The Rev'd Dr. Stephen Reynolds 1951-2011
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[This volume and its companion volume, *Theologies of the Eucharist II: The Anglican Tradition* comprise the final version of lectures and notes composed, printed and handed out to students by Professor Stephen Reynolds in various systematic theology courses taught in the Faculty of Divinity of Trinity College, beginning in 1998 and continuing to the time of his death in 2011. They are here published together by the Faculty of Divinity in honour of the work of a consummate teacher.

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1.

New Testament Texts on the Lord’s Supper
INTRODUCTION

We begin our study of the eucharist where eucharistic practice and thought began, in the New Testament. Or rather, in the eucharistic practice and thought that we find reflected in various writings of the New Testament. For Christians had been doing the Lord’s supper for some time when Paul wrote about it in 1 Corinthians (ca. 55 CE), and for even longer when the three synoptic evangelists recounted the story of Jesus’ last supper. Indeed, Paul expressly and the synoptics implicitly claimed only to be “handing on” what they themselves had received. In other words, by the time they were writing, “the Lord’s supper” had already become tradition.

It is also clear from Paul and the three synoptic evangelists that this tradition was anchored on the institution narrative – the account of what Jesus himself had done with, and most especially said about, the bread and the cup at supper with his disciples “on the night when he was betrayed”. In fact, with the fourfold witness of Paul and the synoptics, no other eucharistic tradition is so well attested in the New Testament as the institution narrative. This appears to lock the eucharist into an association with the passion and death of Christ: he instituted it, after all, “on the night when he was betrayed”.

Here, however, we need to attend to other strands within the eucharistic witness of the New Testament. Luke’s Gospel has its own version of the institution narrative, but it also associates “the breaking of the bread” with the appearances of the risen Jesus. Moreover, John’s Gospel takes pains to align the eating of the bread of life with resurrection “on the last day”. I do not mean to suggest that these two strands represent an alternative etiology of the eucharist, in opposition to that represented by the tradition of the institution narrative. Quite the contrary. According to Luke, the last thing that rabbi Jesus did among his disciples was to break bread with them; the first thing that the risen Christ did was to appear to two disciples, expound the Scriptures to them, and then make himself “known to them in the breaking of the bread”. The Lord’s supper/eucharist ensured continuity in the disciples’ experience of Jesus. They knew that the risen Lord was indeed the same person as their crucified rabbi, at least in part because the context in which they experienced his presence now was the same

as the context in which they had last experienced his presence then, namely, “in the breaking of bread”.

The issue of continuity, of course, only serves to heighten the importance of the institution narrative. For if the eucharistic experience of the apostolic Church was primarily experience of the risen Jesus, it was the terminus of a paschal trajectory which began with the last supper. The institution narrative thus secured the trajectory’s base and the course of its meanings and associations.

This is not to say that the Lord’s supper as practised in the apostolic Church was simply the same, without remainder, as the last supper of Jesus “on the night when he was betrayed” – any more than the Passover seder as practised by Jews of the first century C.E. was wholly identical with the meal that their ancestors ate hurriedly on the night before Moses led them out of Egypt. Just as Jews could never eat the seder as if the original passing-over of “the angel of the LORD” (and of their ancestors from Egypt to the Promised Land) had not in truth happened, so Christians could not celebrate the Lord’s supper as if the resurrection had never happened. This comparison, in fact, may help to explain why the synoptic evangelists insist that the last supper actually took place on the evening of Passover – that it was, in fact, the Passover seder. Thus the meal was not a self-contained, “one-off” event. It referred forward to the passover that Jesus was about to undergo, just as the first seder in Egypt had referred forward to the exodus that the Hebrews were about to begin. Paul captured this forward reference in the line with which he concluded his version of the institution narrative: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

The synoptic tradition of the narrative captured the same reference in words that Jesus himself spoke concerning the cup or, in Luke’s version, concerning the whole meal as well: “He said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’” Hence the significance of the supper at Emmaus in Luke: the passover had been fulfilled, the kingdom of God had come in the person of the risen Lord.

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3 1 Corinthians 11.26.


5 Neither Mark nor Matthew recounts any meal in their resurrection narratives; but John 21.9-13 – the breakfast on the beach of the Sea of Tiberias – joins Luke in bearing witness that such a meal or meals
The trouble is, we cannot be certain that the last supper was indeed a Passover seder. For not only is there a lack of clarity in the New Testament evidence; there is also a flat contradiction. Paul says only that the supper took place “on the night when [the Lord Jesus] was betrayed”; he does not tell us which night that was. The synoptic evangelists and John agree that such a supper occurred on the night before Jesus was crucified; but the two traditions contradict one another as to the date. Mark, Matthew, and Luke set the supper after nightfall of the parasceve (day of preparation) – that is, by Jewish reckoning, on the feast of Passover itself. Thus, Jesus ate the meal, was betrayed, suffered, and died, all on the day of Passover. By contrast, John sets the supper on the night before the day of preparation – so that Jesus was crucified on the parasceve, when the Passover lambs were sacrificed in the Temple in preparation for the seder. Many scholars prefer the Johannine chronology, simply because it is, in relation to the synoptic witness, the lectio difficilior – and “the more difficult reading is to be preferred.” Other scholars are not convinced, because the Johannine chronology is just too neat in its symbolism; it has the Lamb of God crucified on Golgotha about the same time as the Passover lambs were being slaughtered in the Temple. If we could simply tally up the number of accounts, we would have to say that three synoptics carry the day against one John, and the last supper occurred on Passover. But the synoptic testimony presents problems of its own. It has long been recognised that the synoptic accounts do not represent three independent witnesses but, to all intents and purposes, one witness. Matthew’s account of the supper is simply a redaction of Mark’s account; most of Luke’s account is also a reworking of the Markan narrative – except for Luke 22.15-17, which is derived from a source peculiar to Luke. And what about Mark’s account itself? Most scholars consider it to be derived from a source independent of Paul. This means that the association of the last supper with Passover goes back at least one stage earlier in the tradition. Add to this the fact that Mark, unlike Luke, shows no special interest in making theological hay out of the association with Passover, and it seems unlikely that Mark made the whole thing up. But that still leaves us with the Markan

did form a part of the traditions regarding the appearances of the risen Jesus.

tradition pitted against the Johannine tradition, for a tied score. And in this particular game, there is no such thing as sudden death overtime.

Textual and historical criticism, then, does not have the wherewithal to determine whether the synoptics or John were right — whether the crucifixion took place on Passover or the day before, and therefore, whether the last supper was in truth a Passover seder or another of the several kinds of fellowship meals practised by ancient Hebrews. But if historical research cannot prove that these things took place on (or at least around the time of) Passover, neither can it prove that they did not. Here we might remember Paul’s declaration: “For Christ our passover [or our paschal lamb] has been sacrificed.” This does not settle the chronological issue one way or the other. Paul’s declaration simply indicates that Christians of the apostolic era understood the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the light of Passover — or rather, as an event which was itself paschal. And since Jesus himself was (and is) the new Passover, the Lord’s supper/eucharist took on the character of a new kind of Passover meal. In its original forms, this Christian passover was almost certainly indebted to the Jewish seder; but it also must have involved alterations in the seder’s structure and content, if only because it seems to have been eaten much more frequently than just once a year, perhaps even weekly.

This explains why liturgical scholars — although they have discovered the liturgical equivalent of DNA, or even the genome, of the Christian eucharistic tradition in the Jewish tradition of table prayers and blessings for food — have not been able to reconstruct the apostolic form(s) of the Lord’s supper/eucharist. Paul’s

7 1 Corinthians 5.7. This, of course, is the source of the acclamation found in several Anglican eucharistic liturgies — e.g. AmerBCP 1979 (at the fraction), pp. 337 (Rite One), 364 (Rite Two); CanBAS 1985 (anthem at communion), p. 246.

8 Cf. Acts 2.42: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Acts 20.7, 11: “On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight…. Then Paul went upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he continued to converse with them until dawn; then he left.” Cf. also 1 Corinthians 11.18-20: “For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you…. When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord’s supper.” The implication here is that, when the Corinthian believers “came together as a church,” they ate the Lord’s supper — meaning, they did the supper as often as the church gathered.
testimony in 1 Corinthians 11 and the synoptic tradition of the institution narrative are, of course, precious for what they say – but they are also the scholars’ nightmare for what they do not say. They do indeed recount a meal which really happened, and transmit some details of what actually happened at that meal. But it is important to recognise that the narrative traditions do not constitute a blow-by-blow account of the last meal that Jesus shared with his disciples nor, in Paul’s case, of the apostolic Lord’s supper. What was “handed on” was limited to those aspects which distinguished this meal from any other meal.

Furthermore, in Paul’s testimony, it is not clear from what he wrote how – or even whether – the narrative was used in the Lord’s supper. And, if it comes to that, what was the format of that supper itself? Was it a meal still very close to the Passover seder, in that the blessing and sharing of a common loaf and a common cup defined the banquet and made the whole event, with all the other foods eaten at it, the Lord’s supper? Or was it a separate meal which took place either before or after what was essentially a pot-luck supper? From our perspective, Paul’s remarks could be taken to imply either. We might wish that he had said more, a lot more. But Paul was not writing for the ages; he was writing at a particular time for particular reasons to a particular community, whose members were no strangers either to him or to the Lord’s supper. So he did not have to go into the sort of details that we would dearly love to know. And why should he have done? After all, he expected to visit them again. And so, “About the other things I will give instructions when I come.”9 Liturgical scholars read that verse and weep.

Although Paul and the evangelists give us little more than tantalising hints of what the apostolic churches did when they assembled for the Lord’s supper, yet the following readings do allow us to gather a very real sense of what those writers thought about it – so long as we seek to read them on their own terms, not ours. We should not expect to find a concept of “Real Presence” framed in the terms which have made it so contested an issue in western Christendom. Nevertheless, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Paul, Luke, and John had, at the very least, a notion of real communion with Christ at the Lord’s supper. “The cup of blessing that we bless,” Paul asked rhetorically, “is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?” This is also where Luke’s doublet of the last supper and the post-resurrection supper at Emmaus becomes especially significant. Whatever one thinks about the historical credibility of the Emmaus story, it may reflect a

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9 1 Corinthians 11.34.
conviction in the first and second generations of Christians that the risen Lord himself presided at the Lord’s supper and was thus experienced as truly present. If that were the case, the Lord’s supper was far more than an increasingly ritualised replication of his last supper; and if the narrative of that supper provided the warrant for the eucharist, it was for the sake of anchoring the community in Christ’s own passover even as they shared the (new) passover that he was (and is). The Lord whose presence they currently shared at the eucharist was indeed the same Jesus who, before he was crucified, instituted the feast they were sharing. In other words, Christ “was known in the breaking of the bread,” not as a couple of things (body and blood) displacing other things (bread and wine), but precisely as a personal presence in the midst of those who gathered in his name.

The following readings are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, Copyright 1989, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

*
1 Corinthians 10, 11

1. Paul

1 Corinthians 10

Paul is discussing whether it is appropriate for a Christian to eat meat which has been sacrificed in pagan temples in honour of “the gods”.

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

6 Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. 7 Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.”† 8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.‡ 9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents.* 10 And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. § 11 These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. 13 No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. 15 I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one

† Exodus 32.6; Psalm 106.14.
‡ Numbers 25.1-9.
* Numbers 21.4-6.
§ Numbers 14.36-37.
body, for we all partake of the one bread. 18 Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? 19 What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. 9 I do not want you to be partners with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 22 Or are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

23 “All things are lawful,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. 24 Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other. 25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience, 26 for “the earth and its fullness are the Lord’s.” 27 If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. 28 But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience – 29 I mean the other’s conscience, not your own. For why should my liberty be subject to the judgement of someone else’s conscience? 30 If I partake with thankfulness, why should I be denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. 32 Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved.

* * *

1 Corinthians 11.17-34

Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 10 For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. 11 Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. 20 When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord’s supper. 21 For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with

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9 Cf. Deuteronomy 32.17.

† Psalm 24.1.
1 Corinthians 10, 11

your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. 22What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 24and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. 28Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves. 30For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. 32But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

33 So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

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2.

Synoptic Gospels:
The Institution Narratives

Mark 14.12-26

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, “Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” 13 So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ ” 15 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

Matthew 26.17-30

On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’ ” 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

Luke 22.7-39

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it.” 9 They asked him, “Where do you want us to make preparations for it?” 10 “Listen,” he said to them, “when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks you, “Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” ’ 12 He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there.” 13 So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

14 When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. 15 He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this
And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” 19 They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, “Surely, not I?” 20 He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. 21 For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.”

22 While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.”

21 And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” 22 And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, “Surely not I, Lord?” 23 He answered, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24 The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.”

25 Judas, who betrayed him, said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” He replied, “You have said so.”

26 While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”

27 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “This is my cup of salvation; this is the blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 28 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” 17 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; 18 for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

Then he took a loaf of 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.” 20 And he did the same with the cup.
from it. 24He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

“Drink from it, all of you; 28for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

21But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. 22For the Son of Man is going as it has been deter-mined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!” 23Then they began to ask one another, which one of them it could be who would do this.

24 A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. 25But he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. 26But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. 27For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. 28 “You are those who have stood by me in my trials; 29and I confer on you, just as
my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

31 “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

33 And he said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!”

34 Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me.”

35 He said to them, “When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “No, not a thing.”

36 He said to them, “But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, ‘And he was counted among the lawless’; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled.”

§ Cf. Isaiah 53.12.
26. When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

30. When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

look, here are two swords.” He replied, “It is enough.”
3.
The Supper at Emmaus

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. 18Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” 19He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” 25Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” 27Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. 30When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to
That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.
After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capharnaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

The next day the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there. They also saw that Jesus had not got into the boat with his disciples, but that
his disciples had gone away alone. 23 Then some boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” 26 Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” 28 Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” 29 Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” 30 So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? 31 Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ” 32 Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” 34 They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” 35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37 Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; 38 for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.”

41 Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” 42 They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” 43 Jesus answered them, “Do not complain among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ †

† Cf. Exodus 16.2-5, 13-15; Psalm 78.25; Psalm 105.40.

‡ Isaiah 54.13.
John 6

Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.” He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.”

66 Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.” He was speaking of Judas son of Simon Iscariot, for he, though one of the twelve, was going to betray him.
INTRODUCTION

IN 1873 Philotheos Bryennios, then principal of the higher Greek School in Constantinople (Istanbul), was doing research in the library of the Jerusalem Monastery of the Most Holy Sepulchre, also in Istanbul. He came across a parchment manuscript whose scribe, one Leon, noted that he completed the entire transcription on Tuesday, 11 June 1056. Sixth in Leon’s collection was a short work, bearing the title ΔΙ∆ΑΧΗ ΤΩΝ ΔΩ∆ΕΚΑ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΩΝ (Didaché tén dodeka Apostolôn), Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. Bryennios was no amateur; he knew that he had come upon the only known copy of a text which patristic scholars hitherto had presumed lost.¹ He began work on a critical edition of the entire document, which he labelled “The Jerusalem Manuscript”. Two years later he issued the first instalment, an edition of the manuscript’s copy of the Epistles of Clement. That same year, however, he was elected archbishop of Serrae and thus became metropolitan of Nicomedia. His archiepiscopal duties prevented Bryennios from producing the first critical edition of Didaché until 1883, a full decade after he had discovered it in the Jerusalem Manuscript.

Over the next fifty years, a number of fragments of the Didaché came to light – two leaves of parchment from a fourth-century Greek codex, discovered in 1922; a single papyrus sheet, discovered in 1923 and probably dating from the early fifth century, which contains a Coptic version of § 10.3b – § 12.2a;² and

¹ Both Eusebius in his History of the Church (III, § 25) and Athanasius in his Easter Letter 39 (367 C.E.) refer to the Didaché as a writing which did not belong to the canon of the Scriptures but enjoyed the status of “recommended reading” – a work which (as the Anglican Articles of Religion VI puts it) “the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine”. These statements by Eusebius and Athanasius, together with allusions to and citations from the Didaché in other ancient Christian writers, were all that were known of the document before Bryennios’s discovery.

² Coptic was the native language of Egyptians before the Muslim conquest in the seventh century; it remains the liturgical language of
portions of an Ethiopic version of the text (§ 11.3–§ 13.7 and § 8.1-2), incorporated into a mid-fourth century Ethiopian recension of the widely disseminated *Apostolic Canons*. These fragments, though their texts sometimes vary from the text established by Archbishop Bryennios, corroborated beyond any sustainable doubt that Bryennios had indeed discovered a complete version of the *Didaché*.

The contents of *Didaché* are something of a mixed bag. The first six sections provide an outline of baptismal catechesis; they sketch “the two ways” (of life and of death) concerning which all candidates for baptism should be instructed. The next four sections deal with liturgical matters: § 7.1-4 discusses baptism, with an appendix (in § 8.1-3) on fasting and prayer; § 9.1 – § 10.7 provide rules for eucharistising. *Didaché* then morphs into the genre of “church order” and lays down rules concerning relations between a local church’s leadership and itinerant (Christian) prophets and teachers (§ 11.3 – § 13.7), concerning the reconciliation of sinners (§ 14.1-7), and concerning the election of bishops and deacons and other matters of church-discipline (§ 15.1-4). The document concludes (§ 16.1-8) with an instruction regarding the apocalypse at the end-time (*eschaton*). The *Didaché* is, in short, a compilation of texts belonging to different genres of early Christian literature.

