

# THE DWELLING AND THE NOURISHMENT

## *Permanent Eucharistic Resonance and the Controversy over the Real Presence A Reading through the Mahoukou Law*

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### **Prelude — A Piece of Bread and an Infinite Question**

*"I am the food of the mature; grow and you shall feed on me. Nor will you change me into yourself as you change the food your flesh eats, but you will be changed into me." — Augustine of Hippo, Confessions VII, 10*

A piece of bread. A host. What one holds between two fingers — white, light, of no particular flavour — is the object of one of the longest, deepest and most painful theological controversies in Christian history. Not because theologians have quarrelled over nothing, but because what is at stake in this piece of bread is precisely what can never be entirely said: the structure of the gift that transforms the one who receives it by making them inhabited by the one who gives himself.

The philosophical question this text poses is precise. It does not concern first of all the confessional debate between Catholics and Protestants about the Real Presence — though it will return to this with all the attention it deserves. It concerns something more fundamental: what takes place in eucharistic Resonance when it is fully inhabited? What does it mean, phenomenologically, that the one who gives himself as nourishment transforms the receiver into himself — and not the inverse? And what is the status of eucharistic Resonance *after* the liturgical office — in the silence of the tabernacle, in the presence of the consecrated host, in what the Catholic tradition has called the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament?

These three questions — nourishment that transforms in reverse, the temporality of Resonance, and the Catholic-Protestant debate — form an organic whole that the Mahoukou Law enables us to examine with a new philosophical precision. Not to

adjudicate a confessional debate that theologians carry with greater proper competence than the philosopher — but to reveal the underlying phenomenological structure that renders this debate intelligible in its depth, and to show what each tradition says rightly and what it risks leaving in shadow.

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## **I. The Reversed Nourishment — Phenomenology of Eucharistic Resonance**

### ***A. The Ordinary Structure of Nourishment***

Nourishment is, in human existence, the most elementary and most universal paradigm of transformation. When I eat, I receive something external to me — vegetable, animal, mineral — and I transform it into myself. The proteins of bread become the proteins of my muscle. The sugars of the vine become the energy of my cell. What was other becomes identical: assimilated, digested, incorporated in the literal sense of the term. Ordinary nourishment is a conquest of identity over alterity — the other is absorbed, transformed, reduced to what I am.

This structure is phenomenologically precise: it says something about the relation between the subject and the world. In ordinary nourishment, the subject is active — it takes, transforms, assimilates. The food is passive — it is received, dissolved, incorporated. The arrow runs from outside to inside, and this passage is a victory of the inside over the outside. That is why nourishment has always been a metaphor of power: to eat is to dominate, to integrate, to make one's own what was not.

The Mahoukou Law recognises in this ordinary structure of nourishment a form of Resonance — but a unilateral Resonance. What occurs in digestion is not a mutually transformative Resonance in the sense of the C·R·R triad: it is a one-directional transformation. The food does not transform the eater in the same measure that the eater transforms the food. Resonance is asymmetric — and this asymmetry is precisely what the Eucharist reverses.

### ***B. The Eucharistic Inversion — Augustine and His Paradox***

It is Augustine of Hippo who formulated the eucharistic paradox with the greatest philosophical precision, in a passage of the *Confessions* (VII, 10) that is one of the densest pages in the entire Christian mystical tradition. Augustine recounts what he heard as an

interior voice — a voice that says: "*I am the food of the mature; grow and you shall feed on me. Nor will you change me into yourself as you change the food your flesh eats, but you will be changed into me.*" This formula reverses the ordinary structure of nourishment with a radicality that has not yet been entirely exhausted philosophically.

In ordinary nourishment: "*it is you who transform the food into yourself*". In eucharistic nourishment: "*it is the food that transforms you into itself*". The arrow is reversed. The passive becomes active, the active becomes passive. The one who eats is transformed by what is eaten — not the reverse. And what is produced is not the assimilation of the given to the receiver, but the transformation of the receiver to the given. This is what Augustine calls, in the same context, the "*food of the mature*": not the nourishment that sustains us while remaining what it is, but the nourishment that transforms us into what it is. Grow — and then you will feed on me: the capacity to receive this nourishment is itself the fruit of the transformation it operates.

