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Conclusion
1. Transubstantiation as a Mystical Reality

Definitions: Mystery and Reality

1. A mystery is “a divinely revealed truth whose very possibility cannot be rationally conceived before it is revealed,”1 and because it is divinely revealed, it is a manifestation of God, Who is infinite. These manifestations reveal a reality that is infinite in depth and hence the finite mind cannot fully grasp the reality in its totality.2 However, it does not follow that because we cannot fully grasp the reality, that it is irrational.

2. Reality is the objective truth of a situation or event, that is to say, it is true independently of our cognitive awareness, as opposed to the unreal, which is merely subjective or fanciful. The moon revolving around the earth is an objective reality, even if someone does not know that the moon revolves around the earth or believe it to be true.
   
   a. Reality is always richer than our articulation and comprehension of the reality.
   
   b. Some other examples of Christian belief that are “mystical realities” as defined above:
      
      I. The Blessed Trinity (Defined solemnly at the Council of Nicaea in 325)
      
      II. The Incarnation (The Gospel of Luke and expounded upon in the Prologue to the Gospel of John)
      
      III. The hypostatic union (The hypostatic union is the dogma that Jesus, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is a Divine Person with a divine nature and a human nature, united but not confused in His one Divine Person. Defined Solemnly by the Council of Calcedon)

Why The Mysteries of Faith Are Rational

1. As mentioned above, many truths of our Faith transcend reason. Again, it does not follow that because they are above human reason that they are thus irrational. All reason takes as its origin the λογός [logos] (reason) Who is Jesus Himself.3

Etymology of the word “transubstantiation”

1. Transubstantiation is a composite of two Latin words. The first is the preposition trans which means “across.” The second is the noun substantia which means “substance.” Substance refers to a philosophical concept of a being that exists in its own right. The word substance is further broken down into two more Latin words. The first, sub, which means “under,” and stare, which is a verb meaning “to stand.” Thus the meaning, etymologically and literally, is “to stand under” or “to stand firm.”

1 Father John Hardon, New Catholic Encyclopedia, Pg. 365 “Mystery”
2 ibid 2
3 The word λογός is the word used in the Prologue of the Gospel of John. “In the beginning was the word (λόγος) and the word (λόγος) was with God...” This Greek word λογός has the meaning “reason”. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger expounds upon this topic that Jesus, God Himself, is in His essence Reason. (Introduction to Christianity, Chapter 1 subsection 6) He again returned to this theme as Pope, in his Regensburg address. John Paul II devoted an entire encyclical to the relationship of Faith and Reason in his 1998 encyclical “Fides et Ratio”. Both Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI demonstrate to us that faith and reason never contradict but that both point and show us to the Ultimate Reality Who is God.
a. A human person is a substance because we exist in our own right. However, a person’s skin color is not substantial (a substance) but rather it is an accidental character of a substance, meaning that it only exists as a non-necessary quality of the substantial whole.

2. The etymology given above, applied to transubstantiation, means to move across from one substance (the bread and wine) to another (the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ).

What is the Specifically Mystical Reality of Transubstantiation

“The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the Body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation.”

2. History and Controversy

The Testimony of Our Lord and Saint Paul in the New Testament

1. We have received the teaching of transubstantiation in the first place from Jesus, in the institution narratives, the Bread of Life discourse and later in the first century from St. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians.

   a. The institution narratives in the synoptic Gospels and Saint Paul's words in his letter to the Corinthians.

   b. The Bread of Life discourse in John chapter 6.

   c. Receiving Holy Communion worthily, as taught by St. Paul, as the most powerful witness to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

2. The Institution Narratives:

   Mt 26:26-28
   Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

   Mark 14:22-24
   And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had giv-

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4 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1376

5 The Scripture translations are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.
en thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”

Luke 22:19-20

“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after supper, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

1 Cor 11:24

“... and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Notice that our Lord always says, “This is my body”. He never says, “This is a symbol, sign or representation of my body but he says that it truly is His body. Jesus is God, and God cannot deceive or be deceived, therefore the Holy Eucharist must be what Jesus says it is, His true Body and Blood.

3. Bread of Life Discourse

John 6:47-63

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever." This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Caper'na-um. Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you that do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

De fide Catholica (On the Catholic Faith), IV Lateran Council
a. The first nine times that Jesus refers to the eating of His flesh, He uses the verb φαγω [fago] which literally means to gnaw. However, after His disciples doubt Him, Jesus changes the verb to τραγω [trago], which He uses four times with reference to eating His flesh. The verb τραγω is much more graphic form of gnaw or chew.  

b. This change in wording by Jesus is of highest import, because if Jesus were merely speaking symbolically about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He would not intensify the language, but rather He would have de-emphasized and clarified the symbolic nature of eating and drinking His flesh and blood. Although he was losing His disciples over this very teaching, His response was not to water it down but rather to definitively reinforce it in all its significance.

