

the divine consecration, when the very words of our Lord operate? For the sacrament which you receive, is accomplished by the word of Christ.—Now if the word of Elias could call down fire from heaven, shall not the word of Christ be able to change the nature of created things?

You have read concerning the creation of the world. *He spoke and it was done, he commanded and it was formed.* If then, the word of Christ could draw out of nothing what till then had no existence, shall it not be able to change the things that exist, *into what they were not before!* For it is not a less effect of power, to give new existence to things, than to change the nature of things that previously existed. We will now establish the truth of this mystery, from the example itself of the incarnation. Was the order of nature followed when Jesus was born of a virgin? Plainly, not.—Then why is that order to be looked for here. It was the true flesh of Christ, which was crucified, which was buried, and this is truly the sacrament of his flesh. Our Lord himself proclaims. *This is my body.* Before the benediction given by the celestial words, it is called bread; but after the consecration of the body of Christ is signified. He said also; *This is my blood.* Before consecration it has another name, and after consecration it is denominated blood. And you answer Amen; that is, *it is true.* What the mouth speaks, let the internal sense confess: what the words intimate, let the affection feel. By these sacraments Christ feeds his Church, and by them is the soul strengthened. It is a mystery you should carefully keep to yourselves, — lest you communicate it to the unworthy, and publish the secret before unbelievers, by an unrestrained freedom of speech. You must guard your faith with the utmost vigilance, that you may preserve the purity of your life and the secret of the mystery with inviolable fidelity." To argue on the foregoing words would weaken their force. I shall merely observe; 1^o that Saint Ambrose not only makes a clear exposition of the doctrine of transubstantiation, but proves it moreover by adducing the very proofs and examples that have been produced in its defence since it became a contested point: 2^o that the Eucharist is several times called a sacrament, which circumstance will be found of service, later: 3^o that the neophytes, when instructed in the mysteries, were cautioned to preserve the most profound secrecy respecting them.

Saint Ambrose, or rather the very ancient author often work upon the sacraments, which was for a long time attributed to that arch-Bishop, after repeating the above cited passage nearly in so many words, has the following additional observations in another book: "As our Saviour is the true Son of God, not merely by grace, like men, but by nature, being of the self-same substance with the Father; so, according to his own words, it is his true and real flesh that we eat, and his true and real blood that we drink. But you may here propose the objection stated by many of his disciples, when he spoke to them of eating his flesh and drinking his blood: how can it be his true and

real flesh and blood, seeing, as I do, the resemblance, but not the truth and reality of blood. I have already instructed you above of the power inherent in the word of Christ to change and transform the works of nature. Moreover, when any of his disciples could not endure his words, but went away from him on hearing him talk of giving them his flesh to eat and his blood to drink, Saint Peter remained firm, and said in the silence of all, Thou hast the words of eternal life; to whom else should we go? Thus, to prevent similar objections being made by others, on the ground of a natural horror to human blood, it has pleased the Almighty to favour you with a sacrament which, while it bears the resemblance, supplies you also with the grace and virtue of his true and real nature. I am the living bread, says he, which came down from heaven. Now his flesh did not come down from heaven, since it was derived from the blessed virgin upon earth. In what manner then, did this celestial and living bread come down from heaven? By the union of the divinity and humanity effected by Jesus Christ in his person. You, therefore, who receive his flesh, participate of his divine substance in that sacred rite." That the manducation here treated of is not one made by faith is most evident. It is that kind of manducation which excites the doubt; how can it be his true and real flesh, since I do not see it? Now it would be absurd to suppose, that the circumstances of the flesh, not being seen, would ever raise a doubt in any one's mind about its spiritual reception by faith, since contrariwise, for such reception by faith, it is indispensably necessary that the flesh be not seen.

Saint Gaudentius of Brescia spoke in the same strain to the newly baptized, as you will hear.—Describing the celebration of the pasch, he says: "Of all the things pointed out in the book of Exodus we shall at present treat of those only, which cannot be explained before the catechumens, but which nevertheless it is necessary to discover & explain to the newly-baptized.* In the shadows & figures of the ancient pasch, not one lamb, but many were slain, for each house had its sacrifice; because one victim could not suffice for all the people, and also because this mystery was a mere figure and not the reality of the passion of the Lord. For the figure of a thing is not the reality, but only the image and representation of the thing signified. But now that the figure has ceased, the one that died for all, immolated in the mystery of bread and wine, gives life through all the Churches, and, being consecrated, sanctifies those who consecrate. *This is the flesh of the lamb, this is his blood:* for the bread that came down from heaven said: The bread, which I will give you, is my flesh, for the life of the

* Here is an additional and direct proof that the famous secret, kept by the christians as well from the catechumens as from the unbelievers, positively concealed the mysteries revealed to the newly-baptized, viz. the real presence and the change of substance in the Eucharist, as Saint Cyril, the two Gregories and Saint Ambrose have clearly explained it to them, and as we shall now see Saint Gaudentius also explaining it.

world. His blood is rightly expressed by the species of wine, because when he says in the Gospel. I am the true vine, he sufficiently declares that the wine, which is offered in the figure of his passion, is his blood. — He who is the Creator and Lord of all things, and who produces bread from the earth, *of the bread makes his own proper body.* (for he is able, and he promised to do it;) and he who changed water into wine, now changes wine into his blood.

The portion of scripture we have read, closing its subject with an excellent and mysterious conclusion, says: For it is the pasch of the Lord.—O the depth of the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of God! It is the pasch, he says, that is, the passover or passage of the Lord, to the end that you may not think that to be earthly which has been made heavenly by him, *who himself passes into it by making it his body and blood.* For what we have said above in general terms touching the manner of eating the flesh of the paschal lamb, we must particularly observe in the manner of receiving the same mysteries of the passion of our Lord. Therefore you ought not to reject them, considering them, like the Jews, to be rude flesh and blood and with the Jews exclaiming: How can he give us his flesh to eat? Neither ought you to represent this sacrament to your minds as any thing common or earthly, but rather believe with a firm faith, that, by the fire of the Holy Spirit, this sacrament is in effect become what the Lord assures you it is. For what you receive is the body of him who is the living and heavenly bread, and the blood of him, who is the sacred vine. And we know that, when he presented to his disciples the consecrated bread and wine, he said: *This is my body, this is my blood.* Let us therefore believe him, whose faith we profess: *for truth cannot lie.* — As then it was ordained in the old law to eat the head of the paschal lamb and also the feet, we must now, in the new law, eat both the head of Jesus Christ, which is his divinity, and the feet, which is his humanity, united and concealed as they are in the sacred and divine mysteries: believing every thing that has been transmitted to us by the tradition of the Church, and being careful not to break this solid and firm bone, that is, the truth delivered from his own mouth: *This is my body, and this is my blood.*

"And now, if there remain any thing, which you do not understand in this explanation, let it be consumed by the ardour of your faith. For our God is a consuming fire, purifying and enlightening our minds for the understanding of divine things, that, discovering the mysterious causes of this same celestial sacrifice instituted by Christ, we may render him eternal thanks for so great and ineffable a gift. For it is the true inheritance of his New Testament, which he left us on the very night of his passion, as the pledge of his presence. It is the viaticum, with which we are fed and fortified in the pilgrimage of this life, until we arrive at heaven, and the full and unveiled enjoyment of him, who, when on earth, proclaimed to us: Unless you