This very fact has bedevilled efforts to date the document. Some scholars, for example, focusing on the provisions regarding baptism, eucharistising, and itinerant (Christian) prophets, argued that the *Didaché* must have been composed in the late first century – in other words, it was roughly contemporary with John’s Gospel. Other scholars concentrated on provisions regarding the election of bishops and deacons; they noted that evidence for the existence of such orders is very sparse before the second century, and concluded that the *Didaché* could not have been composed much before 120 or 140 C.E. Over the past twenty years, however, scholars have moved away from this “either/or” style of debate and developed a consensus based on the recognition that the document is, in fact, a *compilation*. This means that the author/compiler/editor drew together a number of otherwise independent texts with a variety of dates. The liturgical portions are generally conceded to be very early indeed, most probably

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3 The reason for using this term, instead of saying “the eucharist,” will become apparent in the course of reading *Didaché*’s text.
The Didache § 9 – § 10, § 14.1-3

from the second half of the first century C.E. The portions concerning the “orders” of ministry – itinerant prophets and teachers, resident bishops and deacons – may reflect a church in transition, when “charismatic” ministries from the apostolic era still overlapped with stable hierarchical ministries.\(^4\) By contrast, the concluding apocalyptic section appears to have come from the author/compiler’s own pen and thus is relatively late. The same pen can be detected in editorial passages scattered throughout the older texts.\(^5\)

Here I have included only those sections of the Didaché which have to do with “the giving of thanks” – § 9-§ 10, and § 14.1-3. There has been a great deal of debate about the nature of the meal for which these sections provide directions. For much of the twentieth century, the majority report of scholars hesitated to identify it, without strong reservations, as the Lord’s Supper. The basic objection was the text’s lack of an institution narrative. Scholars, working from western Christendom’s fixation on “the moment of consecration,” took it for granted that the institution narrative must have been, always and everywhere, unum necessarium, “the one thing necessary,” for a valid celebration of the eucharist. Since the Didache § 9-§ 10 lacked the narrative, went the argument, these sections must have been talking about another kind of primitive Christian communal meal – a meal most commonly labelled an agapé, that is, a “love-feast”. But a question arises: Is the doctrinal assumption about the necessity of the institution narrative historically valid, or is it merely an anachronism, the imposition of a later standard on an earlier situation? Scholarly opinion is by no means settled, much less uniform, in its response to this question. Nevertheless, the older view – that Didache § 9 – § 10 reflect an agapé, or some other kind of communal meal, not a form of the eucharist – has ceased to be the majority report. A growing number of scholars are willing to entertain the notion that § 9.1-4 and § 10.1-6, in particular, are

\(^4\) In any case, it is now acknowledged that the episcopal polity was probably established earlier and more widely than many Protestant scholars used to allow. In support of this, it may be noted that the genuine letters of Ignatius of Antioch, which set a very high premium on the office and authority of the bishop, are now commonly dated ca. 115 C.E.

“the ancient, even the archaic text of the source (liturgy),” and do indeed represent ordinances for a celebration of the eucharist.\textsuperscript{6}

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., p. 139. For a survey of the almost awesomely divergent assortment of interpretations proposed in the scholarly literature, see pp. 141-143.
\end{footnote}
Concerning the giving of thanks, give thanks in this way:

2. First, regarding the cup:
   We give you thanks, our Father,
   for the holy vine of your servant David,
   which you have made known to us
   through your servant [or child] Jesus.
   Glory to you for ever.

3. And regarding the broken bread:
   We give you thanks, our Father,
   for the life and knowledge
   which you have made known to us
   through your servant [or child] Jesus.
   Glory to you for ever and ever.

4. Just as this bread which is broken
   was first scattered on the mountains,
   then was gathered together and became one,
   so let your Church be gathered
   from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.
   For the glory and the power are yours,
   through Jesus Christ, for ever.

5. But let no one eat or drink of your thanksgiving except those
   who have been baptized in the name of the Lord. For concerning
   this also the Lord said, “Do not give what is holy to the dogs.”

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1 The noun here translated as the giving of thanks is 'η ευχαριστία (he eucharistía); the verb (present imperative plural) is 'ευχαριστήσατε (eucharistésate).

2 servant. The Greek word in both cases is παις (pais), which can mean either "(male) servant" or "(male) child". A colloquial translation would be “boy” – as in American usage, where “boy” could mean a young male (“My boy here”) and, in the southern United States, any black male. The latter usage popped up in the Glenn Miller hit of the 1940s, when railroad porters and stewards (i.e. servants) were predominantly black men: “Pardon me, boy, is that the Chattanooga choo-choo?”

3 Matthew 7.6.
And after you have eaten your fill, give thanks in this way:

2. We give thanks to you, holy Father, for your holy name which you made to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which you made known to us through your servant [or child] Jesus. Glory to you for ever and ever.

3. Almighty Lord, you created all things for your name’s sake, and gave food and drink to humans for their enjoyment, that they might give thanks to you. But to us you have imparted spiritual food and drink and eternal life through your servant [or child] Jesus.

4. Above all, we give you thanks because you are mighty. Glory to you for ever and ever.

5. Remember, Lord, your Church, to deliver it from all evil and to perfect it in your love. Gather it together from the four winds\(^4\) into your kingdom which you have prepared for it. For the power and the glory are yours for ever.

6. Let grace come, and let this world pass away! Hosanna to the God of David!\(^6\)

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\(^4\) Cf. Matthew 24.31: “And [the Son of Man] will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

\(^5\) \textit{(it being sanctified)} is absent from the Coptic version of the text as well as from \textit{The Apostolic Constitutions}, and may be a gloss interpolated later. There is as yet no consensus on the point among scholars.

\(^6\) Matthew 21.9, 15.
If any be holy, let him come;
if any be not, let him repent.
Marana tha! Amen.

7. But allow the prophets to give thanks as much as they want. 

On the Lord’s day of the Lord, come together, break bread and give thanks [eucharistésate], confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure. 2. But do not let anyone who has a quarrel with his comrade gather with you until they are reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be defiled. 3. For this is what was said by the Lord: “In every place and at every time offer me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is wonderful among the nations.”

7 1 Corinthians 16.22. Μαρανα θα (Marana tha) is the Greek transcription of an Aramaic phrase which means “Lord, come!”

8 The prophets were a distinct “order” within the hierarchy of the primitive churches – see Romans 12.6ff, 1 Corinthians 12.28, Ephesians 4.11 – but, as the next three chapters of Didache make clear, they were not bound to any one church and could take precedence over the resident episkopos (superintendent). The direction here means that the prophets did not have to follow the prayer-formulas appointed in this chapter, but could utter thanks extemporaneously (on the assumption that they were inspired by the Holy Spirit).

9 Malachi 1.11b, 14b.
Further Reading

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II.

Authors of the Catholic Tradition

Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, and Augustine

INTRODUCTION

There are authors, and then there are Authors. Some authors – like the author of this introductory essay – are merely writers, people who fit the immortal words of the Duke of Gloucester on receiving the second volume of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in 1781: “Another damned thick square book! Always scribble, scribble, scribble, eh, Mr Gibbon?” Other authors not only “scribble, scribble, scribble”; they also scribble to great effect. They are authors who have authority. A community or even a whole culture recognises – perhaps for the first time finds – its own voice in the voices of such authors/authorities. They not only identify and expound what is at stake in an issue, but also frame the grammar and set the terms of the community’s discourse about those issues. This was certainly the case with the three authors of the Catholic tradition mentioned in the subtitle of this section, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose of Milan, and Augustine of Hippo. These three, whose lifetimes overlapped in the second half of the fourth century, were certainly prolific authors, and the modern editions of each one’s surviving works fill several thick volumes. The same cannot be said of many other ancient Christian
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writers. Indeed, the sheer number of their works which have survived testifies to something more than their fecundity as writers. It bears witness to the authority that these authors came to possess. For these three framed the grammar and set the terms of the Catholic tradition’s discourse about the meaning of the eucharist.

Gregory and Ambrose sketched out what later came to be known as “metabolic realism”. This term designates the doctrinal standpoint (rather than a single doctrine) which maintains that the bread and wine of the eucharist undergo conversion (metabolē) into the real body and real blood of Christ. It thus makes doctrines of “the Real Presence” (for there are several such doctrines) theologically viable, as distinct from devotionally thinkable.¹

Augustine, for his part, gave the term sacramentum a conceptual clarity which it had never had before. In particular, he not only designated sacraments as signs; he also interpreted signs almost exclusively as linguistic phenomena, as acts of language and speech. It was he, for example, who first called a sacrament verbum visibile, “a visible word”². This view was to dominate sacramental (and specifically eucharistic) theology well into the modern era.³

Augustine also represented a strand of the eucharistic tradition which seemed to parallel, occasionally to touch, but never quite to intersect with the strand represented by his erstwhile mentor Ambrose. It was of course unthinkable to later Catholic writers that the two greater magistri (“masters,” as in schoolmasters, teachers)

¹ People may cherish a conviction – a notion may “work” for them – when they worship, without their feeling the need to give it formal expression. It is a conviction held reflexively, rather than an idea deliberately reflected upon.

² Discourses on the Gospel of John 80, § 3 (CSEL 36, ed. R. Radbodus Willems [Turnholt: Brepols, 1954], p. 529). Augustine was commenting on John 15.3 (You have already been cleansed by the word [sermonem] that I have spoken to you): “Why doesn’t he say, ‘You have been cleansed because of the baptism with which you have been washed,’ instead of saying: because of the word that I have spoken to you – unless it is because the word also cleanses through water? Take away the word, and what is water except mere water? Accedit verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum, etiam ipsum tamquam visibile verbum – The word comes to the element and makes it a sacrament, itself as it were a visible word.”

³ I should add that Augustine’s dominance in this matter, as in so many others, was confined wholly to western Christendom. What western Christians have called “sacraments,” the Orthodox tradition has always preferred to call mysteries; this has led to a rather different orientation in doing theology about them.
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of western Christendom might have been at odds on any fundamental point of eucharistic doctrine, least of all when it came to the question of metabolic realism. Nevertheless, the presence of these two parallel strands in the Catholic tradition was to bedevil its attempts to forge a single doctrine of the eucharist.

Gregory, Ambrose, and Augustine, then, formed the marrow of eucharistic divinity in the Catholic tradition. It is impossible to imagine how that tradition’s spirituality would have developed without their teachings. At the same time, it was not as if Catholic eucharistology sprang whole and wholly new from their brains, in the way Greek mythology supposed Athena to have sprung from the brain of Zeus. If that had been the case, any one of them would have encountered strenuous resistance. Gregory and Ambrose proposed their teachings about the eucharist in the last quarter of the fourth century – at a time, that is, when the Arian controversy had taught Catholic Christians (and Arian Christians as well) to fear any innovation in doctrine and almost reflexively to denounce it as heresy. But so far as we know, the eucharistic teachings of Gregory and Ambrose encountered no resistance, much less the charge of being heretical innovations. Which may be a sign that the Catholic sensibility already recognised, at least on a subliminal level, a distinction between innovation and development. In this sensibility, an innovation is an original teaching which does not carry (so to speak) the genetic code of Catholic spirituality, and thus is “read” by the consensus fidelium as an alien import. A development may also be an original teaching, but it is one which does indeed carry the same genetic code as the system in which it is produced, so that the system “reads” it as a native component. This may help to explain why the “metabolic realism” of Gregory and Ambrose was accepted by the Catholic sensibility with so little resistance. Their notion that the bread and wine are “transelemented”\(^4\) or “changed”\(^5\) into the real body and blood of Christ had never been expressly stated before. But once Gregory and Ambrose stated it, Catholics appear to have decided that this notion suited, or at least did not conflict with, Nicene theology – and that it “made sense” in light of how they were already praying and doing the eucharist itself.

Such an explanation is, of course, only a theory. It certainly accounts for the absence of controversy over the originality of Gregory’s and Ambrose’s contributions to eucharistic theology. But my theoretical explanation immediately encounters one very solid

\(^4\) See Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechetical Oration* 37, § 10 (below).

\(^5\) See Ambrose of Milan, *On the Sacraments* IV.4, §§ 14-17 (below).
Introduction

objection. We do not possess the sort of detailed knowledge of how late-fourth and early-fifth century Catholics prayed and practised the eucharist, such that we can say with definitive assurance that the teachings of Gregory and Ambrose were indeed “authentic” developments of earlier and contemporary eucharistic spirituality. Indeed, if we take Augustine's teachings about the eucharist, we would have to say that Ambrose and Gregory look less like facilitators of development than agents of innovation. For when Augustine instructed newly-baptised Catholics about the Lord's Supper, he cleaved very closely to the classical themes and concerns of the North African church. To that extent, he made it his business to be, in terms of North Africa's distinct Catholic heritage, a Compleat Traditionalist determined that “no new ideas shall ever come near us”. Even more significantly, though he had been catechised by Ambrose himself and had at least some acquaintance with Gregory's works, he took no account of their notions of “transselementation” and mutatio. This alone suggests that the ancient Church entertained several spiritualities (and theologies) of the eucharist. In other words, during the lifetime of Augustine (354-430), diversity was the rule of Catholic eucharistic faith and practice. And there is every reason to think that the same rule applied during the preceding four centuries as well.

Such is what we should have expected. After all, the ancient Church was not a single institution governed from one centre; it was a relatively loose communion/ confederation of local churches with several centres of power. But though the ancient sources undoubtedly reflect diversity of thought about the eucharist, we need to exercise caution when treating the evidence for that diversity. The first relatively extensive discussions of the eucharist in its own right – those of pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory, and Ambrose – all belong to the last half of the fourth century. Earlier texts are sparse in number, scattered in geographical provenance, and allusive rather than discursive in their treatment of eucharistic themes and issues. These texts are precious, of course; but even taken together they do not allow us to track eucharistic faith and practice in any one Christian community over two or three generations, much less construct a global picture of what Catholics

\[\text{Mystagogical Catecheses}\ IV\ and\ V\]. Two sets of “catechetical lectures” are ascribed to Cyril, who was bishop of Jerusalem 350-386 (BAS commemoration-day, March 18th). The first, a single lecture known as The Procatechesis, is generally acknowledged to be Cyril's own work; he probably composed it while still a presbyter, before he became bishop. The authorship of the five Mystagogical Catecheses has been much debated over the past two centuries; the scholarly consensus now favours Cyril's successor, John of Jerusalem, as the genuine author.
thought about the eucharist during the whole period. We cannot even tell how typical of their particular communities or regions any one of the individual authors might have been. The diversity we encounter, then, is a diversity between regions and generations – which hardly allows us to gauge how diverse thought about the eucharist may have been in any one generation. One author at the beginning of (say) the second century may appear to have a perspective on the meaning of the eucharist which is different from the perspective of another author in the middle of the same century. But we lack the range and abundance of evidence which would allow us to judge whether in fact the two authors represented diverse standpoints. It could be the case that each simply chose to highlight certain aspects of a common pool of thought about the eucharist, while other aspects of this same church-wide consensus did not serve their immediate purposes and so, without prejudice, were left unmentioned. To be sure, the existence of such a church-wide consensus between the second and the fifth centuries must remain hypothetical for the time being; but, by the same token, the evidence just does not permit us to posit and then take for granted a state of wholesale diversity.

This paucity of evidence regarding the eucharist in antiquity is not a solitary phenomenon. We know what a scattering of second- and third-century writers thought about God, about the divinity of Christ, about a variety of other theological issues; but once we leave their company, the paper trail rapidly peters out, then ceases altogether. In this connexion, it is interesting to note how little of the Christian literature surviving from the second and third centuries was addressed to the non-Christian public. Most of it was meant for “in-house” consumption – accounts of the martyrs’ passions, homilies, tracts on matters of ecclesiastical policy, polemics against the teachings of other Christians, letters written by martyred bishops. We may have to face a frustrating probability: early Christian references to the eucharist are so thin on the ground because Christians did not write about it very often – and when they did write about it, they were addressing other Christians who (it could be presumed) were already in the eucharistic loop and so did not need much in the way of explanation. It is also true that, apart from sunny mavericks like Justin Martyr and the odd in-your-face ideologue like Tertullian, Christians did not think it appropriate to talk about what they did. “Great is the mystery of our religion,” declared the apostle; 7 and succeeding generations thought that the eucharistic mystery in particular was too great a pearl to be cast before swine. Such an attitude can sound like

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7 1 Timothy 3.16.
nothing more than the reverse elitism of marginalised communities. But there was a genuinely pastoral reason for the Christian reluctance to talk publicly about the eucharist or indeed any other mystery of faith – *disciplina arcani*, “the discipline of the mystery”. 8 This discipline worked on the principle that “the mystery of our religion” involves assent of the heart as much as (and perhaps more than) assent of the intellect, for a person did not become, and could not be considered, a genuine Christian unless he or she lived the truths that he or she had been taught to confess. The discipline also worked on the principle that individuals mature – above all, mature spiritually – at different rates; one person at twenty may be readyer to grasp and practise Christian truth than another person who is fifty. Hence, the early Church devoted an enormous amount time and energy to catechesis and mystagogy. 9 CATECHESIS was progressive instruction in the Christian faith. Those interested in becoming members of the Church could expect to spend anywhere from one to three years as catechumens; during this time they were obliged to attend the Sunday liturgy, but were formally dismissed before the offering of the gifts. Thus, catechumens did not see, much less participate in, their first eucharist until after they were baptised, normally at the Easter Vigil. 10 They then underwent a course of MYSTAGOGY – instruction about “the mysteries,” that is, baptism and the eucharist. It may seem to us poor educational theory to put off instruction about

8 John Henry Newman called it “the economy”; see *Apologia pro vitâ sua, Being a History of His Religious Opinions*, ed. Martin J. Svaglic (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 241-242, and Note F, “The Economy,” pp. 299-301. See also Isaac Williams, “On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge,” *Tracts for the Times* 80 (1838) and 87 (1840). Newman, it seems, suggested the title to Williams. These two *Tracts* caused a public uproar at the time; Williams (1802-1865), a disciple of John Keble, was accused of justifying deceit because he maintained that it was inappropriate to tell all the truth on all occasions without exception. Only Newman’s own *Tract 90* (1841) did greater damage to the Movement in the estimation of the educated classes.