In the vocabulary of the Mahoukou Law, this inversion is the most precise marker of eucharistic Resonance in its radical specificity. Ordinary Resonance in the C·R·R triad is mutually transformative — both poles of the triad are transformed by the exchange. Eucharistic Resonance is mutually transformative in an asymmetric and paradoxical way: the one who gives himself as nourishment does not change — he is what he is, given once and for all in the paschal event. But the receiver is transformed in the direction of what is received: they progressively become what they are nourished by. This is Resonance as reverse assimilation — not the assimilation of the given to the receiver, but the assimilation of the receiver to the given.

### ***C. Abiding in Me — The Johannine Dimension***

The Gospel of John brings a dimension that the Synoptic institution narratives had not developed with the same amplitude: the dimension of *dwelling*. The bread of life discourse (John 6:51-58) and the farewell discourse (John 15:1-10) together constitute a Johannine theology of eucharistic Resonance that extends beyond the single moment of celebration to encompass the whole of the believer's existence.

John 6:56 sets out the fundamental equation: "*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in them*" (*ho trōgōn mou tēn sarka kai pinōn mou to haima en emoi menei kagō en autō*). The verb *menein* — to abide, to remain, to dwell — is one of the most theologically

charged verbs in Johannine vocabulary. It designates a stable, lasting, non-accidental presence: not a visit but a dwelling, not a passage but an inhabitation. What eucharistic nourishment produces is not a momentary transformation linked to the act of eating — it is a mutual dwelling; the believer abides in Christ, and Christ abides in the believer.

This double dwelling is the Johannine form of permanent eucharistic Resonance. It says that Resonance does not cease with the end of the liturgical office — it inscribes itself in the very structure of the believer's existence, it becomes the milieu in which they live, think, act and relate to others. Eucharistic nourishment produces not a momentary transformation but a habitual transformation — a new way of being in the world, in the same way that ordinary nourishment, progressively assimilated, constitutes the flesh and energy of the body over time.

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## **II. The Temporality of Resonance — The Heart of the Confessional Debate**

### ***A. What the Catholic-Protestant Debate Really Says***

The quarrel between Catholics and Protestants over the Real Presence is one of the oldest and most persistent in Christian history. It erupts in the sixteenth century in the debate between Luther and Zwingli (Colloquy of Marburg, 1529), continues through the positions of Calvin, Bucer and Melanchthon, and structures to this day the difference between the major Christian traditions. It has produced anathemas, excommunications, wars — and it remains unresolved.

But behind the dogmatic formulations — transubstantiation, consubstantiation, spiritual presence, memorial — lies a precise phenomenological question that the protagonists have not always explicitly formulated: *what is the temporality of eucharistic Resonance?* Is the Resonance produced in the eucharistic celebration linked to the liturgical act in its proper temporality — and does it cease with it? Or does it persist in the consecrated element beyond the celebration — independently of reception by the faithful? It is this question about the temporality of Resonance that the Mahoukou Law enables us to reformulate with new precision.

### ***B. The Protestant Position — Resonance Bound to the Act***

The Reformed position — in its principal formulations, from Zwingli to Calvin through the Helvetic Confessions — holds that Christ's presence in the Eucharist is real but bound to the liturgical act of celebration and reception by the faithful. It is not in the bread apart from this act — it is in the act itself, in the relation between Christ and the believers that occurs in the celebration. Outside this act, the consecrated bread is once more simply bread.

This position has a real phenomenological coherence that the Mahoukou Law can recognise and even value. It says something true about the structure of the eucharistic Call: the Call is not an inert property of an object — it is a relational structure, an event that occurs between a Caller and Respondents. The Call does not exist without someone to whom it is addressed. And eucharistic Resonance is above all a communal Resonance — it occurs in the assembly of believers, it is carried by the celebrating community, it is *koinōnia* in the Pauline sense. This position also preserves something essential about the freedom of Response: a permanent Call, independent of any act of reception, might risk losing its Call-structure and becoming an imposed presence — an evidence that precedes and conditions the Response rather than an alterity that invites it.

