what stage or state of being we find ourselves in. Faith is emphatically not a state of self deception but, on the contrary, a condition of self discovery, the mind finally seeing what the heart has known, i.e., an understanding of our life as spirit. Faith is an expression of human reality of the highest order; a grasp of our transcendent capability. The Kingdom of God is for the children of God and we are all children of God. In faith, Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior.” Through one fourteen year old sinless peasant girl, the world received its King.

The Last Supper was repeated right from the very beginning among the Christians. One of the early writings referring to it was the Didache (dee-da-chay). Its date, thought to be c.60 CE places it in the midst of the expansion of the followers of Christ including the immediate witnesses to Jesus’ activities.

According to the Encyclopedia of Early Christianity, it was “a manual of church life included among the works of the apostolic fathers.” Further, “The Didache presents a church still in close proximity to Judaism and still developing its distinctive institutions. The document was highly valued in the early church.” It was probably written before the final destruction of the temple. I will extract chapter 9 here, because that is the one which deals with the Eucharist.

IX

1. And concerning the Eucharist, hold Eucharist thus: 2. First concerning the Cup, “We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the Holy Vine of David thy child, which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy child; to thee be glory for ever.” 3. And concerning the broken Bread: "We give thee thanks, our

Father, for the life and knowledge which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy child. To thee be glory for ever” 4. “As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom, for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.” 5. But let none eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptized in the Lord's name. For concerning this also did the Lord say, “Give not that which is holy to the dogs.”

It is interesting that there is no mention of “body and blood” in the document, but for good reason. Some were spreading the rumor that the Christians, now large enough to be considered a sect of Judaism, were cannibalizing their infants. On and off, under ensuing Roman emperors, this was one of the indictments which brought on terrible persecutions. As a rule their gatherings, with Eucharist and Agape or Agape and Eucharist, had to be celebrated in secret. Much blood was shed by the martyrs for refusing to deny their faith in Christ the Lord.

A wonderful source of apologetics from the early church comes to us from St. Justin Martyr, born about 100 CE He defended the faith in Asia Minor and Rome and was martyred there about 165 CE. His First Apology, Chapter LXVI, includes specific references regarding the Eucharist which has been left for us to read 1900 years after it was written.

"CHAPTER LXVI - OF THE EUCHARIST

“And this food is called among us Eukaristia [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins

(baptism), and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, ‘This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;’ and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, ‘This is My blood’ and gave it to them alone.”

When the Christian community grew large enough to be called a Church with a hierarchy apostolically chosen by the “laying on of the hands,” there was a set of rules and regulations for membership. Scripture tell us that there were many disagreements among its members, which were generally due to the differences in the diverse cultures accepting the faith. (It seems human beings are never able to avoid power struggles stemming from favoritism or personal interests habitually formed.) One recalls from Luke:22,24 how an argument cropped up even after the “supper” as to who among the Apostles was the greater. Jesus was quick to quell the dispute by saying: “For who is the greater: the one at the table or the one who serves? The one at the table, surely? Yet here I am among you as one who serves!”

The early Fathers fought the battles against heresy with courage and an intrepid tenacity. They never would allow extraneous concepts dilute the “word of God” as heard from the

Apostles. Men like Irenaeus, Clement, Tertullian, Basil, Eusebius, Athanasius, Jerome, Ignatius, most of whom became saints for keeping unity among the faithful (with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit).

Christian theology, “faith seeking understanding” was and remains a staunch guide to right judgement with regard to complicated exegesis. The scriptures are full of contradictions because it is (though divinely inspired) also a work of human hands and minds. As any great work of art (which it is) it has its failings. No great work of art is of itself perfect. Traditionally, its holiness and inviolability is due to the great men of faith. who organized it and bound it in the canon we now know as sacred.

The teachings of the early Bishops and Presbyters is generally considered as having been oral; but a listing of theological beliefs which were thought to have been written by the Apostles themselves became known as the Apostles Creed. It probably was adapted from the "Old Roman Creed" used at baptismal ceremonies in the first part of the second century. The tenets outlined in the Creed line up perfectly with Paul's writings.

“I BELIEVE IN GOD, the Father almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty. He shall come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting... Amen.”

There were, undoubtedly, many systematic texts, now lost, that were in the possession of the early fathers in Hebrew, Latin and Greek, used for catechetical purposes. The following account of the transitional nature of teaching concerning the Eucharist is explained quite well in the Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism.

“The eucharistic teachings of the Eastern Church (Cyril and Theodore) and of Western churches (Ambrose and Augustine) have survived; they emphasize Christ’s death for humankind and its practical and moral application to the lives of the converts, as well as repeating Paul’s teaching that the one bread of the Eucharist makes Christians the one body of Christ.”