9 At Alexandria, the metropolis of Egypt, the church even set up a permanent, free-standing Catechetical School, staffed in the third century by such intellectual heavy-weights as Origen and Clement. It served not only as a nursery for catechumens but also as a centre for advanced theological studies.

10 Various churches later celebrated baptism on other occasions, such as the Vigil of Pentecost, the Epiphany and/or the Baptism of Christ.
such things until after they were received. Ancient Christians, however, seem to have worked on the idea that like can only attract its like – that no one can be spiritually mature enough to receive teaching about the mysteries of Christ until she or he had been actually initiated into Christ and thus become alive as a likeness of Christ.

Seen in this light, the disciplina arcani implies a very “high” doctrine both of baptism and of the eucharist. Why insist on secrecy, if the two rites were “only badges or tokens of Christian men’s profession,” rather like the oaths that military conscripts took (in public) when they were enrolled in a legion of the Roman army? Why, indeed, when secrecy about the eucharist in particular gave credence to rumours which fed pagan prejudice against the Christian religion? From second-century Christian apologists like Justin and Tertullian we know that the Church was commonly accused of practising cannibalism – as sure a hint as any that Christians believed that in some sense they really shared the body and blood of Christ. There is no other reasonable etiology for the vulgar rumour – and no clearer confirmation of this etiology than the fact that, apart from Justin and Tertullian, Christians refused to offer any public statements which might disperse the prejudice. That is to say, the rumours were so close to the truth, that Christians could not easily deny the rumours without also betraying the truth of what they believed about the eucharist.

So far, I have done nothing more than extrapolate from second-hand Christian reports of what pagans were saying about the eucharist. If this were a court of law, counsel for the defence of modern critical scholarship could still argue reasonable doubt, with far better than even chances of making it stick. But on the very point at issue – what did Christians in the age of the martyrs think they were doing when they celebrated the eucharist? – we do in fact have a number of second- and third-century Christian testimonies concerning the significance of the eucharistic mystery; and these testimonies bear witness to a broad consensus on the matter.

We shall look at four writers – Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Cyprian of Carthage. These early teachers of the faith by no means exhaust the evidence, but their discussions of the eucharist, brief and allusive as they may be, do suggest how the primitive Church focussed on the mystery of the Incarnation in order to explain the mystery of the Lord’s body and blood.

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1. Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius was bishop of Antioch at the very beginning of the second century. Antioch was then, and for another four hundred years, the metropolis (administrative and military capital) of the Roman province of Syria and the third largest city of the empire. It was also the home of first great Christian church outside of Jerusalem. Several Johannine scholars have argued that the Gospel according to John was written there, and Ignatius may even have known the beloved disciple himself. Sometime between the years 107 and 115 – the dating is that uncertain – bishop Ignatius was arrested by the Roman authorities and condemned to suffer death in the wild beast games. The authorities decided to send him all the way to Rome for the execution of this sentence, and he began the long westward journey under guard. His route took him through several cities with large Christian congregations, and the soldiers allowed him to spend some time with each one. During a lengthy stop-over at Smyrna, on the coast of Asia Minor, Ignatius wrote four letters, one to each of the four churches that he had just visited. There was another stop-over at Philippi in Macedonia, and there Ignatius wrote another three letters, two back to Smyrna, and one forward to Rome. These seven letters were his last will and testament, and the Church has ever honoured their powerful witness.

Ignatius was enraptured by the prospect of his own martyrdom. There is no other way to describe it – he was going to a horrible death, but he regarded it with loving anticipation, as if the ravages of the animals in the open arena would consummate his entire life. So Ignatius wrote to the church of Rome, begging them not to intervene on his behalf out of some misplaced sense of compassion:

I implore you, do not be so unseasonably kind to me; let me be the food of beasts, that through them I may find God. I am God’s wheat, and the teeth of wild beasts will grind me so that I may be pure bread of Christ.

The eucharistic allusions in this plea are obvious: Ignatius was comparing his impending martyrdom, and indeed his whole life, to

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12 Feast-day (Roman Calendar 1969, AmerBCP 1979, CanBAS 1985): October 17th. This was his feast-day in the Calendar of the ancient church of Antioch.

13 According to Acts 11.26, “it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called ‘Christians’.”

14 Ignatius of Antioch, To the Romans 4.1.
the Church’s offering of *eucharistia*, “thanksgiving,” in bread and wine. He was to become a sacrifice in the same sense as the eucharist was a sacrifice, that is, a pure oblation where the Church had communion with God in Christ. For in ancient religions, it was not the slaughter or destruction of a victim that fulfilled the sacrifice, but rather the consignment of the victim to God and then the eating of the oblations in table-fellowship with God. The eucharist became the model by which Ignatius understood his martyrdom. As in the eucharist Christians offer “pure bread” and then feast on the life of Christ, so Ignatius offered his own life, his own body, that he himself might be the very place where Christ shares his immortal glory with mortal humanity.

Ignatius found the eucharist a useful model for understanding his martyrdom precisely because (as he wrote) “breaking the one bread... is a medicine of immortality, an antidote which prevents [eternal] death, and a giving of life in Jesus Christ for ever.”

15 The term “medicine of immortality” was taken from the pagan rites of Isis; and Ignatius’s use of it does indeed make the power of the eucharist sound very objective – almost as if the eucharist contained life all on its own and by itself conferred immortality. But this was not Ignatius’s intention. Instead, he meant that the life conveyed by the eucharist was nothing other or less than the life of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen again.

We see this from another of Ignatius’s letters, the one he wrote to the church at Smyrna. He warned the Smyrnæans against a group known as Docetists, from the Greek verb δοκεω (dokea), which means “to seem” or “to appear”. These Christians believed that, since Jesus Christ was God, and since God is Spirit and incapable of change (much less of suffering), Christ did not really take flesh – he only *appeared* to take flesh and only *seemed* to suffer on the cross. Ignatius would have no truck with these people. He wrote:

[The Docetists] abstain from the eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the eucharist is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, the flesh that suffered for our sins, and that the Father in his goodness raised this flesh up again.

Those who thus reject *the gift of God* [John 4.10] perish in their contentiousness.  

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The eucharist makes us sharers in the flesh of the incarnate Word – indeed, quite independently of whether we receive it or not, it is

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15 Ignatius, *To the Ephesians* 20.2.

16 Ignatius, *To the Smyrnæans* 7.1.
“the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ,” the very same flesh that hung on the cross and died for our sins, and the very same flesh that God raised again in glory. Ignatius implies that if Christ did not really die, if Christ only appeared to have flesh – if, in short, the incarnation, passion, death and resurrection of Christ were all a divine trick upon our senses – we have not really been saved. “The gift of God” that the Docetists have rejected is thus the gift of true salvation in Jesus Christ; they have made this gift into a fiction and, worse, a lie. But this gift of salvation and the gift given in the eucharist are one and the same. For, as a modern French scholar has pointed out, Ignatius considered the eucharist to be “bound up with the incarnation and [to be] an actualisation of the redemptive mystery [Christ’s death and resurrection]. The various aspects of the mystery are so closely connected in Ignatius’s thinking as to constitute a single mystery of Christ.”

The incarnation, then, is the point from which salvation begins its passover trajectory into the glory of the resurrection; and the eucharist is, as it were, the vehicle which bears us along the path of that same trajectory. All this had practical import, not least for the institutional life of the Church. There is one Christ who truly came in the flesh and was truly crucified and truly raised again, and this one Christ truly gives us his selfsame flesh to eat in the eucharist. So far as Ignatius was concerned, it followed that those who share the one life of Christ should themselves be actually and visibly one. As he wrote to the church of Philadelphia, in Asia Minor:

Be careful... to participate in only the one eucharist, for there is only one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup to unite us in his blood, [and there is only] one altar just as there is [in each church only] one bishop with the presbyters and deacons....

One Christ, one eucharist, one altar and, above all, one bishop. “Let only that eucharist be regarded as legitimate that is celebrated under the presidency of the bishop or someone whom the bishop appoints.”

The presidency of the bishop at the eucharist thus manifested the solidarity of the community with the one Christ. This was an essential point, because the primitive Church was perpetually in danger of whirring apart into little cliques and

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18 Ignatius, To the Philadelphians 4.

19 Ignatius, To the Smyrnæans 8.1.
conclaves. Ignatius’s emphasis on the role of the bishop may indicate that his was a time of institutional transition, a time when the episcopate was not quite fully established everywhere as the norm of church government. But the institutional question is subordinate to the larger purpose of visible unity; and it is in visible unity around the eucharistic table that the fullness of the mystery of Christ, the mystery of his flesh and blood, is celebrated.

2. Justin Martyr

This leads us to another teacher of the second century, Justin. Born in Palestine sometime around the year 90; he received the best possible education that his father’s considerable fortune could buy, then set off in search of the one true philosophy. A chance meeting with an elderly Christian convinced him that Christianity was just that philosophy, and from then on Justin acted as an itinerant advocate of “the Christian wisdom”. He never held any office in the Church; instead he made it his business to challenge pagan philosophers to public debates on the merits of Christianity. Around the year 150 he moved to Rome and started doing the same sort of thing. In the year 167 or thereabouts, he defeated one pagan philosopher too many. The fans of his most recent victim denounced him to the authorities, and Justin was beheaded for confessing the faith – hence his name, Justin Martyr.

Justin wrote three works which have survived to us – a First Apology, addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius and his sons, a Second Apology, addressed to the Roman Senate, and a Dialogue with Trypho the Jew. The two Apologies sought to show that Christianity was a reasonable religion. As part of this task, Justin had to refute rumours that Christians practised unspeakable crimes when they gathered for worship – things like incest, cannibalism, and the murder of infants. So Justin outlined the eucharist, to show that it was a simple, law-abiding event:

> On the day named after the sun, all who live in city or countryside assemble, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read for as long as time allows. When the reader has finished, the president addresses us, admonishing us and exhorting us to imitate the splendid things we have heard. Then we all stand and pray, and...

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20 Feast-day (Roman Calendar, BCP, CanBAS): June 1st.

21 In ancient Roman law-trials (and rhetoric), an apologia was the summation of the case for the defence. So the title Apology is more appropriately translated as “Defence of the Christian Faith”.
when we have finished praying, bread, wine, and water are brought up. The president offers prayers of thanksgiving according to his ability, and the people give their assent with an “Amen!” Next, the gifts over which the thanksgiving has been spoken are distributed, and each one shares in them, while they are also sent by way of the deacons to the absent brethren.... The reason why we all assemble on Sunday is that it is the first day, the day on which God transformed darkness and matter and created the world, and the day on which Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead.22

Readings from holy Scripture, a sermon, intercessions, an offertory, the eucharistic prayer, and communion – we ourselves follow the same order when we assemble “on the day named after the sun”. So, by the middle of the second century, at least in major centres like Antioch and Rome, the eucharistic liturgy had taken on the basic form which it has retained ever since.

To do something is one thing; to know what it means is another. Justin offered his pagan readers a brief but pregnant explanation of the eucharistic action in these words:

We do not receive these things [i.e., the eucharistic bread and wine] as though they were ordinary food and drink. Just as Jesus Christ our Saviour was made flesh through the word of God and took on flesh and blood for our salvation, so too..., through the word of prayer that comes from him, the food over which the thanksgiving has been spoken becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, in order to nourish and transform our flesh and blood. For in the memoirs which the apostles composed and which we call “gospels,” they have told us that they were commissioned thus: Jesus took bread and, having given thanks, said, Do this in memory of me, this is my body; and in a like manner he took the cup and, having given thanks, said, This is my blood, and he gave these to them alone.23

There are two things to note here. First, Justin placed heavy emphasis on the words of the institution narrative, and in so doing was one of the first Christian writers to suggest that these words were used in the prayer of thanksgiving, to make or (as we say) consecrate the bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ. Secondly, Justin tied the Incarnation and the eucharist even more

22 Justin Martyr, First Apology 67, §§ 3-5, 7.

23 Ibid., 66, §§ 2-3.
closely together than Ignatius had done. “Jesus took flesh and blood for our salvation,” and the eucharist becomes this same flesh and blood “in order to transform our flesh and blood”. The same work which was accomplished in the Incarnation – the transformation of flesh and blood – even now continues to be accomplished in the eucharist.

Showing that the Christian eucharist was truly pious and in no sense criminal fulfilled only half of Justin’s purpose. He wished to show that the Christian faith did not contradict pagan philosophy, but rather fulfilled the true meaning and real intentions of ancient civilisation. Becoming a Christian, he believed, was the most natural thing in the world, because Christianity was the philosophy towards which Judaism and paganism alike had pointed. Hence, when Justin explained why Christians assembled “on the day named after the sun,” he was careful to point out that Sunday, the first day of the week, commemorated not only the resurrection of Christ, but the creation of the whole world. All creation, not just the Church, was thus included in the redemption which the eucharist embodied.

This programme was made clear in Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho the Jew. His argument focused on Malachi 1.11: From the rising of the sun to its setting my Name is glorified by the nations, and in every place incense and pure sacrifice are offered to my Name; for my Name is great among the nations, says the Lord, but you have defiled it. Justin used this passage in order to show that Jewish sacrifices did not please God because they excluded the rest of humanity. By contrast, the Christian sacrifice, the eucharist, was pleasing to God because it included all whom Judaism excluded. So, speaking of the passage from Malachi, Justin remarked: “God thus already speaks of the sacrifices which we, the nations, offer him in every place, namely, the bread of the eucharist and the cup of the eucharist.” The Christian sacrifice was itself the fulfilment of God’s purpose in creation, for it gathered together all nations and gave them a share in the life of him who transforms all flesh and blood.  

3. Irenæus and the Gnostic challenge

Justin was not alone in his desire to claim the whole of human history and culture for the Christian gospel. Many others experimented with Greek philosophies in order to see if they could pull a new Christian rabbit out of old pagan hats. As one might expect, the experiments met with varying success. Then, towards the close of the second century, the laboratory itself seemed to
explode; there was a kind of melt-down in the Christian effort to appropriate ancient civilisation.

I am talking about a movement called Gnosticism – really an umbrella-term covering a luxuriant number of disparate sects, each with its own guru and its own mythological interpretation of reality. These Gnostic sects none the less shared certain basic traits in common. They got their name from the Greek word γνωσις (gnosis), meaning “knowledge”. Each Gnostic sect tied an individual’s salvation to the knowledge of a secret, convoluted myth about the origin of the cosmos. These myths were designed explain how material reality came about. The issue could not be avoided, because Gnostics regarded matter as intrinsically evil, its mere existence as a primordial mistake. In certain elect humans there was a little scintilla, a little spark of the absolute Spirit; and when they were granted knowledge of this truth, it was their duty and their privilege to live in such a way as to liberate this spark, so that it might fly upwards and be reabsorbed into the absolute divine Spirit.

Now, Christianity was (and is) a religion which confesses one God, the Creator, who not only made all things, but also made all things good – including matter. As if to seal the point, Christianity was (and is) a religion which confesses that the only Son of God became human and dwelt among humans – and that the way to salvation lies in the partaking of the humanity of this same Son of God. So one would think that second-century Christians, with their increasing focus on the Incarnation, would have rejected Gnosticism out of hand. But this does not seem to have been the case. By the end of the second century, Gnosticism seems to have thoroughly infiltrated the Church. It took Catholic teachers a full generation of hard theological battle to force the Gnostics into withdrawing from the Church.

One of the foremost defenders of the catholicity of the Church was a bishop named Irenæus. He was a native of Smyrna in Asia Minor who somehow ended up at Lyons, a city on the river Rhone in what is now southeastern France. He became bishop of the church of Lyons in the year 177, in the wake of a dreadful persecution which may have seen up to half the Lyonnaise Christians massacred. We know very little about Irenæus himself, or his subsequent career; he seems to have died peacefully, in his own bed and not in the public arena, sometime around the year 202. But he wrote one major work which has survived, The Refutation of “The Knowledge,” falsely so called, more commonly

25 Feast-day (Memorial): June 28th. Irenæus’s name (like the feminine name Irene) is derived from the Greek word for “peace” (εἰρήνη, eirene).
known as *Adversus hæreses*, “Against the Heresies”. It is an exhaustive catalogue of Gnostic teachings, with a no less exhaustive (and exhausting!) refutation of each one. Scholars used to think that Irenæus was skewing the pitch, caricaturing the Gnostics and their doctrine. Then, just over fifty years ago, some original Gnostic writings were discovered in the Egyptian desert; and lo! the Gnostics were revealed to be just as Irenæus had reported.