### *C. The Catholic Position — Permanent Resonance*

The Catholic position — formalised at the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and reaffirmed in all subsequent magisterial texts — holds that the transubstantiation effected in the consecration persists in the consecrated host beyond the celebration. Christ's presence in the eucharistic bread is real, substantial and permanent — it does not depend on reception by the faithful, it does not cease with the end of the liturgical office. It is this permanence that grounds the practice of the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament — the preservation of consecrated hosts in the tabernacle — and all forms of eucharistic devotion associated with it: adoration, benediction, processions, visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

This position also says something phenomenologically profound that the Mahoukou Law can recognise. It says that eucharistic Resonance is not merely a momentary event linked to the celebration — it is a permanent ontological modification of the consecrated element. What took place in the consecration is not an act whose effects cease with the act itself — it is a real transformation, inscribed in the reality of the host. Eucharistic Resonance has a structural permanence that transcends the temporality of the liturgical

act. This position also says something important about the Johannine notion of dwelling: if *Christ abides* in the believer — if eucharistic Resonance is a lasting inhabitation and not a momentary passage — then it is philosophically coherent that Christ's presence in the consecrated host should also be lasting.

#### *D. What Each Position Risks Leaving in Shadow*

The Mahoukou Law is not an arbiter in this confessional debate — it has no competence to decide between two theological traditions each carrying a long and rigorous reflection on the eucharistic mystery. But it can identify what each position risks leaving in shadow if developed without the corrective of the other.

The Protestant position, in its most radical formulations — those that reduce the Eucharist to a mere commemorative memorial — risks losing the dimension of permanent Resonance that John formulates in the notion of dwelling. If Christ's presence in the Eucharist is entirely dependent on the act of reception by the faithful, it becomes difficult to account for the continuous inhabitation that John 6:56 describes. Resonance becomes momentary where the Johannine text describes it as habitual.

The Catholic position, in certain of its scholastic formulations — those that insist on the transformation of the *substance* of bread outside any relational framework — risks losing the event-like and communal dimension of the eucharistic Call. If Christ's presence in the host is entirely independent of the celebrating and receiving community, it becomes difficult to account for the *koinōnia* dimension that Paul places at the centre of his eucharistic theology. Resonance becomes a property of the object where Paul describes it as a communal constitution.

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### **III. A Phenomenological Reformulation — Lasting and Actualised Resonance**

#### *A. Two Dimensions of Eucharistic Resonance*

The Mahoukou Law enables us to distinguish two dimensions of eucharistic Resonance that the confessional debate has tended to oppose where they are in fact complementary and structurally linked. **Lasting Resonance** is the ontological transformation produced in the consecrated host — the real modification of the eucharistic element by which Christ makes himself present under the species of bread and wine. **Actualised Resonance** is the

transformation produced in the receiving community — the communal *koinōnia*, the Johannine inhabitation, the constitution of the ecclesial body.

These two dimensions of Resonance do not exclude each other — they mutually imply each other. Lasting Resonance in the host is the condition of Actualised Resonance in the believer: it is because Christ's presence is real and permanent in the consecrated bread that receiving this bread can produce the transformation John 6:56 describes. And Actualised Resonance in the believer is the purpose of Lasting Resonance in the host: the permanence of eucharistic presence is not an end in itself — it is in the service of the continuous inhabitation of Christ in his members.

A synthesis may be formulated: *eucharistic Resonance is permanent in its structure and communal in its actualisation*. Permanence (Catholic) and community (Protestant) are not two competing properties of the same reality — they are two complementary dimensions of eucharistic Resonance in all its depth.

#### ***B. The Lasting Resonance — What the Tabernacle Signifies***

The tabernacle is the institution in which the Catholic tradition has given an architectural and liturgical form to Lasting Resonance. Not a storage cupboard — a space of dwelling. Not a functional container — a place of presence. The tabernacle says: eucharistic Resonance does not cease with the end of the liturgical office. It abides. It is there — available, silent, permanent — for the one who enters the church outside the hours of celebration.