“In the Medieval Church the transition from the eucharistic preaching of Augustine and Ambrose is best understood as a movement away from symbolic thinking about the Eucharist to an instrumental thinking of how the bread (becomes) the body of Christ.

Christ’s words were so emphatic that it was difficult to think of the bread and wine simply in symbolic terms.

“St. Thomas Aquinas, in the thirteenth century, retained the classical understanding of Augustinian symbol, but brilliantly employed the insights of Aristotle to explain (how) bread and wine can be changed (substantially) into the Real Presence of Christ while the accidents (color, shape, taste) of bread and wine remain. This explanation, known as transubstantiation, had already been used at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.”

The idea of substantial change was offered in many documents, previous to the Angelic Doctor. Before we look into how

Aristotelianism was woven into the fabric of Eucharistic Christian belief, it is necessary to understand that the faith of the Church, i.e. (all Christendom in the West) subscribed to the Nicene Creed (325) and the subsequent dogmatic proclamations of the council of Chalcedon (451). Together they pronounced the divinity of Christ, his two natures (one of God and one of man) in one person; and the Trinity (three persons in one God); these still remain the basic beliefs of all Christians. These beliefs were cogently established by the inspired processes of Christian theology and personal witness from the time of the Apostles onward. Though there were bad Popes and unsavory prelates and clergy, the deposit of faith, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was passed on from one generation to the next. Many heart wrenching arguments about receiving the sacrament in one kind or both; reserving the consecrated bread; the activities of priests in the communion rite and others, were vigorously pursued (sadly) with a deadly determination that brought on violence; definitely not a Christian virtue. The promises of Christ were subordinated to the politics of power and personal interest. Holiness and honest piety, indeed, had gone out of much of religion - save for a blessed cadre of martyrs, mystics and saints whose hearts and minds clung to the indomitable love of God in Christ. This was the “dark night of the soul” for the church, but the House of Authority did not fall. The faith survived intact from its enemies both within and without. Its path was set straight by the Council of Trent (1545).

PART THREE

Right from the very start (after the resurrection) scripture recounts how the risen Lord met with the Cleopas and probably Barnabas on the road to Emmaus and stayed with them to eat: “Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and

said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them.” In Corinthians 1:11,23, Paul writes: "For the tradition I received from the Lord and also handed on to you is that on the night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and after he had given thanks, he broke it and he said, ‘This is my body which is for you; do this in remembrance of me’ and in the same way, with the cup after supper, saying, ‘This is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.’”

I don't think there can be any doubt that in the earliest Christian communities the (breaking of the bread) was the central act at their gatherings usually presided over by a bishop, and later, whomever the bishop ritually designated or who was elected.

It has been proven time and time again; humanity is prone to contend with the Divinity at every stage of history, some, rejecting outright the grace of God (and not out of ignorance) for their own salvation and redemption. What better example do we have than the trek of the Israelites to the promised land? The idols they made for themselves are no different from the idols concocted by many people today.

It is human nature to seek for ultimate truth.

When Homo Sapiens emerged out of a chain of primates on an evolutionary trajectory, they had (inscribed in their very being) the power of transcendent thought - and freedom to act for or against the (good). They were graced with the ability to break through the bonds of pure instinct. With this gift of (knowing that they knew) they had the potential of overcoming almost any obstacle that stood in the way of successful advancement. They certainly attained it but not without travail as we have all personally experienced. Our ability to (think things out) is

common to us all. The creative ability which we're born with is how we are related to our "maker." Seeking the good is our way of life, both physically and psychologically.

It is reasonable to say that today's Christian community accepts the decisions that were made at a meeting of the Apostles in Jerusalem (the first council) and also the subsequent councils (called ecumenical) of Nicea and Chalcedon. It is important to understand however, all the decisions that were made depended on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the Canon of Sacred Scripture. Nothing was made up out of "whole cloth." Let's say: substantially, the entire enterprise was conducted with the sole objective of staying as true as was humanly possible to the teachings of Jesus Christ. When he broke the bread and said, "This is my body," no one could bring himself to say he didn't mean just that regardless of other times when he spoke in parables. This is emphasized most clearly in Chapter Six of St. John's gospel, stated earlier.

I found a concise piece put out by the Augustine Club at Columbia University (of all places) where a fellow by the name of John Keck, stated it very well.