Irenæus sought to show just how Gnostic teachings were incompatible with the gospel – more especially, how the gospel was for the salvation of the whole human being, flesh as well as spirit, body as well as soul. And this had implications for the eucharist. In the fifth book of the *Adversus hæreses*, Irenæus said:

If the flesh cannot be saved, then neither did the Lord redeem us with his blood, nor is the cup of the eucharist a participation of his blood, nor is the bread which we break a participation of his body. For blood comes only from veins and flesh and the rest of that human substance which the Word of God assumed so as to become man and truly redeem us.

Irenæus here argued from the work of redemption, and saw the eucharist as the concrete realisation of that redemption here and now. But he was unwilling to leave the matter there. He went on to say:

We are members [of the Word made flesh] and we are nourished by his creation. He himself gives us that creation as he makes his sun to rise and his rain to fall at his good pleasure. The cup which comes from his creation he declared to be his blood that mingles with ours, and the bread which comes from his creation he asserted is his body which gives growth to our bodies.  

In other words, the eucharist itself recapitulates the whole of God’s merciful working towards us – it takes in the bread and wine, which are God’s creation and the work of our own creaturely hands, and then involves the transformation of those creatures into the redemptive body and blood of Christ. Creation is not destroyed, but fulfilled in redemption; and the eucharist itself embodies this truth.

Irenæus made the same point even more clearly in another passage:

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How can [the heretics] say that flesh ends only in corruption and does not receive life, when it is nourished by the body and blood of the Lord? Our doctrine agrees with the eucharist, and the eucharist itself confirms our doctrine. For we offer to God the things that are God’s own, as we proclaim the mutual participation and unity of flesh and spirit. For just as earthly bread, when it receives God’s blessing, is no longer ordinary bread but eucharist, consisting of two things, and earthly and a heavenly reality; so also our bodies, when they receive the eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but have the hope of resurrection.  

The eucharist not only exemplifies the fulfilment of creation in the grace of redemption. It is also the action, the event, through which creation is even now, already, being fulfilled. The reality of bread and wine is fulfilled when they are made to be the body and blood of Christ; and the reality of human life is transformed when humans receive the eucharistised bread and wine, the mystery of the flesh and blood of the Word made flesh. And so the Gnostic repudiation of physical existence is itself repudiated, because it violates the eucharist.

4. Cyprian of Carthage

Even as Gnostics threatened the catholicity of the Church from within, persecution threatened its very existence from without. The Roman emperors did not issue a steady stream of edicts against the Church, and the edicts which they did issue were not enforced with equal rigour in all districts of the empire. Instead, the persecution of the Church had a spasmodic quality, and the violence of each spasm differed from district to district. Nevertheless, when an imperial edict was enforced, it could be a very terrible experience. Christians were usually presented with a stark alternative – either throw a few grains of incense into the pagan sacrifices, or themselves be thrown to the executioner. Many, many Christians accepted death rather than surrender Christ, and the Church did a very effective job in publicising the horrors which the martyrs endured. But it should not be surprising that many other Christians could not bear to face the penalties and, renouncing Christ, took part in pagan sacrifices. When the latest persecution had run its course, these unhappy people often wished to return to the faith. The authorities of the Church gradually worked out a policy – one which strove to keep “the mean between the two extremes, of too
much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting” truly repentant apostates back into communion.

One of the chief architects of this policy was Cyprian, bishop of the church in Carthage, which was the chief port of Roman North Africa. Cyprian was a wealthy landowner and lawyer who became bishop of Carthage in the year 248. Soon afterwards the emperor Decius issued a new edict of persecution, and Cyprian went into exile. The Decian persecution lasted three years, and when Cyprian returned to Carthage in 251 he found that many of his flock had apostatised. Of these, a fair number wished re-admission to communion. Cyprian rejected the advice of those in his flock who took a hard line – who insisted that the apostates should reap the reward of their faithless pusillanimity and be left to rot outside the Church. Cyprian also rejected the false liberality of those clergy who re-admitted apostates to communion without requiring any penance on them at all. He announced that apostates could be reconciled with the Church, and again receive the body and blood of the Lord – but only after each one had done appropriate penance for their apostacy.

Cyprian explained and defended his policy in a short book entitled De lapsis (“Concerning Lapsed Christians”). He emphasized the quality of mercy, but also made it very clear that danger awaited any apostate who presumed to receive communion without doing penance. In proof of this point, he recounted an event which, he said, “happened in my own presence, before my very eyes”:

There was a baby girl, whose parents had fled [during the Decian persecution] and had, in their fear, rather improvidently left her behind in the care of a nurse. The nurse took the orphaned child to the magistrates before the idol where the crowds were flocking. Because she was too young to eat the flesh [of the animal sacrificed], they gave her some bread dipped in the wine offered by those who had already doomed themselves. Later, the mother recovered her child. But the girl could not reveal or tell the wicked thing that had been done, any more than she had been able to understand or ward it off before. Thus when the mother brought her in with her while we were offering the Sacrifice [i.e. the eucharist], it was through ignorance that this intrusion occurred.

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28 Feast-day (Memorial): September 13th. Cyprian was actually martyred on 14 September 258, but that date has since been designated as Holy Cross Day, which as a feast of our Lord takes precedence.
The child threw a tantrum of truly awesome proportions, one which went on through the whole service. Cyprian, himself an innocent when it came to the behaviour of infants, explained the tantrum by saying that the little girl was “confessing, as if under torture, in every way she could, her consciousness of the misdeed”. In any case, the mother presented her squalling baby for communion – and then the truth was revealed. Cyprian wrote:

When the girl’s turn came to receive, she turned her little head away as if sensing the divine presence, she closed her mouth, held her lips tight, and refused to drink from the chalice. The deacon persisted and, in spite of the infant’s opposition, poured in some of the consecrated chalice. There followed choking and vomiting. The eucharist could not remain in a body or a mouth that was defiled; the drink which had been sanctified by the Lord’s blood returned from the polluted stomach. So great is the power of the Lord, so sacred is his majesty!  

This passage discloses some things about the eucharistic celebration in mid-third century Carthage – for instance, that the Church gave communion to infants, apparently in only one kind, that is, from the chalice. But the main point of this story is, of course, the way Cyprian and his flock regarded the eucharistic sacrament itself. They considered it to be fraught with divine power in the most objective, the most concrete manner possible. We would probably regard the infant’s tantrum, with its culmination in her vomiting, as evidence that she was coming down with a fever. Cyprian and his contemporaries took the tantrum and the vomiting as a sign that the child’s very being had been contaminated by apostacy – that the holy power of the Lord was reacting upon the pollution which the child had involuntarily contracted. Are we right, or were they? – or is it that we are content to note only the outward signs, where they were restless until they had discovered the inward cause, the relation of an event as common as an infant’s tantrum to the power and purposes of God?

Cyprian had seven years between his return from exile and a renewal of persecution in 258, when he himself was arrested, tried, and beheaded. During these seven years he became a major figure among Latin-speaking bishops and, in an angry exchange of letters

about schismatics, could even treat the bishop of Rome as if he were a wayward equal. But Cyprian also had local issues to deal with. As bishop of the church in North Africa’s largest city, he exercised the authority of a metropolitan and kept tabs on what was happening in the other churches of North Africa. Sometime between 253 and 256, he heard that one or more of these other churches had adopted a strange practice – they had stopped using wine when they celebrated the Lord’s supper and filled the chalice only with water. This prompted Cyprian to write an encyclical letter to Cæcilius, the bishop of a town called Biltha – in the collection of Cyprian’s correspondence, Letter 63.

In this letter, Cyprian offers some hints, but no sure information, as to why the churches in question had stopped using wine altogether. He remarked in passing that “some [Christians] feel apprehensive at our morning sacrifices that if they taste wine they may exhale the smell of the blood of Christ.” In the third-century Roman empire, Sunday was as much a work-day as any other day. Christians had, of course, no right to take the day off, or even a couple of hours, on religious grounds; so they had to celebrate the eucharist – and drink the cup of the sacrament – very early on Sunday morning, before the work-day began. In the ancient world people normally did not drink wine before noon. Thus, if your pagan neighbours smelled wine on you at nine o’clock on a Sunday morning, they would know that you were a Christian – and might denounce you to the authorities. So, using only water and no wine in the cup was a way of letting discretion be the better part of Christian valour.

Cyprian made it very clear that he disapproved of the practice in question:

In offering the cup the teachings of the Lord must be observed, and we must do exactly as the Lord first did himself for us – the cup which is offered up in remembrance of him is to be offered mixed with wine. For inasmuch as Christ says, I am the true vine, it can never be supposed that the blood of Christ is water; it is wine. And it is, therefore, obviously impossible that Christ’s blood... should be present in the cup when in the cup there is no wine: wine signifies the blood of Christ, as is foretold by sacred type and testimony to be found throughout the Scriptures.

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31 Ibid., § 2; Clarke, vol. 3 (ACW 46), pp. 98-99.
Here Cyprian betrayed his legal background: he treated Jesus’ actions at the Last Supper as if they were a body of legislation which must be strictly enforced and obeyed. This attitude, in its turn, led to the spiritualisation of a rather ordinary act. In the ancient world people normally “cut” their wine with water, adding more or less according to their taste (or “sweet-tooth”). The Church did the same, as a matter of course, whenever it celebrated the eucharist. But Cyprian could not accept so matter-of-fact, so “profane,” an explanation. Since the eucharist was a mystery of salvation, everything that was done at its celebration had to have a special reason or a mystical significance. Thus, in and of itself, the wine in the cup “signifies the blood of Christ”. Then why add water? Cyprian answered:

By water is meant God’s people.... When, therefore, water is mixed with wine in the cup, the people are made one with Christ and the multitude of believers are bonded and united with him in whom they have come to believe. And this bonding and union between water and wine in the Lord’s cup is achieved in such a way that nothing can thereafter separate their intermingling. Thus there is nothing that can separate the union between Christ and the Church, that is, the people who are established within the Church and who steadfastly and faithfully persevere in their beliefs: Christ and his Church must remain ever attached and joined to each other by indissoluble love.

Cyprian drew the conclusion:

Hence, when we consecrate the cup of the Lord, water alone cannot be offered, no more than can wine alone. For should anyone offer up only wine, then the blood of Christ will be there, but without us, whereas if there is only water, the people will be there, but without Christ. So it is only when both are mingled, bonded, united, and fused one with

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32 This emphasis on “doing exactly what Jesus did” landed Cyprian in something of a bind when he tried to explain why the Church celebrated the eucharist in the early morning. Jesus, of course, ate his last supper in the evening. Cyprian appealed to typology and argued that it was fitting for Jesus to have celebrated the last supper in the evening “so that he might signify by that hour... the setting [=going down] and evening of the world.” But it is different for Christians, Cyprian maintained, because they live in the time of the Resurrection, at the dawn of the new creation. Hence, it is fitting that they should celebrate the eucharist in the morning. Letter 63, §16.2; Clarke, vol. 3 (ACW 46), p. 107.
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another that this spiritual and divine mystery is accomplished.\textsuperscript{33}

A modest little ritual whose origin lay in everyday custom and taste was thus transformed into a point of faith – and a very great point of faith, at that. For out of this same modest ritual Cyprian extracted the essence of salvation – namely, humanity’s commixture and union with the divinity of the Word made flesh.

With Cyprian’s mystical interpretation of “the mixed cup” we come about as close as we ever will to seeing the inner workings of the primitive Christian mind as it considered the eucharist. The Church in the age of the martyrs knew that the eucharist was \textit{litourgia}, that is, an action performed by the people of God. But it also realised that this action had a transcendent reason, a reason whose fullness was hardly exhausted – indeed, only just suggested – by the outward performance of the rite. So, when they interpreted the eucharist and its ritual details, early Christian teachers had no trouble in suddenly warping off into the mystical dimension. For that was where the truth of the eucharistic action lay – not in its correct performance alone, but in the divine realm of salvation.

For the primitive Church, then, the eucharist was indeed a mystery of salvation. The Church of the martyrs, in its understanding of salvation, increasingly gravitated towards the Incarnation of the Word of God. For as the Church defended itself first against Judaism, then against docetism and Gnosticism, and always against pagan misunderstanding and intolerance, it discovered in the Incarnation a truly catholic hope, that the whole of humanity – not just Israel, and not just the Gnostic elect – should be sharers in the nature of God. With this conviction, it was no wonder that the primitive understanding of the eucharist itself should be (to coin a word) “incarnocentric” – that the martyrs’ teaching about the eucharistic mystery, precisely as a mystery of salvation, should focus on the Incarnation and unpack the meaning of the eucharist by reference to the Incarnation. And this incarnocentric perspective – sealed with the blood of Ignatius, Justin, Cyprian, and so many other martyrs – became the norm of eucharistic ethos in ancient Catholicism. Such is the norm to which Gregory and Ambrose responded, and which Augustine also recognised, in their discourses on the eucharist.

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\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., § 13.1-3; Clarke, vol. 3 (ACW 46), p. 105.
1.

Gregory of Nyssa

*The Great Catechetical Oration*

Chapter 37
Introduction

GREGORY of Nyssa was born around 335 in Caesarea, the capital of the province of Cappadocia (now central Turkey). In early adulthood he appears to have become restless with his family’s Christian renown and with the stellar asceticism of his mother, his older sister Macrina, and his older brother Basil (the Great). He chose to become an advocate and teacher of rhetoric and a husband. At some point in his thirties, however, he left his public career behind and retired to the monastery that Basil had founded on the family estate. (Like so much else about Gregory’s life, we do not know what happened to his wife; in all probability he was a widower when he entered his older brother’s community.) In 371 Basil, then bishop of Caesarea and in need of episcopal bodies to outface an Arian rival, forced Gregory to accept ordination as bishop of Nyssa, a one-horse village in the Cappadocian hinterland. Gregory bowed to his brother’s authority, but scarcely concealed his resentment of him. As a bishop Gregory proved to be a disappointment, then a liability to the Nicene cause. He took no interest in administrative matters; he hadn’t a political bone in his body; finances totally flummoxed him; and he lacked that affability, that ability to “be good with people,” which would have made up for all his other shortcomings as a public figure. His management of diocesan funds was so incompetent and such a mess, that the Arian party easily trumped a charge of fraud against him. He had to flee Nyssa to avoid arrest, and in 376 an Arian-controlled synod deposed him. He was able to return in triumph two years later, but he seems never to have reconciled himself to the bread-and-butter work of a bishop.

He eventually become reconciled with the heritage of his family and, in particular, with the legacy of Basil. His older brother died on 1 January 379; seven months later Macrina also died. Gregory nursed his sister in her final illness, and she gave him both the vision and the will to carry on with Basil’s theological work. Whatever his shortcomings and failures in the hurley-burley of ecclesiastical politics, Gregory proved to be one of the very greatest of all speculative and mystical theologians in the Christian tradition. He completed a couple of controversial treatises that Basil had left unfinished, then advanced beyond them to make his own substantial contributions to Nicene theology. He wrote a number of treatises of mystical theology, the most famous of which are his Life of Moses and his Commentary on the Song of Songs. The last we know of him, he attended a synod at Constantinople in 394; he probably died later that same year or early in 395. His feast-day in the Calendar of The Book of Alternative Services is March 9th.
Gregory probably composed his Great Catechetical Oration (also known as The Great Catechism) sometime between 383 and 385. He intended it to be a resource for those entrusted with the task of religious instruction and formation in the Church. But it is more than just a compendium of doctrines or a textbook for catechists. The Great Catechetical Oration is one of the earliest (as well as one of the more successful) attempts to create a systematic theology.

In Chapter 37 of this work Gregory discusses the eucharistic mystery and lays the foundation for the position known as “metabolic realism”. The term comes from the Greek word metabolé, meaning “conversion” or “change of one thing into another”. The idea is that the bread and wine, upon consecration, are changed and converted into the real body and blood of Christ. This position, as we shall see, was adopted by Ambrose of Milan, who was probably indebted to Gregory for it; and it would become the basis for eucharistic doctrine in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions.

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FURTHER READING

There is a sizeable amount of literature about Gregory in French and German, but only a pitiful smattering of studies in English, and nothing at all about his teaching on the eucharist.


Selections from Gregory’s writings in English translation, with a brief but useful introduction.


A catalogue raisonnée of Gregory’s works, with brief discussions of his teachings on major themes.
SINCE the human being is a twofold creature, a compo-site of soul and body, those who are saved must lay hold of the Author of new life through both constituent parts. The soul is united with him through faith, and it derives from that union the means of salvation: for the act of union with the Life implies participation in the Life. But the body comes into communion and blending with the Author of our salvation in another way. For example, those who have been tricked into taking poison offset its deadly effect by taking some other drug. For it is necessary for the antidote to enter the organs in the same way as the deadly poison, in order to make sure that, through those organs, the effect of the remedy may be circulated through the whole system. Likewise, we who have tasted the thing which breaks down our nature, need something which can build up what has been thus broken down, so that the counter-effect of such an antidote within us may undo the mischief introduced into the body by the poison.