Jesus refers to His Flesh/Body and Blood being eaten/drunk 17 times in the New Testament.  
Flesh (Jn 6:51, 53, 54, 55, 56)  
Body (Mt 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:24)

3. The Admonition of St. Paul to Receive The Holy Eucharist Worthily  
1 Cor. 11:27

“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.”

a. This warning of St. Paul about examining oneself before receiving the Holy Eucharist is particularly important. Symbols of realities are not able to make one ill or kill them. However, St. Paul says that by receiving the Holy Eucharist without discernment, people are becoming sick and even dying. Therefore, there must exist real power and reality in the Holy Eucharist to affect the sickness and death of those who receive it unworthily.

The Greek Tradition

1. The Greek or Eastern Tradition on the nature of the Holy Eucharist is in accordance with the Latin Tradition of transubstantiation. The word used by the Greek tradition to signify the change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus is μεταουσια [metaousia]. μεταουσια is commonly used among early Greek writers in reference to the Holy Eucharist and it possesses the basic meaning of “change of being” or “transubstantiation.” The preposition μετα means “change.” The Greek word ουσια means “being.” It is thus a change of being or change of substance.

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7 This analysis of Sacred Scripture can be found in Dave Armstrong’s book “A Biblical Defense of Catholicism”
Ignatius of Antioch
"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 incorruptible" (Letter to the Romans 7:3 [A.D. 110]).

"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" (Letter to the Smyrnaeans 6:2–7:1 [A.D. 110]).

Justin Martyr
"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" (First Apology 66 [A.D. 151]).

Irenaeus
"If the Lord were from other than the Father, how could he rightly take bread, which is of the same creation as our own, and confess it to be his body and affirm that the mixture in the cup is his blood?" (Against Heresies 4:33–32 [A.D. 189]).

"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?" (ibid., 5:2).

Clement of Alexandria
"'Eat my flesh,' [Jesus] says, ‘and drink my blood.’ 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" (The Instructor of Children 1:6:43:3 [A.D. 191]).
Council of Ephesus
"We will necessarily add this also. Proclaiming the death, according to the flesh, of the only-begotten Son of God, that is Jesus Christ, confessing his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, we offer the unbloody sacrifice in the churches, and so go on to the mystical thanksgivings, and are sanctified, having received his holy flesh and the precious blood of Christ the Savior of us all. And not as common flesh do we receive it; God forbid: nor as of a man sanctified and associated with the Word according to the unity of worth, or as having a divine indwelling, but as truly the life-giving and very flesh of the Word himself. For he is the life according to his nature as God, and when he became united to his flesh, he made it also to be life-giving" (Session 1, Letter of Cyril to Nestorius [A.D. 431]).

Origen
"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 6:55]" (Homilies on Numbers 7:2 [A.D. 248]).

Cyprian of Carthage
"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" (The Lapsed 15–16 [A.D. 251]).

Council of Nicaea I
"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]" (Canon 18 [A.D. 325]).

Cyril of Jerusalem
"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" (Catechetical Lectures 19:7 [A.D. 350]).

"Do not, therefore, regard the bread and wine as simply that; for they are, according to the Master’s declaration, the body and blood of Christ. Even though the senses suggest to you the other, let faith make you firm. Do not judge in this matter by taste, but be fully assured by the faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the body and blood of Christ. . . . [Since you are] fully convinced that the apparent
bread is not bread, even though it is sensible to the taste, but the body of Christ, and
that the apparent wine is not wine, even though the taste would have it so, . . . partake
of that bread as something spiritual, and put a cheerful face on your soul" (ibid., 22:6, 9).

The Latin Tradition

Tertullian
"[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 [in the Eucharist] on the body and blood of Christ, that
the soul likewise may be filled with God" (The Resurrection of the Dead 8 [A.D.
210]).

Hippolytus
"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 of-
fered 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]" (Fragment from Commentary on Proverbs [A.D. 217]).

Ambrose of Milan
"Perhaps you may be saying, ‘I see something else; how can you assure me that I am
receiving the body of Christ?’ It but remains for us to prove it. And how many are the
examples we might use! . . . Christ is in that sacrament, because it is the body of
Christ" (The Mysteries 9:50, 58 [A.D. 390]).

Augustine
"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" (Explanations of the
Psalms 33:1:10 [A.D. 405]).

"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" (Sermons 227 [A.D. 411]).

...  
"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 is the blood of Christ. This has been said very briefly, which may perhaps
be sufficient for faith; yet faith does not desire instruction" (ibid., 272).
The Relationship Between Faith and Reason and Stephen of Brouge

1. Many critics of the Church accuse the Catholic Church, and especially during the Medieval period, of inventing doctrines that are based on philosophy, and not the authentic teaching of Jesus. These accusers, when they come from within the Christian faith, fail to realize that the central questions and mysteries of Christianity, which they profess to accept, were formulated with the help of Hellenistic (Greek) philosophy. The best example is the primordial truth and mystery of the Christian faith, The Most Blessed Trinity. The articulation of the Blessed Trinity by the Council of Nicaea and the subsequent Ecumenical councils could not have been given but for the philosophical notions such as “person” (three Persons, One God), “nature” (each Person of the Most Holy Trinity fully possesses the Divine Nature), and “substance” (each Person is consubstantial with the other two). Nor should we forget that St. Paul used philosophy as a tool for evangelization in the book of Acts. 