This institution has a precise phenomenological significance within the Mahoukou Law framework. It says that the eucharistic Call is a Call that does not withdraw with the end of the celebration — a Call that remains available, that waits, that is there for the Respondent who comes to seek what they need. The tabernacle is the institution of the permanent availability of the Call — the liturgical and architectural form by which the community says: here, the Call is always awaiting a Response. The small red lamp — the sanctuary lamp — that burns permanently before the tabernacle in Catholic churches is the simplest and most eloquent sign of Lasting Resonance. It says: here, someone is present. Not something — someone. A Caller who abides, who is there, who waits.

### ***C. Eucharistic Adoration — Response to the Permanent Call***

The practice of eucharistic adoration — silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament exposed or reserved in the tabernacle — is the most direct form of Response to Lasting Resonance. It says: I recognise that you are here. I come to place myself in the presence of your presence. I respond to your permanent Call by my silent availability.

This practice has a precise phenomenological structure within the Mahoukou Law. The worshipper does not seek to produce an experience — they place themselves in the conditions in which the Resonance already produced by the consecration can continue to operate within them. Eucharistic adoration is not an attempt to create a new Resonance — it is the conscious inhabitation of a Resonance already given. It is the Response to a Call that precedes the Response — the purest form of Marcellian availability: being there, open, without agenda, without particular petition, simply present to a presence.

### ***D. The Reservation for the Sick — The Call That Goes to the Absent***

There is a dimension of the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament that the theological debate on the Real Presence has sometimes neglected in its focus on ontological questions: the reservation of the Eucharist for the sick and dying. From the origins of Christian practice, consecrated hosts have been preserved precisely in order to be brought to those who could not participate in the communal celebration — the sick, the imprisoned, the dying.

This practice reveals something essential about the structure of the permanent eucharistic Call in the Mahoukou Law. The eucharistic Call is not only available for those who can come to the church — it is *portable*, it can go to those who cannot come to it. The reservation of the Eucharist for the sick is the most radical form of this movement: the Call that leaves its habitual dwelling to go to those whose vulnerability prevents them from coming. This dimension is phenomenologically very close to the structure of the christological Call on the Emmaus road: "*Jesus himself drew near*" (Luke 24:15). The Call takes the initiative, the Call goes to the Respondent where they are — precisely the structure that the Emmaus narrative reveals as characteristic of the divine Call.

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## **IV. A Piece of Bread — Matter as the Place of Resonance**

### ***A. The Scandal of Materiality***

One must return, at the end of this analysis, to what we started from: a piece of bread. A host. What one holds between two fingers. There is here something that resists every tendency toward spiritualisation — and this resistance is phenomenologically constitutive.

The two great temptations of eucharistic theology have always been, on one side, naive materialism — treating eucharistic presence as a physically locatable presence, reducible to the categories of material substance — and on the other, volatilising spiritualism — reducing eucharistic presence to a purely spiritual, interior presence, independent of the materiality of bread and wine. The Catholic tradition, in its doctrine of transubstantiation, refused both tendencies — with the conceptual means available at the time, that is, Aristotelian philosophy of substance and accident.

The Mahoukou Law can reformulate this refusal in contemporary phenomenological language. The eucharistic Call is not locatable in the matter of bread as a physical property — it cannot be detected by any instrument of measurement, it produces no chemical effect different from that of ordinary bread. But neither is it purely spiritual, interior, independent of matter — it passes through the matter of bread, it is bound to it, it cannot be separated from it without losing its specificity. It is an embodied Call — in the proper sense of the term: inscribed in the flesh of the bread as Christ inscribed himself in human flesh.