§ 2. And what is the remedy? Nothing else but that very body which has been shown to be superior to death, and has been the first-fruits of our life. The Apostle says that a little yeast assimilates to itself the whole lump of dough. Even so, that body to which God has given immortality, when it is in our body, translates and transforms the whole into itself. As the admixture of a wholesome liquid to a poisonous one deprives the whole drink of its deadly effect, so too the immortal body [of Christ], by being within the body which receives it, changes the whole into its own nature.

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1 Gregory appears to have Genesis 3.6 in mind: “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.”

2 1 Corinthians 5.6: “Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?”
Nothing can get inside the body except by spreading through the vital organs by way of eating and drinking. It is therefore necessary for the body to receive this life-producing power in the only way that its makeup allows.

§ 3. Since that body, the dwelling-place of divinity, alone received this grace of immortality, – and since it has been shown that it is impossible for our body to become immortal except by participating in incorruption through its communion with that immortal body [of Christ], – it is necessary to consider how that one body, which is portioned out to so many hundreds of thousands of the faithful throughout the world, enters whole into each individual through that portion, and yet remains whole in itself.

§ 4. In order that our faith, with its eyes fixed on what is logically plausible, may harbour no doubt about the matter before us, it might be useful to digress a bit in our argument and consider the physiology of the body. Who does not know that our bodily frame, taken by itself, possesses no life in its own proper substance, but that it holds itself together and continues in existence by an influx of force or power from outside, and that it draws to itself what it wants, and repels what is superfluous, by a ceaseless movement? If a leather flask is full of some liquid and then the contents leak out at the bottom, it would not keep the contours of its full bulk unless something else were poured in at the top to fill the empty space. Anybody who sees the shape of this flask swollen to its full size, would know that this shape did not really belong to the object which he or she sees, but that what was being poured into the flask, by being in it, gave bulk and roundness to its contours. In something like the same way, the mere framework of our body, so far as we know, has nothing of its own to hold it together, but it remains in existence because of a force which is introduced into it. Now this power or force both is and is called nourishment. But it is not the same in all bodies which require food; rather, the One who rules the natural order has as-signed to each of them a fare adapted to its condition. Some animals feed on roots which they dig up; grass is the food of other animals, different kinds of flesh are the food of still others. But the food of human beings is, above all, bread; and to maintain and keep the moisture of their body, drink - not just water but water often sweetened with wine, to join forces with our internal heat. Whoever thinks about these things, therefore, thinks implicitly about the particular bulk of our body. For by being within me those things became my blood and flesh, since the corresponding nourishment, through its ability to adapt, is changed into the form of my body.
§ 5. With these points in mind we must return to the consideration of the question before us. The question was: How can that one body of Christ give life to all humankind – that is, all in whom there is faith – and yet, though divided among all, itself remain undiminished? Perhaps now we are not far from the probable explanation:

§ 6. Every body depends on nourishment for its subsistence, and nourishment means food and drink. In our case the food is bread, and the drink is water sweetened with wine.

§ 7. Now the Word of God, who is both God and the Word, united himself with human nature. When he came in a body such as ours, he did not alter our physical constitution so as to make it other than it was. On the contrary, he maintained his body by the customary and appropriate means, and provided for its subsistence by food and drink – and the food was bread.

§ 8. Furthermore, when we see bread, we also behold (in a certain sense) the human body – for by being in the body, that is what the bread becomes. It was the same the case of the Word made flesh. By partaking of bread for nourishment, the body into which God entered was, in a certain sense, identical with the bread. For what is acknowledged as a characteristic of all flesh is true of Christ’s flesh as well – namely, that his body was sustained by bread. And by the indwelling of God the Word, that body was elevated to the dignity of the Godhead.

§ 9. We have good reason, then, to believe that the bread which now is sanctified by the Word of God is also changed into the body of God the Word. For that body once was virtually bread – but that body has been consecrated by the indwelling of the Word who tabernacled in the flesh. Therefore, the means by which the bread was transformed in Christ’s body and charged with divine power, are the same as the means which bring about a similar effect now. In the former case, the grace of the Word hallowed the body which got its subsistence from bread and which in a manner of speaking was itself bread. In the latter case, the bread, as the Apostle says, is sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer. Not that it becomes the body of the Word by being eaten. On the contrary, it is immediately converted into the body by the Word – as the Word himself said. This is my body.

§ 10. And just as we sustain by solid food the solid part of our body, so in like manner we supplement the moist part from the kindred element. And once this moist element is within us, it is converted it into blood, especially if the admixture of wine gives it

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4 1 Timothy 4.5.
the aptitude to be turned into heat. Now the God-containing flesh of Christ partook of this particular nourishment as well for its substance and sustenance. Furthermore, the God who became manifest united the divine self with perishable humanity in order that this communion with divinity might make humanity divine. As a result, and for this very purpose, in accordance with the plan of grace, he implants himself in every believer by means of his own flesh, whose substance comes from bread and wine. He blends himself with the bodies of believers in order to ensure that, by this union with the immortal, humanity also may share in incorruptibility. He bestows this gift on us by virtue of the blessing through which he transelements the natural quality of these visible things into that immortal thing.

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5 the blessing: The anaphora, i.e. the eucharistic prayer.

6 μεταστοιχειωσας (metastoicheiosas). The idea here is that the primary, elemental realities – what later theological discourse would designate the substance – of bread and wine are reconstituted (or “metabolised”) into the body and blood of Christ’s new humanity.
2.

Ambrose of Milan

Selections from

On the Sacraments

(De sacramentis)
INTRODUCTION

AMBROSE was bishop of Milan, a city in northern Italy, from 374 until his death in 397. The son of a senior imperial official, he learned Christianity as well as Latin and Greek from his tutor, a presbyter named Simplicianus; but he was slated for a career in the imperial service and, as was common among males of his class and prospects, he chose to postpone baptism indefinitely. Around 370 he was appointed governor of Æmilia-Liguria (north-western Italy), with his base at Milan. This was at the time one of the most important posts in the imperial bureaucracy. Emperor Valentinian I, needing to be close to the embattled frontiers along the Danube, had made Milan his headquarters and, in effect, the imperial capital. Ambrose was responsible for maintaining civil peace in the interests of military security. It was for this reason that he intervened directly in the affairs of the church of Milan following the death of bishop Auxentius in 374. With the active encouragement of the imperial court, the late bishop had strongly endorsed the Arian movement, which denied that the Son of God was either eternal or divine by nature. By contrast, a sizeable number of Milan’s laity and lower-rank clergy favoured the Nicene position, which confessed the Son to be eternally “of one being with

\[\text{Source: BAS Calendar, CanBCP 1962, Calendar of Easter Week.}\]

\[\text{Source: BAS Calendar, CanBCP 1962, Calendar of Easter Week.}\]

1 In the BAS Calendar the memorial of Ambrose is on 7 December, the anniversary of his ordination as bishop of Milan; in the Calendar of CanBCP 1962 his commemoration is on 4 April, the anniversary of his death. The latter date is frequently in Easter Week, the ferias of which takes precedence over all other Holy Days, Memorials, and Commemorations. So the memorial of Ambrose was transferred to the alternative December date, when its observance would be less likely to be pre-empted.

2 The Church still judged post-baptismal sin severely; so those entrusted with public office, at a time when it was taken for granted that officials would authorise and perform acts of violence, commonly put off baptism until they had retired and could repent at leisure. The emperor Constantine, for example, did not let himself be baptised until he was on his deathbed. In his case, it was probably just as well.
the Father”. The emperor and the senior clergy tried to foist an Arian candidate on a vociferously unwilling community, and the electoral assembly showed every sign of becoming a riot. Ambrose took the podium and issued a plea for peace and unity. The crowd was surly, and his oration seemed to make little headway. But then something happened. From somewhere in the crowd the voice of a small child piped up: “Ambrose for bishop!” The crowd took up the cry; and within minutes Ambrose, stunned and appalled, found himself elected bishop of Milan.\(^3\) The one impediment – the fact that he had not as yet been baptized – was remedied on 7 December 374, and he processed directly from the font to ordination as bishop.

Ambrose thereupon called upon his old tutor Simplicianus to put him through an intensive course of theology. Being as literate in Greek as in Latin, he was able to read for himself the writings of the leading theologians of the Nicene movement, like Athanasius, Basil the Great, and Gregory of Nyssa, all of whom wrote in Greek. Ambrose continued to be one of the very few Latin-speaking bishops who read, and kept *au courant* with, what contemporary Greek theologians were writing. Once he had finished his course with Simplicianus, he made himself a strenuous opponent of Arianism, and an even more strenuous promoter of Nicene theology. He also turned his experience as a senior imperial administrator to good account and became a brilliant player in “the great game” of power-politics for the Nicene cause. Emperor Valentinian I died in 375 and was succeeded by his young son, who took the imperial purple as Valentinian II. Real authority, however, rested with his mother Justina, a fierce partisan for Arianism. The bishop and the dowager empress circled one another for years, and Ambrose gradually gained the upper hand: within five years of becoming bishop, he had shut Arians out of all of Milan’s churches and confined them to the imperial court. In March of 385 Valentinian, likely at the prompting of his mother, precipitated what is known as “the Affair of the Basilicas”. He demanded that the bishop make one of the city’s smaller churches, the Portian

\(^3\) The story is told in the earliest biography of Ambrose, by Paulinus the Deacon, the *Vita sancti Ambrosii* (“The Life of Saint Ambrose”), § 6. Paulinus wrote the *Vita* ca. 412-413.
Introduction to Ambrose of Milan

Basilica, available to the imperial household, so that it might celebrate the Arian liturgy in the style to which an emperor should be accustomed. Ambrose refused point-blank; Valentinian then demanded the cathedral itself, the New Basilica. Ambrose seems simply to have ignored this demand. Matters escalated dramatically on Palm Sunday. While Ambrose was presiding at the liturgy, imperial agents entered the Portian and began hanging banners and insignia; a mob gathered and would have lynched a hapless Arian presbyter, had not Ambrose dispatched some of his own clergy to save the man’s life. By nightfall, the entire city lay under a pall of tension and fear. The next day – Monday in Holy Week – orthodox laity made a point of occupying the Portian to ensure that theirs would be the liturgy celebrated there; others crowded into the New Basilica. Valentinian ordered his household guard, a regiment of Goths, to surround the Portian (and perhaps the New Basilica as well), and to let no one in or out. In this crisis, Ambrose remained with his people for the whole day, preaching, exhorting, and leading them in the singing of psalms and hymns (some of which he himself had written), even though (or precisely because) he knew the emperor might order his troops to slaughter the congregations. Then, at dusk, the Goths marched back to their quarters. Ambrose had won. Valentinian again tried to acquire the Portian Basilica a year later, but again Ambrose’s moral power, combined with his ability to mobilise the

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4 A basilica is an oblong assembly-hall with a semi-circular apse at one end. The name comes from the Greek word for “royal”. Such buildings originally designated royal palaces; later Roman emperors constructed to be auditoriums where they could hold their official audiences, and from there they became “palaces of justice,” in effect law-courts. Constantine made a practice of handing them over to the Church for use as churches. As a result, “basilica” became a name for a large, oblong church where the bishop regularly presided at the liturgy. It is now an honorific title granted to certain churches by the Pope, whether their architecture is “basilican” or not.

5 Goths were a Germanic people, whom most inhabitants of the Roman empire considered “barbarians”; those in Valentinian’s guard had been converted to an Arian form of Christianity.
citizenry, made the imperial court again back down. The emperor thereafter conceded that he had lost control of his own capital to its bishop.

Valentinian II did not control much of anything else, either. Even as he squared off against Ambrose over a basilica, his armies were barely holding at bay a usurper named Maximus, who had gained all the western empire north of the Alps and south of the Pyrenees, and whose naval forces were blockading the western coast of Italy. A year after the second instalment of “the affair of the basilicas,” Maximus invaded Italy itself. Valentinian, with his mother and the rest of his court, precipitately fled by sea to Thessalonica in Greece. His imperial bacon was saved by Theodosius, the eastern Roman emperor, who led a large army to Italy and quickly rolled Maximus back up the peninsula; the usurper was handed over by his own troops, and summarily beheaded by Theodosius’s. Valentinian was now officially restored, but it did not take much political savvy to realise that Theodosius was really sole emperor of West and East.6

In contrast to most of his predecessors, Theodosius was firmly committed to the Nicene cause and opposed to Arianism; it was he who convened the (first) council of

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6 In the wake of Valentinian I’s death (375), the Roman empire was in a far greater mess than this account suggests. By his first wife Valentinian had a son named Gratian, who was a vigorous and intelligent youth – too vigorous and too intelligent for certain counsellors, who had an army in Gaul acclaim the four-year-old Valentinian II, the offspring of Valentinian I and his second wife Justina. Gratian decided that discretion was the better part of civil war and immediately hailed his younger brother as co-emperor of the West. Valentinian II sat in purple at Milan, while Gratian ruled (or tried to rule) the rest of the western empire. In 378, their uncle Valens, emperor of the East, died at Adrianople, in the most catastrophic defeat that Roman arms had suffered at the hands of barbarians in almost four centuries. Gratian raised Theodosius, the most successful Roman general of the day, to the purple as emperor of the East. Four years later, in 383, Gratian himself was assassinated by officers sympathetic to Maximus, and civil war broke out. After his restoration in 388, Valentinian II sat on the imperial throne for another four years; he was strangled to death in 392, in his twentieth year, by a senior councillor whom he had tried to dismiss.
Constantinople in 381 and directed it to entrench Nicene doctrine as the faith of the Church. Ambrose naturally thought of Theodosius as an answer to prayer, and for two years he strove to maintain good relations with the emperor. Somehow, Ambrose regularly received top-secret information from inside the court, which allowed him to make preemptive interventions in the imperial decision-making process. It was thanks to this inside source (whether a single individual or a network, we still do not know) that Ambrose learned of the emperor’s plan to visit retribution on the citizens of Thessalonica, a major city in northern Greece. They had rioted when a favourite charioteer was imprisoned on a morals charge; and during the riot the city’s military commandant (along with several other officers) was murdered. Theodosius commanded the troops on the spot to lure the citizens into the city’s amphitheatre and then slaughter them. On being informed of this, despite some danger to himself (for Theodosius earlier had forbidden the bishop to approach him), Ambrose paid several calls on the emperor and begged him to cancel the order. Theodosius eventually gave in and sent a countermand. It arrived at Thessalonica too late; the troops had already carried out the plan and massacred as many as 7,000 unarmed civilians in the amphitheatre. Ambrose, careful to show sorrow more than outrage, notified Theodosius that he would not be allowed to receive the eucharistic sacrament until he had done penance for ordering the massacre in the first place. Theodosius complied; and though it is unclear how publicly he performed the penance, the news of its imposition and performance almost immediately became public knowledge. As a result, by the time Ambrose died in 397, no one – not even the bishop of Rome – rivalled his prestige in the western Church.

Ambrose’s prestige extended far beyond his ability to humiliate one emperor and bring another to heel. Since the early Middle Ages he has been counted as one of “The Four Doctors of the Western Church” – “doctor” in this context being meant in the strict Latin sense of “teacher.”

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7 The Calendar of The Book of Alternative Services (1985) reflects this when it designates major theologians (though,
Introduction to Ambrose of Milan

honour does not mean that Ambrose was a speculative theologian of genius, like Augustine or Thomas Aquinas. Instead, he excelled as a teacher – and as a teacher of the sort who practised what is known as haute vulgarisation. His reading was vast – perhaps because of his habit, contrary to that of the ancient world, was to read silently. But Ambrose had the gift of assimilating and organising what he read for the sake of enlightening his congregations. He was, in fact, an exemplar of what the late Tad Guzie called “preached theology” – a theology which takes serious account of the

[8] curiously, not Ambrose) “teachers of the faith”. The other three “Doctors of the Western Church” are Jerme (c. 342-420), Augustine of Hippo (354-430), and Gregory the Great (c. 540-604).

[8] We know this from Augustine, who visited Ambrose on several occasions but was always prevented from speaking with the bishop because of the number of others waiting their own turn ahead of him. “When [Ambrose] was not with these crowds of busy men, and this was but a little while, he either refreshed his body with needed food or his mind with reading. When he read, his eyes moved down the pages..., while his voice and tongue remained silent. Often when we were present – for no one was forbidden entry, and it was not his custom to have whoever came announced to him – we saw him reading to himself, and never otherwise…. We thought that in that short time which he obtained for refreshing his mind, free from the din of other people’s problems, he did not want to be summoned to some other matter. We thought too that perhaps he was afraid, if [he had read aloud and] the author he was reading had expressed things in an obscure manner, then it would have been necessary to explain it for some perplexed but eager listener, or to discuss some more difficult questions, and if his time were used up in such tasks, he would be able to read fewer books than he wished to. However, need to save his voice, which easily grew hoarse, was perhaps the more correct reason why he read to himself.” [Confessions VI.3, § 3; trans. John K. Ryan.] Augustine spent so much time on Ambrose’s habit of reading silently because it was an exception to the rule, otherwise universal in the ancient world, of reading everything aloud, not only in company, but also when alone. In fact, it was not until the nineteenth century that reading silently (“to yourself”) became the custom, and reading out loud became the mark of a “slow” or semi-literate person.
people who are being addressed, their familiarity with things Christian (especially the liturgy), their level of spiritual maturity, and shapes its discourse accordingly for the sake of converting the audience. This way of doing theology implicitly sets a high premium on rhetoric – that is, on the art of persuasion – and therefore on performance, in contrast to the concern of systematic theology for coherent analysis of concepts in themselves. Ambrose brought “preached theology” to new heights because he also happened to be one of the premier Latin orators of his age. Indeed, in all of Christian antiquity, only Augustine of Hippo excelled him as a Latin orator – and Augustine himself later acknowledged that Ambrose’s preaching had been a decisive influence in bringing him back to the Catholic faith. Such a tribute, from such a source, suggests that there was much more to Ambrose’s reputation than just brilliant technique and spell-binding performance. He was an enormously effective teacher of the Catholic faith; and if people first went to hear him for the sake of his oratorical showmanship, they kept coming back to hear him for the sake of his sermons’ content.