2. Many attacks against the Holy Eucharist use this line of argumentation by saying that the doctrine of transubstantiation is just a medieval invention based on the philosophy of Aristotle. It must, however, be noted that Aristotle was not reintroduced to the western world until the time of the Islamic philosophers Al-Farabi, Avveroes and Aveneena in the 13th century. Only after this point did Aristotle begin to be translated into Latin. Even then, Aristotle was greatly looked down upon by most Christians for his belief in the eternity of the world and the human soul: certainly two very anti-Christian beliefs as they eliminate the necessity of a Creator and destroy any precedence for morality.

3. The term transubstantiation was first used by Stephen of Brouge in the year 1140, not by the Council of Trent. The Church solemnly used and defined the teaching of transubstantiation 75 years later at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

Protestant Beliefs Concerning the Nature of the Last Supper and Its Continuation in History

1. Protestant belief about what Jesus actually intended and meant by what He said at the last supper varies from those who claim He was speaking completely symbolically to those who believe in a Real Presence, but not Real par excellence as in transubstantiation. Because Protestants now comprise upwards of 30,000 different denominations and thus varying beliefs, it is well beyond the scope of this talk to list in detail all the Protestant beliefs. Let us limit ourselves to three.

   a. Evangelical Protestants claim that when Jesus said, “This is my body,” He was merely speaking symbolically, and when one of their “ministers” reenacts the Last

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8 Acts 17:18 This passage, and its significance for the relationship between faith and reason, is drawn out in detail by John Paul II in chapter IV (#36) of his encyclical “Fides et Ratio” (Faith and Reason)

9 The distinction between eternal and immortal must be born in mind. Something is eternal that has no beginning or end. The world was created and thus is not eternal because it has a beginning and the human soul is immortal meaning that it was created by God but it will never die.

10 This date is important because it tells us that Transubstantiation, the definition, was already in use before the western world had significant access to Aristotle.

11 1st Constitution of the IV Lateran Council, “De fide Catholica”. “transsubstitatis pane in corpus et vino in sanguinem potestate divina.” (Having been transubstitated from bread into the Body and from wine into the Blood by the divine power. This is not an accidental change of appearance, but a true change in essence (ousius). For Jesus, Who is God, and therefore can neither deceive nor be deceived said, “This is my body...”
Supper the bread and the wine remain just that, bread and wine. They believe that it is a symbol, however.
b. Lutheran theology teaches consubstantiation, which essentially says that the substance of Christ’s Body exists simultaneously with the substance of the bread and likewise for the substance of the Blood of Christ and the substance of the wine. This heresy was and remains solemnly condemned by the Church by the council of Trent.  
c. Anglican theology teaches that there exists a “real presence” of Jesus in the Eucharist. Within the Anglican ecclesial community this can mean anything from belief in transubstantiation to a mere spiritual presence.

3. Conclusion

Pope Paul VI
1. In his encyclical “Mysterium Fidei” (The Mystery of Faith), Pope Paul VI reaffirmed the Church’s teaching of Transubstantiation and condemned the ideas of “transignification” and “transfinalization” as put forward by “progressive” theologians. These two ideas were attempts from certain theologians inside the Church to do away with the doctrine of transubstantiation.  

Pope John Paul II
2. John Paul II spoke so extensively on the Holy Eucharist that it would be impossible to touch on all of his thought here. However, it is worthy to note that he wrote his last encyclical, Ecclesia de Eucharistia (The Church of the Eucharist) on the Eucharist and died during the year of the Eucharist which he inaugurated.  

Pope Benedict XVI
3. As Cardinal, the current Holy Father wrote extensively on the subject of the Holy Eucharist. In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Sacramentum Caritatis (The Sacrament of Charity), Pope Benedict devotes a section in which he discusses the relation and importance of the Holy Spirit with respect to transubstantiation.  

Conclusion
4. The Catholic Church’s teaching of transubstantiation has its origin in the words of Jesus Christ. The truth of transubstantiation is a truth, “which the Catholic Church has always held and which she will hold until the end of the world.” Catholics must know that the Church’s teaching about the Holy Eucharist is not just an abstract theological fact that has little impact on our daily lives here and now but rather, it is one of the most important realities in the universe. It can rightly be given this high value because it gives us communion (union with) Jesus, and thus the God from Whom we come and to Whom we are journeying. Only by being in communion with God do we have a proper foundation upon which to live our life.

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12 See the Catholic Encyclopedia under “Consustantiation” for a thorough analysis of this Lutheran teaching.
13 Type “Mysterium Fidei Pope Paul VI” into the Google search engine for the entire document online.
14 Type “Ecclesia de Eucharistia Pope John Paul II” into the Google search engine for the entire document online.
15 Type “Sacramentum Caritatis Benedict XVI” into the Google search engine for the entire document online.
16 Council of Trent, De S.S. Eucharitia