"The crowds clearly understand him to say that to live they must eat his flesh (v. 52), and, although they understand him in a carnal way (not seeing that his flesh will be veiled under the appearance of bread and wine), they grasp the basic truth of his words. The proof is that he does not try to correct them as if they had misunderstood, but rather reiterates and amplifies what they have understood from his saying in verse 51. Notice with what solemnity ("Truly, truly") and how many times he reaffirms this teaching (with verses 43, 54, 55, 56, 57, and 58), Each of these verses is a categorical affirmation of the crowd's understanding of his words. There is no indication that Jesus is

speaking figuratively here; we must humbly accept the words of our Lord, even though if it require a great leap of faith. We must not allow our predispositions or traditions or even the purely empirical knowledge of our own senses to restrict our full recognition of the truth given from the mouth of God made Man.”

If we haven't made the decision to accept the (gift of faith) at this point, there is always hope. A (leap) into anything is always dangerous. We do not find God; he finds us!

Now, let us see how the Angelic Doctor, Thomas Aquinas, incorporated the thinking of his hero Aristotle to form an acceptable augmentation, so that Christ's words were not construed as being cannibalistic or mad. I believe that was his goal.

The word substance has a different meaning in physics, from the meaning it has in philosophy which includes metaphysics. (Refer to Aristotle; *Metaphysics* Book XII; 1-5). (a) In physics, the word substance refers to matter. Does the phrase: substance abuse ring a bell? Obviously that means dope or alcohol, even though the substances can be broken down into constituent parts. (b) “Another is (immutable), which certain thinkers hold to exist separately.” Specifics, on this class, need not be enlarged upon here. Suffice it to say that both (a) and (b) come within the scope of physics, since they involve motion. The last class, (c), “belongs to some other science, if there is no principle common to all three.” Before our eyes glaze over, I would like to include one other quote from the Philosopher.

Proceeding to part V titled: “Actuality and potentiality are causes common to all things” I pulled out parts (2-3), the ones that could have attracted Thomas. “For in some cases the same

thing exists now actually and now potentially; e.g, wine or flesh or man (actuality and potentiality also fall under causes as already described; for the form exists actually if it is separable, and so does the compound of form and matter, and the privation, e.g. darkness and disease; and the matter exists potentially, for it is this which has the potentiality of becoming both).” Please read the rest for yourself.

One can see (though it is tedious) how Thomas strove to bring some of Aristotle's philosophic thought to the anxieties of faith regarding perspectives of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. What is amazing is how any true Christian, while accepting the tenets of Nicea and Chalcedon, could rebuke the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and I Corinthians, which contain unequivocal statements by Jesus about his body and blood vis-a-vis bread and wine. Wouldn't this make a liar out of the Son of God and reduce him to having been evil? In my way of thinking, that would be a sin against the Spirit, which, according to the very same scripture may not be forgiven! Can we take the Lord at his word in that case?

Let me elaborate (in layman's terms, of course) by using one of Jesus' sayings misunderstood by some of the Reformers in the sixteenth century, notwithstanding their reasonable antithesis against what had become (less than honorable) papacies but certainly not the Antichrist. The "house of authority" had really never fallen despite some of its sons and daughters who might have, (God help them)

Jesus said:

“Does this (anyone who eats this bread will live forever) disturb you? What if you were to see the Son of man ascend to where he was before?” “It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh

has nothing to offer. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”

It is very easy (too easy) to see how this could be understood as meaning the bread and wine of the Eucharist are mere representations of the Body and Blood of Christ, symbolic representations. But, if we take Jesus’ words to heart, already believing him to be the second-person of the Trinity, i.e., one with the Father: “The words I spoke to you are spirit and they are life.” What then?

For a religious person (soul or spirit) are a reality beyond the flesh and blood of the body including mind (the workings of the brain). If we cannot claim a connection to spiritual things, we have no obligation to intellectually understand anything but "matter," empirically speaking. Therefore, the words of Jesus have positively no meaning for you, and Christianity is of no use to us. That's when Jesus becomes a “wise” prophet or insane.

But, if soul/spirit are a reality and the words spoken by Jesus are (spirit and they are life) then life, as in (this is my body) becomes a reality, or should I say, an actuality? The spirit cannot be symbolic if it is “life,” according to Jesus. Life is not a symbol, it (is). So life (spirit) is there in actuality under the accidents of bread and wine. Shades of Thomas and Aristotle and faith in the fact that Christ is not a liar, but the true Messiah, the Son of God,— God himself.

In that very same chapter of St. John, Chapter Seven v 65, Jesus clarifies the issue for us all:

““This is why I told you that no one could come to me except by the gift of the Father,’ (the grace of God). After this, many of his disciples went away and accompanied him no more.”

“Then Jesus said to the Twelve, ‘What about you, do you want to go away, too?’ Simon Peter (the one who would deny him three times) answered, ‘Lord to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.’” That was Peter (the rock) the first Pope, upon whom Christ built his church, (The Body of Christ) as Paul put it, where the actual or real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is adored and consumed all over the world by the faithful.

“I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark, but will have the light of life.”