Almost all of Ambrose’s surviving works originated as sermons. He never preached from a prepared text; instead, one of his secretaries sat near him and took down what he said. Then, if he thought a series of sermons deserved wider distribution, he would edit the transcripts, hone their rhetoric, and turn them into a treatise on this or that topic of Christian interest.

Most of the original transcripts of Ambrose’s sermons have disappeared; we have only the treatises he chose to produce from them. But there is an exception – the work known as De sacramentis (“On the Sacraments”). According to a solid consensus of scholars, this work is essentially the transcript of a series of lectures that Ambrose delivered to a class of newly baptized Christians during Easter Week, probably in 390 or 391. Ambrose subsequently revised these transcripts to produce De mysteriis (“On the Mysteries”), a polished little treatise explaining the Christian sacraments of baptism and the eucharist for the general reading public. But in this case the original transcripts somehow survived, probably because copies were made and circulated before Ambrose himself got around to editing them and producing his “finished” treatise On the Mysteries.
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I have chosen selections from *On the Sacraments* for our reading because it reflects Ambrose's mind far more immediately, and in far greater detail, than *On the Mysteries*. The original work consists of six “books,” each “book” being the transcript of one day’s lecture. The last three books – the lectures for Friday and Saturday in Easter Week and the Second Sunday of Easter – contain Ambrose’s discussion of the eucharistic mystery, the Lord’s Prayer, and the life of prayer.

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**Further Reading**


Selected tracts, sermons, hymns, and letters of Ambrose in English translation, including *On the Mysteries*, Paulinus’s *Life of Ambrose*, and an excellent general introduction.


On the Sacraments

Book IV

§ 1. Under the old covenant priests were accustomed to enter the first tabernacle often; but the high priest used to enter the second tabernacle only once a year. Recalling this in his Letter to the Hebrews, the Apostle Paul explains clearly the order of the old covenant. The manna was in the second tabernacle, so was the rod of Aaron which withered and afterwards blossomed again, and the altar of incense.

§ 2. Why does Paul consider this? So that you may understand what is the second tabernacle to which the bishop introduced you, which the high priest was accustomed to enter only once a year – that is, to the baptistry, where Aaron’s rod blossomed. Before it was withered, afterwards it blossomed again. You too were dried out and began to blossom again “by the irrigating power of the font.” You were dried out with sins, you were withered by errors and offences, but now you have begun to bear fruit as a tree planted beside streams of running water.

§ 3. But perhaps you will say: “What is this to the people? So the priest’s rod was dried out and blossomed again – so what?” What is the people itself but a priestly people, to whom it is said: You are

1 Cf. Exodus 30.10, Leviticus 16.2-34. In the temple at Jerusalem, what Ambrose calls “the first tabernacle” was the largest room, where ordinary cultic activity was conducted. “The second tabernacle” was inner sanctuary, “the Holy of Holies,” where the ark of the covenant reposed.

2 Hebrews 9.6-7.

3 Hebrews 9.1-7, Numbers 17.2-10.

4 A phrase drawn from Georgics IV.32, by the Latin poet Vergil (70 – 19 B.C.E).

5 Psalm 1.3.
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a chosen nation, a royal priesthood, a holy tribe – as the Apostle Peter says.\(^6\) Each individual is anointed for the priesthood, anointed for the kingdom – but it is a spiritual kingdom and a spiritual priesthood. \(\S\) 4. In the second tabernacle there was also the altar of incense. It is the altar of incense which is accustomed to put forth a sweet aroma. So you too are now the sweet aroma of Christ;\(^7\) now there is no filth of offences in you, no scent of more grievous error.

\(2\) \(\S\) 5. The next thing is, that you come to the altar. You began to come; the angels looked on, they saw you coming, and they beheld that human condition, which before was soiled with the dark squalour of sins, suddenly glisten. And so they say: \textit{Who is this woman that comes up from the wilderness clothed in brightness?} \(^8\) Even the angels, then, are amazed. Do you want to know how they are amazed? Hear the apostle Peter as he says that to us are granted those things that \textit{angels long to see}.\(^9\) Hear again: \textit{What the eye has not seen, what the ear has not heard, these are the things that God has prepared for those who love him.}\(^10\) \(\S\) 6. Recollect, then, what you have received. The holy prophet David saw and longed for this grace in a figure. Do you want to know how he longed for it? Hear him again as he says: \textit{You shall purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: you shall wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.}\(^11\) How so? Because snow, though white, soon becomes discoloured with dirt and is ruined. This grace which you have received, if you hold to what you have received, will be lasting and perpetual.

\(\S\) 7. You came, then, full of desire, because you beheld such grace; full of desire, you came to the altar where you

\(^6\) 1 Peter 2.9.

\(^7\) Cf. 2 Corinthians 2.15.

\(^8\) Song of Songs 8.5.

\(^9\) 1 Peter 1.12.

\(^10\) 1 Corinthians 2.9.

\(^11\) Psalm 51.9
received the sacrament. Your soul says: *I will go to the altar of God, to the God who gladdens my youth.*\(^{12}\) You have put off the old nature of your sins, you have taken on the youth of grace. The heavenly sacraments bestowed this youth on you. Thus, again hear David speaking: *You have renewed my youth as an eagle’s.*\(^{13}\) You have begun to be a good eagle which seeks heaven and scorns the earth. Good eagles are around the altar, for *where the body is, there also are the eagles.*\(^{14}\) You are eagles, renewed by the washing away of sin.

\(\text{3} \) § 8. You came to the altar, you gave heed to the sacraments placed on the altar, you marvelled at that creature, even though it was an everyday, familiar creature. § 9. Perhaps someone will say: “To the Jews God gave such grace that he rained manna from heaven on them: what more has he given to his faithful people, what more has he bestowed on those to whom he promised more?” § 10. Listen to what I say! The mysteries of the Christians are older than the mysteries of the Jews, and the sacraments of the Christians are more divine than the sacraments of the Jews. How? Listen. When did the Jews begin to be Jews? With Judah, the great-grandson of Abraham; or if you wish to understand it this way, with the Law – that is to say, when the Jews merited to come under the “jew-risdiction” of God.\(^{15}\) Therefore, by reason of the name of Abraham’s great-grandson, the Jews were called Jews from the time of Moses. At that time God showered manna from heaven on the complaining Jews. But, so far as you are concerned, a figure of these sacraments came earlier, in Abraham’s time, when he gathered three hundred and eighteen servants of his household and went in pursuit of his enemies and delivered

\(^{12}\) Psalm 43.4.

\(^{13}\) Psalm 103.5.

\(^{14}\) Matthew 24.28.

\(^{15}\) The word “jew-risdiction” is an attempt to translate the atrocious pun that Ambrose makes in this sentence: “Ex Iuda utique, pronepote Abrahamae, aut, si vis et sic intelligere, ex lege, id est, quando ‘ius dei’ accipere meruerunt.”
his nephew from captivity. Then Abraham returned homewards in triumph, and Melchizedek the high-priest met him and offered bread and wine.\(^{16}\) Who had the bread and wine? Not Abraham. Who then? Melchizedek. He, therefore, is the author of the sacraments. Who is Melchizedek, whose name means king of righteousness, king of peace?\(^{17}\) Who is this king of righteousness? Can any human be king of righteousness? Who then is the king of righteousness but the Righteousness of God? Who is the peace of God and the wisdom of God?\(^{18}\) It is he who could say, My peace I give to you, my own peace I leave with you.\(^{19}\)

§ 11. Understand first of all, therefore, that these sacraments which you receive are older than the sacraments that the Jews say they have. Understand, too, that the Christian nation began before the Jewish nation – we according to God’s eternal purpose, they in name.

§ 12. Melchizedek, then, offered bread and wine. Who is Melchizedek? Without father, it says, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, like the Son of God.\(^{20}\) So the Letter to the Hebrews has it. Without father, it says, without mother – and like the Son of God. The Son of God was born without a mother by a heavenly birth, because he was born of God the Father alone. And again, he was born without a father when he was born of a virgin. For he was not begotten by the seed of a male, but was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and brought forth from the Virgin’s womb. Like the Son of God in all things, Melchizedek was also a high priest, because Christ in his turn is the high priest to whom it is said, You are a high priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.\(^{21}\)

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\(^{16}\) See Genesis 14.14-18.

\(^{17}\) Hebrews 7.2.

\(^{18}\) Cf. Ephesians 2.14, 1 Corinthians 1.24.

\(^{19}\) John 14.27.

\(^{20}\) Hebrews 7.3.

\(^{21}\) Psalm 110.4, Hebrews 7.17.
4 § 13. Who, then, is the author of the sacraments but the Lord Jesus? These same sacraments came down from heaven, for every counsel is from heaven. But it was indeed a great, a divine miracle that God rained manna from heaven on the people, and that the people ate without working for their food.

§ 14. Perhaps you will say: “My bread is of the ordinary kind.” 22 But this bread is bread before the word of the sacraments: when the consecration is added, the flesh of Christ is made from the bread. How can that which is bread be the body of Christ? By what words, then, and by whose speech, is the consecration? The Lord Jesus’. For all the other things that are said earlier on in the liturgy, are said by the priest [sacerdos] 23 – praises and prayers are addressed to God, intercession is offered for the people, for kings, and for others. When it comes time for the venerable sacrament to be produced [conficiatur], the priest no longer uses his own words but the words of Christ. Therefore, the word of Christ produces the sacrament.

22 An allusion to the offertory, as then (and for several centuries to come) practised in the churches of Italy and North Africa. At the appointed moment in the liturgy, all householders in the congregation came forward, each with his or her own loaf of bread and cruet of wine. They placed their bread in one of several baskets, and poured their wine into basons. The bishop (or his archdeacon) would take as many loaves and as much wine as needed for communion, and place them on the altar; the rest of the bread was set apart, to be distributed after the liturgy to the poor.

23 Sacerdos is a term appropriated by Christians from the public cults of classical paganism; it designated “the giver of sacrifice,” the public official who presided over the ritual slaughter and immolation of the victim (an animal, often a bull). In the Christian context, it always referred to the bishop, since it was normally the exclusive prerogative of the bishop to preside at the eucharist – which had already come to be known as “the Christian sacrifice”. The term sacerdos did not (yet) refer to a presbyter (from which English derives the word priest, and French the word prêtre). For in the late fourth century, it was still unusual, even extraordinary for a presbyter to be allowed to preside at the eucharist.
§ 15. What is the word of Christ? It is that word by which all things are made. The Lord commanded, and the heavens were made; the Lord commanded, and the earth was made; the Lord commanded, and the seas were made; the Lord commanded, and every creature was brought forth. You see, then, how powerful the word of Christ is. If such power is in the word of the Lord Jesus, that things which were not should begin to be – how much greater is its power, that things which already exist, even as they exist, should be changed into something else. Heaven did not exist, the sea did not exist – but hear David as he says: *He spoke, and they were made: he commanded, and they were created.*

§ 16. To answer your question, then: Before consecration it was not the body of Christ, but after consecration, I tell you, now it is the body of Christ. *He spoke, and it was made: he commanded, and it was created.* You yourself already had existence, but you were an old creature; after you were consecrated [in baptism] you began to be a new creature. Do you want to know how you are a new creature? *Whoever is in Christ, it says, is a new creature.*

§ 17. Hear, then, how the word of Christ is accustomed to change every creature, and changes at will the laws of nature. How, you demand? Listen – and first of all, let us take the example of his own birth. Normally no human is begotten except from a man and a woman and from conjugal intercourse. But because the Lord willed it, because he chose this mystery [sacramentum], Christ was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin – that is to say, he who is the mediator between God and humankind, the man Jesus Christ. You see, then, that he was born contrary to the laws and order of nature when he was born of the Virgin. § 18. Take another example. The Jewish people were hard-pressed by the Egyptians, and their way was blocked by the sea. By the divine command, Moses touched the waters with his rod, and the flood parted – surely not according to the custom

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24 Psalm 33.9.

25 2 Corinthians 5.17.

26 1 Timothy 2.5.
of nature, but according to the grace of the heavenly command. Take another example. The people were thirsty, and they came to a spring of water. The spring was bitter. The holy man Moses cast wood into the spring, and the spring which was bitter became sweet\textsuperscript{28} – that is to say, he changed a normal characteristic of its nature and it received the sweetness of grace. Take a fourth example. An iron axe-head had fallen into water and, being iron with the normal characteristics of iron, it sank. Elisha cast wood into the water; immediately the iron rose and floated upon the water\textsuperscript{29} – surely contrary to the normal characteristics of iron, for it is a material that is heavier than the element of water.

§ 19. From all these examples do you not understand how powerful the heavenly word is? If it was powerful in the earthly spring, if the heavenly word was powerful in other things, is it not powerful in the heavenly sacraments? You have learned, therefore, that the body of Christ is made from the bread, and that wine, with water, is placed in the cup, but becomes blood by heavenly consecration.

§ 20. But perhaps you will say: “I do not see the appearance of blood.” But it has the likeness. For just as you have assumed the likeness of death, so also you drink the likeness of the precious blood, so that there might be no horror of blood, and yet the price of redemption might accomplish its purpose. You have learned, then, that what you receive is the body of Christ.

5 § 21. Do you want to know how the sacrament is consecrated with heavenly words? Hear what those words are. The priest (sacerdos) says:\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{27} See Exodus 14.5-22.

\textsuperscript{28} See Exodus 15.23-25.

\textsuperscript{29} See 2 Kings 6.5-7.

\textsuperscript{30} Ambrose here quotes directly from the Canon (Eucharistic Prayer) of the liturgy of the church of Milan. These and his other quotations from the Milanese liturgy have a very strong resemblance to the Canon of the Roman Rite. This is not to say, however, that Milan followed the Roman church’s lead and simply adapted the Roman Rite; it could have been the
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Make this oblation to be for us approved, spiritual, and acceptable, because it is the figure of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; who, on the night before he suffered, took bread in his holy hands; he looked up to heaven, to you, holy Father, almighty, eternal God, and giving thanks, he blessed and broke it and, having broken, delivered it to his apostles and disciples, saying, Take and eat of this, all of you, for this is my body which is broken for you.

§ 22. Pay attention!

Likewise after supper, on the night before he suffered, he took the cup; he looked up to heaven, to you, holy Father, almighty, eternal God, and giving thanks, he blessed it and delivered it to his apostles and disciples, saying, Take and drink of this, all of you, for this is my blood.

Note that all of these words are the evangelist’s, up to Take... either the body or the blood. After that, the words are Christ’s: Take and drink of this, all of you, for this is my blood.

§ 23. Consider each detail. It says: “On the night before he suffered, he took bread in his holy hands.” Before it is consecrated, it is bread, but when the words of Christ are added, it is the body of Christ. Hear him when he says: Take and eat of this, all of you, for this is my body. And before the words of Christ, the cup is full of wine and water. When the words of Christ have done their work, then it is become the blood which redeemed the people. Therefore, behold in how many ways the word of Christ is powerful to change all things. There the Lord Jesus himself testifies to us that we receive his body and blood. Ought we to have any doubt of his faithfulness and testimony?

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other way around, that Rome followed Milan’s lead. We cannot be sure, because the earliest manuscript versions of the Roman Rite are all much later than Ambrose’s quotations from the Milanese Rite in De sacramentis. Both rites nonetheless belonged to the same liturgical family.
§ 24. Now return with me to my point. It was a great and awe-inspiring thing that he rained manna from heaven on the Jews. But think – which is greater, manna from heaven or the body of Christ? Surely the body of Christ, who is the Maker of heaven. In the days of the Exodus, those who ate manna in the wilderness died; those who eat this body, the forgiveness of sins will become theirs and they will never die. § 25. Therefore, [when you receive the sacrament] it is not insignificant that you say “Amen,” now confessing in your spirit that you receive the body of Christ. When you present yourself [for communion], the priest says to you, “The Body of Christ,” and you say, “Amen,” which means, “It is true.” What the tongue confesses, the thoughts of the heart should hold fast. In any case, you should know that this is a sacrament whose figure came beforehand.

§ 26. Know, then, how great the sacrament is. Consider what the Lord says: As often as you do this, you do it for the remembrance of me, until I come again. § 27. And the priest [sacerdos] says:

Therefore, mindful of his most glorious passion, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, we offer to you [O Father] this unspotted sacrifice, this spiritual sacrifice, this unbloody sacrifice, this holy bread and the cup of eternal life. We implore you, and we beg you, to take this oblation up to your altar on high, by the hands of your holy angels, just as you deigned to accept the gifts of your servants Abel, and the sacrifice of our forebear Abraham, and that which the high-priest Melchizedek offered to you.

