This chapter will have eight parts: (1) the present context: ecumenical and Catholic; (2) general eucharistic theology before Trent; (3) Catholic eucharistic theology on the eve of Trent; (4) the Eucharist at Trent; (5) Post-Tridentine Catholic theology of the Eucharist as sacrifice; (6) the Tridentine legacy in modern Catholic eucharistic theology; (7) transcending Trent; (8) coda.

The Present Context: Ecumenical, and Catholic

Although this article is primarily historical, it is being written from within the ecumenical context of the second decade of the twenty-first century. My eucharistic theology originally took its academic shape within the typical pre-Vatican II atmosphere of the traditional Roman Catholic seminary system of the 1950s and early 1960s. By the mid-1970s I was teaching Catholic eucharistic theology at (the Jesuit) Boston College, but within the Boston Theological Institute, \(^1\) I was doing that in an increasingly ecumenical context. From the mid-1980s, as an active member of the North American Academy of Liturgy, the international Societas Liturgica, more recently the Jungmann Society of Jesuits in the Liturgy and the Society of Oriental Liturgy, my eucharistic study, while remaining Roman Catholic, has also become consciously and profoundly ecumenical in both method and content. Most liturgical scholars, especially the older ones among us, have similar stories to tell—stories with Catholics learning from Protestants, and Protestants from Catholics, and with both of us also learning from the East. But not all are happy with this situation. The so-called “liturgy wars,” with some wanting to defend or even accelerate the various liturgical

\(^1\) The Boston Theological Institute (BTI) is a closely cooperating association of ten theological schools or faculties in the Boston area: Andover Newton Theological School, Boston College Department of Theology, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Boston University School of Theology, Episcopal Divinity School, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Harvard Divinity School, Hebrew College, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Saint John’s Seminary.
reforms and others wanting to roll them back or “reform the reforms,” are not something that affect only Roman Catholics.

Why this autobiographical information? It is because no scholar is unaffected by these developments. No one comes to this topic without various biases that, consciously or not, inevitably affect one’s judgment. As the reader will notice, I will not try to hide my biases. I will, rather, try to make them as transparent as possible so that my readers can decide for themselves just how far to agree or disagree with the way that I present and judge things.

**General Eucharistic Theology before Trent**

Gary Macy’s chapter on the medieval theology of the Eucharist provides excellent background for this chapter. For the more immediate background, see Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West.* In general, it is important to keep in mind the thoroughly medieval nature of the eucharistic theology that European Christians shared with each other, or argued about, on the eve of the Council of Trent. At this time theologians—though not necessarily all popular preachers—focused above all “on the mystery of the sacraments of the body and blood and the efficacy of the eucharistic sacrifice for the living and the dead.”

Since the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), the theory of transubstantiation had been the most widespread explanation of the dogma of the eucharistic real presence. Those who may have preferred the theory of consubstantiation—or “coexistence” as Macy refers to it—such as the fourteenth-century William of Ockham, would nevertheless, generally, hold for transubstantiation because of Church authority. It was in this

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4 *Transubstantiation* means the conversion of the whole substance of the bread and the wine into the whole substance of the body and the blood of Christ, with only the “accidents” (i.e., the appearances of the bread and the wine) remaining. For a balanced, brief, and nuanced description of this term, see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1997), p. 1637.

5 *Consubstantiation* means that after the consecration, the substances both of the body and the blood of Christ and of the bread and the wine coexist in union with each other. See *The Oxford Dictionary*, p. 408.

6 Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West*, p. 156. In this discussion the following terms are frequently found. The *consecration*, as a part of the Mass, refers to the act whereby the