### ***B. The Incarnation as Model of Eucharistic Presence***

The Christian theological tradition has always thought the Eucharist in continuity with the Incarnation — and this continuity is phenomenologically fruitful. In the Incarnation, the divine did not dissolve into the human, nor was the human absorbed by the divine: the two natures coexisted in a union without confusion or separation (the formula of the Council of Chalcedon, 451). It is the same structure, transposed into the eucharistic register, that accounts for Christ's presence in the consecrated bread: the divine and the material coexist without either absorbing the other, without matter ceasing to be matter and without divine presence being reduced to matter.

In the vocabulary of the Mahoukou Law, this Chalcedonian structure applied to the Eucharist says something important about the nature of the eucharistic Call. The eucharistic Call is embodied — it passes through matter without being reducible to it. It is carried by the matter of bread without being a material property of bread. It uses materiality as a *medium* of presence without being absorbed by that materiality. This is the very structure of the authentic Call in the Mahoukou Law: it comes from an alterity, it embodies itself in a gesture or a word, but it always exceeds what carries it.

### *C. What a Piece of Bread Can Bear*

At the end of this analysis, one must return to the piece of bread in all its material simplicity — and wonder at what it can bear.

A piece of bread can bear an absolute Call — the kenotic gift of the one who gave himself once and for all in the paschal event. A piece of bread can bear a Lasting Resonance — the permanent presence of Christ who abides in the consecrated host, available for the Respondent who comes. A piece of bread can bear an Actualised Resonance — the transformation of the believer who receives it, the Johannine inhabitation, the progressive constitution of the body of Christ in the world. And a piece of bread can bear a Missionary Resonance — the sending back into the world, the dispatch into history, the eschatological opening toward what will come.

This is not magic — it is the logic of the Incarnation taken to its conclusion. If the Word could incarnate himself in human flesh — in the fragility of a mortal body, in the vulnerability of a historically limited existence — then nothing is philosophically absurd in the idea that he might inscribe himself in the fragility of a piece of bread. The question is not: is this possible? The question is: is this coherent with the structure of the divine Call as the Christian tradition understands it? And the Mahoukou Law's answer is: yes — because the structure of the veiled Call, of the presence that gives itself in fragility and discretion rather than in evidence and power, is precisely the structure of the christological Call from the Incarnation to the cross, from Emmaus to the tabernacle.

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## **Conclusion — What the Mahoukou Law Brings to Both Traditions**

At the conclusion of this text, the central thesis can be formulated in its most concentrated form. The quarrel between Catholics and Protestants over the Real Presence is not, in its depth, a quarrel about the existence or non-existence of a presence. It is a quarrel about the temporality of eucharistic Resonance — about how its permanence and its communal actualisation articulate. And it is precisely this articulation that the Mahoukou Law enables us to rethink without dissolving confessional differences in a vague synthesis.

What the Mahoukou Law brings to the Catholic tradition is a phenomenological language for saying what the doctrine of transubstantiation has always sought to say — without the Aristotelian categories that have sometimes given the impression of a physically locatable and materially detectable presence. Lasting Resonance is not a chemical property of the consecrated bread — it is a real ontological modification of its relational structure: the consecrated host is that bread which bears within it a permanent Call, available for every Respondent who comes to receive it. The tabernacle is the institution of this permanent availability — the dwelling of the Call that waits.

What the Mahoukou Law brings to the Protestant tradition is a phenomenological reformulation of the permanence of eucharistic presence that does not require the contested onto-theological categories. The permanence of eucharistic Resonance can be thought not as the localisation of a divine substance in a material object, but as the persistence of a Call inscribed in the consecrated matter — a Call that does not withdraw with the end of the office, that remains available for the Respondents who come, that bears within it the Johannine dwelling. This reformulation does not impose the Catholic doctrine on Protestants — it offers a phenomenological level of understanding at which both traditions can meet without negating each other.

And what the Mahoukou Law brings to both traditions together is the awareness that the debate over the Real Presence is a debate about something absolutely fundamental — not a secondary theological dispute, but the question of whether the Resonance of the gift can be permanent, whether the Call can abide after the act that produced it, and whether matter can be the place of a presence that transcends it without denying it. These are the deepest questions the Mahoukou Law addresses to all human existence — and the Eucharist poses them in their most radical form, in the fragility of a piece of bread.

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