§ 28. Therefore, as often as you receive – what did the Apostle say to you? As often as we receive, we proclaim the
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Lord's death. If we proclaim his death, we proclaim the forgiveness of sins. If as often as the blood is poured out it is shed for the forgiveness of sins, I ought always to receive it, so that it may release me from my sins. I, who always sin, ought always to have a remedy.

§ 29. In any case, today I have explained as much as I could. But tomorrow, Saturday, and on Sunday, we shall talk about the order of prayer, so far as we are able. May the Lord our God maintain the favour which he gave to us, and may he deign to illumine more fully our eyes, which he opened for us, through his only Son, the King and Saviour, the Lord our God; through whom, and with whom, praise, honour, glory, splendour, and power are his, with the Holy Spirit, from the beginning, so now, and throughout all ages. Amen.

Book V

§ 1. Yesterday our sermon and discourse carried us as far as the sacraments of the holy altar; and we learned that the figure of these sacraments had gone before, in the times of Abraham, when holy Melchizedek, who has neither beginning nor end of days, offered sacrifice. Hear, O mortal, what the Apostle Paul says to the Hebrews. Where are those who say that the Son of God belongs to time? Melchizedek, it is said, has neither beginning nor end of days. If Melchizedek does not have a beginning of days, can Christ? The figure which foreshadows a reality is not more than the reality itself. You see, therefore, that he himself is the first and the last – the first, because he is the creator of everything; the last, not because he comes to an end, but because he fulfills everything.

34 1 Corinthians 11.26.

35 A reference to the Arians, who maintained that “there was a time when the Son was not,” i.e. did not exist.

36 Revelation 1.17.
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§ 2. We said that a cup and bread were set on the altar. What is placed in the cup? Wine. And what else? Water. But you say to me: “Why? Melchizedek offered wine and bread. What does the adding of water mean?” Hear the reason.

§ 3. First of all, the figure which foreshadowed this rite in the time of Moses – what does it contain? When the Jews thirsted and grumbled because they could not find water, God commanded Moses to touch the rock with his rod. He touched the rock, and the rock poured forth an abundant flood – as the Apostle says: They drank from the rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. It was not an immovable rock that followed the people. Drink, so that Christ may follow you. Behold the mystery! Moses, that is, a prophet, with a rod, that is, with the Word of God – a priest touches the rock with the word of God and water flows and the people of God drink. Therefore, the priest touches the cup, the water brims in the cup, wells up to eternal life, and the people of God drink, who have obtained the grace of God.

§ 4. You have learned this. Learn something else. At the time of the Lord’s passion, when the great Sabbath was near, because our Lord Jesus Christ (or the two thieves) still lived, men were sent to finish them off. When they came they found our Lord Jesus Christ already dead. Then one of the soldiers touched the Lord’s side with his lance, and from his side flowed water and blood. Why water? Why blood? Water, for cleansing; blood, for redeeming. Why from his side? Because grace should come from that place from which the fault came: the fault came by means of the woman Eve; grace came by means of our Lord Jesus Christ.

§ 5. You came to the altar; the Lord Jesus Christ calls you, or your soul, or the Church, and says: Let her kiss

37 See Exodus 17.1-7.
38 1 Corinthians 10.4.
40 See John 19.31-34.
41 John 1.17.
me with the kisses of her mouth.\textsuperscript{42} Do you wish to apply this to Christ? Nothing could be more pleasing. Do you wish to apply it to your own soul? Nothing could be more delightful. § 6. Let her kiss me. Christ sees that you are clean from all sin, because your sins have been thoroughly washed away [in baptism]. Thus does he judge you worthy of the heavenly sacraments, and thus does he invite you to the heavenly banquet: Let her kiss me with the kisses of her mouth. § 7. Nevertheless, taking into account what follows, [we should add] that your soul, or the human condition, or the Church sees itself as cleansed from all sins, as a worthy subject who can approach the altar of Christ – for what is the altar of Christ but the image [forma] of Christ’s body? – and it sees the wondrous sacraments, and says: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. That is to say: “Let Christ imprint a kiss on me.” § 8. Why? Because your breasts are better than wine\textsuperscript{43} – that is, “Your senses, your sacraments, O Christ, are better than wine, better than the wine which, even though it has sweetness, power to cheer, and a pleasant taste, nevertheless has a worldly joy in it; while in you, O Christ, there is spiritual delight.” Thus Solomon already represented the marriage of Christ and the Church, or of soul and flesh, or of spirit and soul. § 9. And he added: Your name is an ointment poured out, therefore do the maidens love you.\textsuperscript{44} Who are these maidens but the souls of the individuals who have shed the old nature of this body, having been renewed through the Holy Spirit? § 10. Draw us: we run after the fragrance of your ointments.\textsuperscript{45} See what he says: you cannot follow Christ unless he himself draws you. Therefore, so that

\textsuperscript{42} Song of Solomon 1.2. The text actually reads: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.” In V.2.7, Ambrose quoted it exactly. Here, however, he wished to make it clear that the one who initiates the love-relation is not the human subject (whether the individual soul or the community of the Church) but Christ.

\textsuperscript{43} Song of Solomon 1.2.

\textsuperscript{44} Song of Solomon 1.3.

\textsuperscript{45} Song of Solomon 1.4.
you may know this, he says: When I have been lifted up, I will draw all things to myself.\(^{46}\) § 11. The king has led me into his chamber – the Greek has into his storehouse, or into his cellar\(^{47}\) – where there are good drinks, rich aromas, sweet honey, various fruits, and a variety of foods, so that your repast may be seasoned with a great many dishes.

§ 12. You came, then, to the altar, you received the body of Christ. Hear again what sacraments you have obtained. Hear holy David speak. In the Spirit he foresaw these mysteries and rejoiced, and said that he lacked nothing.\(^{48}\) Why? Because those who have received the body of Christ will never hunger.\(^{49}\) § 13. How often have you listened to the twenty-third Psalm and not understood it? See how it is applied to the heavenly sacraments:

The Lord feeds me, and I lack nothing.
He sets me in a pasture, and has led me beside the waters of refreshment.
He converts my soul, and has led me along the paths of righteousness for his Name’s sake.
Even though I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff themselves have comforted me.

The rod is sovereign power, the staff is suffering – that is, the eternal divinity of Christ as well as his bodily suffering. The one created, the other redeemed.

You have prepared a table for me in the face of those who trouble me; you have anointed my head with oil, and how excellent is your inebriating cup!

\(^{46}\) John 12.32.

\(^{47}\) Song of Solomon 1.4. “The Greek” to which Ambrose referred was the Septuagint, the official Jewish version of the Hebrew scriptures in Greek. The Christian Church simply adopted this translation as its own “Standard Version” of the Old Testament.

\(^{48}\) Psalm 23.1.

\(^{49}\) Cf. John 6.35.
§ 14. You have come to the altar, you have received the grace of Christ, you have obtained the heavenly sacraments. The Church rejoices in the salvation of many, and she is gladdened with spiritual exultation that her white-robed family stands at her side. You find this in the Song of Songs. In her joy, the Church calls to Christ, seeing that she has prepared a banquet which seems worthy of a heavenly feast. And so she says: Let my brother descend into his garden and take the fruit of his fruit-trees.\(^{50}\) What are the fruit-trees? You were made dry wood in Adam, but now through the grace of Christ you have budded forth as fruit-bearing trees. § 15. Willingly has the Lord Jesus accepted your fruit, and with a heavenly graciousness he replies to his Church: I have descended into my garden; I have gathered the vintage of myrrh with my ointments; I have eaten my bread with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, my brothers, and become inebriated.\(^{51}\) § 16. I have gathered the vintage of myrrh with my ointments. What is this vintage? Know the vine and you shall recognize the vintage. You brought a vine out of Egypt, it says\(^ {52}\) – meaning, the people of God. You are the vine, you are the vintage. Having been planted as a vine, as the vintage you have borne fruit. I have gathered the vintage of myrrh with my ointments – that is, for the sweet fragrance which you have received. § 17. I have eaten my bread with my honey. You see that there is no bitterness in this bread, but that it is all sweetness. I drank my wine with my milk. You see that it is a kind of joy which is defiled by no stain of sin. For as often as you drink [the sacrament], you receive forgiveness of sins and are made drunk with the Spirit. For this reason the Apostle also says: Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.\(^ {53}\) Whoever is drunk with wine wobbles and weaves: whoever is drunk with the Spirit is rooted in Christ. And so it is an

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\(^{50}\) Song of Solomon 4.16.

\(^{51}\) Song of Solomon 5.1.

\(^{52}\) Psalm 80.8.

\(^{53}\) Ephesians 5.18.
excellent drunkenness which produces sobriety of mind. These things are a brief review of the doctrine of the sacraments.

§ 18. What remains except prayer? And do not suppose it is of small worth to know how you should pray. The holy apostles said to the Lord Jesus: Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples. Then the Lord said this prayer:

\[\text{Our Father in the heavens,} \]
\[\text{your name be made holy,} \]
\[\text{your kingdom come,} \]
\[\text{your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.} \]
\[\text{Give us today our daily bread,} \]
\[\text{and forgive us our debts} \]
\[\text{just as we too forgive our debtors;} \]
\[\text{and do not let us to be brought to the test,} \]
\[\text{but deliver us from evil.}\]

You see, how brief a prayer and how full of all the right qualities! Of how much grace is the first petition! § 19. O mortal, you did not dare to lift your face to heaven, you used to direct your eyes onto the ground, and suddenly you have received the grace of Christ, all sins are forgiven you. Out of a bad slave you have been made a good son. So, do not presume that this is of your own working, but from Christ’s grace! You have been saved by grace, says the Apostle. This is not arrogance, but faith. To proclaim what you have received is not pride but devotion. Therefore, lift your eyes to the Father who gave you birth through the washing of baptism – to the Father who redeemed you through the Son – and say, Our Father! It is a good audacity, but a restrained audacity. As a child you say “Father,” but do

\[55\] Matthew 6.9-13.
\[56\] Ephesians 2.5.
\[57\] Cf. Titus 3.5, James 1.18.
not claim anything as uniquely your own. For he is uniquely the Father of Christ alone, and Father to all of us in common, because Christ he begot, us he created. Say Our Father, then, through grace, so that you may deserve to be a child. Commend yourself in the sight and estimation of the Church!

§ 20. **OUR FATHER IN THE HEAVENS.** What does *in the heavens* mean? Hear Scripture as it says: *The Lord is high above the heavens.* 58 And everywhere you have it that the Lord is *above the heaven of heavens.* 59 As if the angels were not in the heavens, as if the spiritual powers were not in the heavens! But they are in those heavens concerning which it is written: *The heavens tell out the glory of God.* 60 Heaven is there, wherever guilt has ceased; heaven is there, wherever occasions of shame are destroyed; heaven is there, wherever there is no wound of death.

§ 21. **Our Father in the heavens, your name be made holy.** What does *be made holy* mean? As if we were to hope that he would be made holy who says: *You be holy, because I am holy* 61 – as if any quality of being made holy were added to him from our preaching! No, but he is made holy in us, so that his hallowing can reach us.

§ 22. **Our Father in the heavens, your name be made holy, your kingdom come.** As if the kingdom of God were not eternal! Jesus himself says: *For this was I born* 62 – and you say to the Father, *Your kingdom come,* as if it had already arrived. But then the kingdom of God comes, when you have obtained his grace. For he himself says: *The kingdom of God is among you.* 63

§ 23. **Your kingdom come, your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth; give us today our daily bread.** All things, whether in heaven or on earth, are reconciled by the

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58 Psalm 113.4.

59 See, for example, 1 Kings 8.27, Psalm 8.2.

60 Psalm 19.1.

61 Leviticus 19.2.

62 John 18.37.

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blood of Christ; heaven is sanctified; the devil is cast down. There he is overthrown, where the man is whom he deceived. Your will be done – that is, let there be peace on earth as there is in heaven.55

§ 24. **Give us today our daily bread.** Remember my sermon, when I discoursed about the sacraments. I said to you that, before the words of Christ, what is offered is called bread; when Christ’s words have been uttered, it is no longer called “bread,” but is named “the body”. Why, then, in the Lord’s Prayer, which comes afterwards, does it say **our bread**? He did indeed say **bread**, but he also said `επιουσιον [epiousion], that is, “substantial”. This is not the same bread which enters the body, but that bread of eternal life which sustains the substance of our soul.66 Thus, in Greek, it is called επιουσιον. But our language says that this bread is **daily bread**, because the Greeks mean την `επιουσαν `ηµεραν [ten epiousan hemeran], “the coming day”. Thus, what our language said and what the Greek said, both seem to be profitable: Greek signified either in one word, our language said daily. § 25. If this is **daily bread**, why do you take it once a year, as the Greeks in the East are accustomed to do? Receive daily what benefits you daily. Live in such a way that you may deserve to receive it daily. Anyone who does not deserve to receive it daily, does not deserve to receive it only once a year. In the same way Saint Job offered daily sacrifices for his sons, just in case they had sinned either in heart or in speech.67 You hear, then that as often as the sacrifice is offered, the death of the Lord, the resurrection of the Lord, the ascension of the Lord, and the forgiveness of sins are signified – and you do not receive this bread of life daily? He who has a wound requires medicine. The wound is, that we are under the power of sin. The medicine is the heavenly and venerable sacrament. § 26. **Give us today our daily bread.** If you receive it daily, it is yours every day. If today Christ is yours, he rises again for

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64 Cf. Colossians 1.20.


67 Cf. Job 1.5.
ON THE SACRAMENTS

you every day. How? You are my Son, today have I begotten you.\(^{68}\) Today, then, is the day when Christ rises again. He is the same yesterday and today, the Apostle Paul says.\(^{69}\) But elsewhere he says: The night is far spent, the day has drawn near\(^{70}\) – yesterday’s night is far spent, today’s day has drawn near.

§ 27. Then comes: AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, JUST AS WE TOO FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS. What is the debt except sin? Thus, if you had not received money from somebody else’s capital investment, you would not have committed sin, and so sin would not be imputed to you. You had the coin with which you might have been rich. You were created rich in the image and likeness of God. You lost what you had, that is, humility; when you claim arrogance for your own, you have lost the money, just as Adam was cleaned out. You received a debt from the devil, a debt which was not necessary. And so, you who were free in Christ were made a debtor to the devil. An enemy held your bond, but the Lord crucified it and cancelled it by his blood. He took away your debt, he restored your liberty. § 28. Well does he say: And forgive us our debts, just as we too forgive our debtors. This is what he means: “In the manner in which I forgive, so forgive me, too.” If you forgive, you may well ask that it be forgiven you. If you do not forgive, how can you ask for forgiveness?

§ 29. AND DO NOT PERMIT US TO BE BROUGHT TO THE TEST, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL. Consider what you are saying: And do not permit us to be brought to the test which we cannot bear. One does not say, “Do not bring us to the test,” but like an athlete one wishes such a test of strength as the human condition and each individual can stand, so that one may be freed from evil – that is, from the Enemy, from sin. § 30. But the Lord is mighty, who has taken away your sin and has pardoned your offenses, to guard and protect you against the assaults of the devil who opposes you, so that the Enemy who is accustomed to beget sin may not sneak up on

\(^{68}\) Psalm 2.7.

\(^{69}\) Hebrews 13.8.

\(^{70}\) Romans 13.12.
you and take you by surprise. But whoever commits himself to God does not fear the devil. *For if God is for us, who is against us?*  

To him, therefore, be praise and glory, as from the beginning, so now and for ever, throughout all ages. Amen.

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### Book VI

1 § 1. Just as our Lord Jesus Christ is the true Son of God – not as humans are, by grace, but as the Son of God from the substance of the Father – so it is (as he himself said) his true flesh and his true drink that we receive.  

§ 2. But perhaps you will say what the disciples of Christ said when they heard him say, *Unless a person eats my flesh and drinks my blood, he will not abide in me nor will he have eternal life* – perhaps you will say: “How is it real flesh? And I do not see the reality of blood, only a likeness.”  

§ 3. First of all, I said to you about the word of Christ which causes the sacraments, that it can change and convert the kinds of things established in nature. In the second place: when his disciples could not endure Christ’s saying, but hearing that he would give his flesh to eat and give his blood to drink, they withdrew; Peter alone said: *You have the words of eternal life, and shall I leave you?*  

So, lest many more say that they would leave because of the horror that blood inspires – and in order that the grace of redemption might nevertheless remain – you do indeed receive the sacraments in things like the actual reality [veræ naturæ] of Christ’s flesh and blood, while still obtaining the grace and power of the actual reality itself.

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71 Romans 8.31.

72 Cf. Hebrews 1.3.

73 John 6.55.

74 Cf. John 6.53-56.

75 Cf. John 6.68.
§ 4. I am the living bread which came down from heaven.76 But flesh did not come down from heaven – that is, Christ assumed flesh on earth from the Virgin. How then did bread, even the living bread, come down from heaven? Because our Lord Jesus Christ is partaker both of divinity and of a body; and you who receive the flesh partake of his divine substance in this food.

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§ 5. You have thus heard about the sacraments, you have come to know all things most fully. Because you were baptized in the name of the Trinity, the mystery of the Trinity is upheld in everything you do. Where there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there is one operation, one sanctification – even though certain things seem as if they are specific to one or another of the divine Persons. § 6. How? It is God who anointed you, and the Lord set his seal upon you and placed the Holy Spirit in your heart. Therefore you received the Holy Spirit in your heart. Listen, there is more. Because the Holy Spirit is in the heart, even so Christ is in the heart. How? In the Song of Songs you have Christ saying this to the Church: Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm.77 § 7. Therefore God anointed you, Christ set his seal on you. How? Because you are marked with the form of the cross, with his passion. You received a seal in his likeness, so that you may rise again in his form and live in his figure, who was crucified to sin and lives to God.78 And your old humanity was plunged in the font, it was crucified to sin, and it has risen again to God. § 8. It follows that in one place you have something specific to the Father, that God called you; that in baptism you were (so to speak) specifically crucified with Christ; and then that there was something specific (as it were) to the Spirit, when you received the seal of the Spirit. You see that there is a distinction of persons, but that the whole mystery of the Trinity is connected together. § 9. Then what did the Apostle


77 Song of Solomon 8.6.

78 Cf. Romans 6.10.
ON THE SACRAMENTS

say to you, as you heard in the reading three days ago? There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; varieties of ministries, but the same Lord; varieties of workings, but the same God who works all things in everyone. God, he says, works all things. But it is also read concerning the Spirit of God: It is one and the same Spirit who apportions to each individual as he wills. Hear Scripture as it says that the Spirit apportions according to his own will, not out of obedience. Therefore the Spirit apportions grace to you as he wills, not as he is commanded, and precisely because he is the Spirit of God, he is the Spirit of Christ. And hold that he himself is the Holy Spirit, he himself is the Spirit of God, he himself is the Spirit of Christ, he himself is the Spirit, the Paraclete.

§ 10. The Arians think that they take away from the Holy Spirit if they say that the Spirit is the Paraclete. What is the Paraclete but a comforter? As if it were not read concerning the Father, that he himself is the God of consolation! You see, then, that they think to disparage the Holy Spirit by that very quality by which the power of the eternal Father is proclaimed with devout feeling.

[Ambrose concludes his course of mystagogical lectures (VI.3.11 – 4.25) with some instructions about private prayer.]

§ 26. We have taught in proportion to our powers of understanding, it may be, what we have not learned from human sources; we have expressed ourselves as best we could. May your holiness, shaped by the instructions of your bishop, strive to hold fast what it has received, so that your prayer may be accepted by God, and your oblation may be as a pure sacrifice, and he may recognize his seal in you always; so that you yourselves can attain to grace and to the reward of virtue, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honour and glory, praise and unending life, from the beginning, and now, and always, and throughout all ages. Amen.

79 1 Corinthians 12.4-6.

80 1 Corinthians 12.11.

81 2 Corinthians 1.3.
3.

Augustine of Hippo

Discourses
on the Eucharistic Mystery
INTRODUCTION

WESTERN theology sometimes looks like nothing more than a long series of footnotes to the writings of Augustine of Hippo (354-430).1 His writings against the Donatist schism in his own North Africa laid the ground-rules for later developments in sacramental theology. His great speculative treatise On the Trinity originated and determined the western tradition’s “psychological” doctrine of God. His treatises against the Pelagians established the doctrine of Original Sin, delineated the doctrine of grace, and saddled the western tradition with the doctrinal albatross of predestination. And his spiritual autobiography, Confessions, became a kind of phylactery on the brow of western spirituality.2 So far as western Christendom has been concerned, there was no theologian but Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas – or, depending on one’s confessional affiliation, Marin Luther or John Calvin – was his prophet.

In one area of doctrinal concern, however, Augustine has stymied efforts to nail down his teaching and exploit his authority. Nothing is more characteristic of the western tradition than controversy about the eucharist – and nothing has been more constant in all these controversies than the slipperiness of Augustine’s views on the mystery. This is not because he ignored or downplayed the eucharist. On the contrary, references to the eucharist are peppered throughout his prodigious output. But, as Jaroslav Pelikan has remarked, “Augustine’s doctrine about ‘the sacrament of the body of Christ’ was less explicit than his doctrine about baptism, not because he spoke of it less often (though he probably did), but because he did not specify its content with equal detail.”3 In particular, Augustine did not specify his thoughts about the two issues which would obsess the later western tradition – the

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1 Augustine’s feast day is August 28th, the anniversary of his death in 430.

2 Gary Wills has pointed out that Confessions is merely a transliteration, not a translation, of Augustine’s Latin title Confessiones. In modern English usage, confession is associated with criminals admitting their crimes or with penitents retailing their sins (usually of a salacious sort) to a priest. But in Late Latin usage, to make confessio was to bear witness or to testify – almost in the sense of an “altar call” at a revivalist meeting. For this reason Wills translates Confessiones as The Testimony. (Gary Wills, Augustine. Penguin Lives [New York: Viking Penguin, 1999], pp. xiv-xvi.)

nature of Christ's sacramental presence and whether the eucharist itself is a sacrifice. His failure to deal at length with these issues does not mean that he lacked a theology of the eucharist. It simply means that his theology of the eucharist was not infatuated by them.

Augustine's most characteristic statements about the eucharist are to be found in the sermons he delivered to the newly baptised on the morning after their baptism. These sermons are transcripts, not finished treatises, and they show all the “messiness” – as well as all the pungency – of discourse “off the cuff”. They are short, pithy, and, taken together, rather repetitve. Augustine had a few basic points about the eucharist that he wanted to get across in the time available to him, and he was not ashamed to recycle them over and over again. He was, after all, speaking to beginners, not professors of eucharistic theology. I have selected two of these mystagogical homilies: Sermo 227, preached to the newly baptised on Easter Day either in 412-413 or in 416-417; and Sermo 272, preached to the newly baptised on the Day of Pentecost sometime between 405 and 411.

I have also included Discourse 26 on the Gospel of John. Between 412 and 417 Augustine delivered several series of expository sermons on John’s Gospel; when he was finished, he collected and edited them into a continuous commentary on John. This particular discourse, which deals with John 6.41-58, was originally delivered on 9 August 413.

Finally, I have gathered some of Augustine’s scattered references to the eucharist. These remarks were part of larger arguments in which the eucharist came up as a useful example or as a collateral issue. Some of these brief discussions of eucharistic themes – especially Letter 98, § 9 – have been bones of contention in their own right, bandied back and forth between sacramental realists and symbolist grammarians in the Middle Ages, and between Catholics and Protestants during (and since) the Reformation.
Further Reading


I AM mindful of my promise. For I promised you who were baptised a sermon in which I would explain the sacrament of the Lord’s table, which you now see and of which you were made sharers last night. You should know what you have received, what you are about to receive, what you ought to receive daily. The bread which you see on the altar, when it is sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. The cup, or rather what the cup contains, when it is sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ. Through this bread and wine the Lord Christ willed to entrust to us his body and the blood which he shed for the forgiveness of sins. If you receive the sacrament worthily, you are what you have received. For the Apostle says, There is one bread and we, being many, are one body.¹ It is commended to you in this bread how you ought to love unity.

§ 2. For was that bread made from one grain of wheat? Were there not rather many grains? But before they became bread, they were separate. They were joined together through water, after a certain grinding.² For unless the grain is ground and sprinkled with water, it will in no way come to that form which is called bread.³ Thus, too, were you (so to speak) ground beforehand, through the self-abasement of fasting and by the sacrament of exorcism. Then came the water of baptism; you were sprinkled, so to speak, in order that you might come to have the form of bread. But bread is not yet bread without fire. What does the fire symbolise? Chrism. For the oil of our fire is the sacrament of the Holy Spirit. Note this in the Acts of the Apostles, when that book is read. (We begin to read that book soon: today, in fact, begins the book called “The Acts of the Apostles”.⁴)

¹ 1 Corinthians 10.17.

² _after a certain grinding_ (per quamdam contritionem): _Contritio_ may mean “sorrow” or “grief” as well as “grinding”. As grains of wheat are “contrited” into flour, so are catechumens “contrited” through penitence and exorcism into the proper material for baptism.

³ The many grains-one loaf motif goes back very far in the Christian tradition. Paul, of course, broached the image in 1 Corinthians 10.17. The motif was taken up in _Didache_ 9. Augustine himself was probably indebted to a source closer to home. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage and martyr (258), used the motif in his _Letter_ 63, § 13.3-4 (see Introduction to this section).

⁴ _We begin to read that book soon_: Augustine probably delivered this homily at the very beginning of the liturgy, just after his entrance but
§ 3. Those who wish to advance in the Christian faith have the resource for doing so. When you gather at the church, leave off gossiping: be attentive to the Scriptures. We are your books. Attend, therefore, and see that the Holy Spirit is about to come at Pentecost. And so he shall come: with tongues of fire will he manifest himself. For he breathes into us the love by which we yearn for God and despise the world; the love by which our chaff is burned up and the heart is refined as gold is refined. The Holy Spirit comes, fire after water, and you are made into the bread which is the body of Christ. And so, in a certain way, unity is signified.

§ 4. You understand the sacraments in their proper order. First, after prayer, you are admonished to lift up your hearts. This befits the members of Christ. For if you have been made members of Christ, where is your Head? Members of a body have a head. If the Head had not gone before, the members would not follow. Where has your Head gone? What did you recite in the Creed? “On the third day he rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father.” Therefore your Head is in heaven. Thus, when “Lift up your hearts” is said, you reply: “We have them with the Lord.” And lest you attribute the fact that you lift up your hearts to the Lord to your own strength, to your own merits, to your own labours – for it is God’s gift that you lift up your hearts – therefore, when the people have responded, “We have them with the Lord,” the bishop or presbytery who presides follows and says: “Let us gives thanks to the Lord our God, because

before the opening prayer and readings.

5 When Augustine speaks of “the sacraments,” he means the word in its broadest possible sense. A “sacrament” was for him anything which served as a sign of a sacred reality. Thus, the bread was one sacrament because it signified Christ’s body, and the wine was another sacrament because it signified Christ’s blood.

6 after prayer: Augustine probably means the Prayer over the Gifts, the offertory prayer proper to the Day. He then discusses the dialogue which introduced the Eucharistic Prayer itself. This began with the celebrant saying, Sursum corda, “Hearts on high!”

7 We have them with the Lord: The Latin is Habemus ad Dominum. Ever since Cranmer, this phrase has been Englished as “We lift them (up) to the Lord.” Such a rendering implies a movement on our part, a process that we are in the act of performing. The sense of the Latin is more about the heart’s (already accomplished) location than about its movement. For here the Latin preposition ad is equivalent to the French preposition chez, as in the phrase chez nous (“at our place”). So the Latin really means something like “Our hearts are where the Lord is.”
we lift up our hearts.” Let us give thanks because, unless God had
given the grace, our hearts should have remained fixed on the
earth.8 And you attest to this, saying, “It is meet and right that we
should give thanks to him who gave us power to lift up our hearts
to our Head.”

§ 5. Then, after the consecration of the sacrifice of God, --
because he wished us to be his sacrifice (as is manifest from the
institution of the sacrifice), and because the sacrifice of God is the
sign of the reality that we are, -- behold, when the consecration is
finished, we say the Lord’s Prayer, which you have received and
recited.9 After this, “Peace be with you” is said, and Christians kiss
one another with a holy kiss. It is the sign of peace: just as your lips
show peace, let there be peace in your conscience. That is, just as
your lips come near to the lips of your brother, so should your
heart not withdraw from his heart. These are great sacraments,
very great indeed. Do you wish to know how they are
commended? The Apostle says: Anyone who unworthily eats the
body of Christ or drinks of the cup of the Lord unworthily, will be
guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.10 What is an
unworthy receiving? To receive scornfully, to receive with
contempt in your heart.

§ 6. Do not let the sacrament seem of no account to you just
because you see it. What you behold passes away, but the invisible
reality which it signifies does not pass away but abides for ever. It is
received, it is eaten, it is consumed. Is the body of Christ
consumed? Is the Church of Christ consumed? Are the members of
Christ consumed? Surely not! Here the members of Christ are
purged; there they will be crowned. What is signified will therefore
abide eternally, even though it seems to pass away. Therefore,
receive in such a way that you may ponder, that you may have
unity in your heart, that you may fix your heart always on high.
Your hope is not on earth, but in heaven. Let your faith in God be
firm, let it be acceptable to God. Because you believe what here

8 This emphasis on the divine initiative of grace suggests that Augustine
was already involved in the Pelagian controversy when he delivered this
sermon. In that controversy, which began in 410 and lasted for the rest of
his life, Augustine defended the absolute sovereignty of God’s grace
against Pelagius’s stress on the responsibility of humans to deserve their
salvation.

9 The Lord’s Prayer was solemnly “handed over” to baptismal candidates
during their catechetical training; they “received” it in the sense of
memorising it, in order to recite it (and the Apostles’ Creed) at their
baptism during the Great Vigil of Easter.

10 1 Corinthians 11.27.
and now you do not see, you shall behold it there, where you will rejoice without end.

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Sermon 272

What you see on the altar of God, you also saw last night;¹⁰ but what it was, what it should mean to you, how great a reality the sacrament contained, you have not yet heard. What you see, then, is bread and a cup. This is what your eyes report to you, but your faith asks to be instructed about the meaning of what you see. The bread is the body of Christ, the cup is the blood of Christ. This is the point in a nutshell, and perhaps faith should be satisfied with that. But faith desires instruction. For the prophet says: Unless you believe, you do not understand.¹¹ You can now say to me: “You admonished us that we should believe, now explain so that we may understand.” For some such thought as this might arise in someone’s mind: “Our Lord Jesus Christ – we know the person he received flesh from; it was the Virgin Mary. As an infant he was suckled at her breast and nourished; he grew and reached adulthood; he suffered persecution from the Jews; he was hanged from the tree, he was killed on the tree, he was taken down from the tree; he was buried; he rose again on the third day, on the day he willed to rise; he ascended into heaven; thither was his body assumed, thence shall he come to judge the living and the dead, there he sits at the right hand of the Father – how is bread his body? and the cup, or rather what the cup contains, how is it his blood?”

§ 2. It is for this reason, brothers, that these things are called sacraments – because one thing is seen in them, another thing is understood. What is seen has bodily form; what is understood has spiritual fruit. Therefore, if you wish to understand the body of Christ, hear the Apostle speaking to the faithful: You are the body

¹⁰ What you see on the altar.... you also saw last night: Augustine delivered this sermon on the Day of Pentecost. In his time, the Church still celebrated the Vigil of Pentecost on the same scale as the Easter Vigil, with baptism and eucharist, the night before.

¹¹ Isaiah 7.9, according to the Old Latin version of the Greek Septuagint. This passage from Isaiah, in this version, was one of Augustine’s favourites. The original Hebrew appears to mean something rather different. The New Revised Standard Version translates this same verse: “If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all.”
of Christ and members of him. If you are the body of Christ and members of him, your own mystery is placed upon the Lord’s table. You receive your own mystery. To that which you are, you respond “Amen” – and by your response you give your assent. For you hear, “The Body of Christ,” and you respond, “Amen”. Be a member of Christ’s body, so that you may speak a true “Amen”.

§ 3. Why, then, is the body of Christ in bread? Here we present and offer nothing of our own. Let us hear the very same Apostle who, when he speaks about this sacrament, says: There is one bread and we, being many, are one body. Understand and rejoice: unity, truth, devotion, and love! One bread. Who is this one bread? The many who are one body. Remember that bread is not made from one grain but from many. When you were exorcised, you were (so to speak) ground up. When you were baptised, you were (so to speak) sprinkled with water. When you received the fire of the Holy Spirit, you were (so to speak) baked. Be what you behold, and receive what you are.

§ 4. The Apostle said this about the bread. Now, about the cup: what we should understand is obvious enough, even if it is not said in so many words. For just as many grains are moistened into one lump in order that there may be the visible form of bread (just as that happened which holy Scripture says about the faithful, They had one heart and one mind toward God) – even so with the wine. Brothers, recall how it became wine. Many grapes clung to the cluster, but the juice of the grapes was mingled into a unity. So also the Lord Christ signified us, wished us to attain to him, and consecrated the mystery of our peace and unity on his table. He who accepts the mystery of unity and does not hold the bond of peace, does not receive the mystery for his good but as a testimony against himself.

§ 5. When we have turned to the Lord God, the Father almighty, let us with a pure heart give (so far as our littleness can give) very great and true thanks to him – with the whole mind beseeching his singular gentleness, that he might deign in his loving-kindness to hear our prayers and by his power expel the Enemy from our actions and thoughts; that he might increase our faith,

12 1 Corinthians 12.27.

13 For you hear, “The Body of Christ” (Audis enim Corpus Christi): Augustine here refers to the formula for administering the sacrament in communion – a stark statement of fact, without any of the pleonasm so dear to Anglican hearts.

14 1 Corinthians 10.17.

15 Acts 4.32.
Augustine of Hippo: Sermosn 227 & 272

govern the mind, grant spiritual understanding, and lead us to his
blessedness; through Jesus Christ his Son. Amen.

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Discourse 26
on the Gospel of John

[John 6.41-58]

AS WE heard in the gospel, when our Lord Jesus Christ said that he was the bread which came down from heaven,¹ the Jews murmured and said: Isn’t this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we have known? How then does he say this, “I came down from heaven”?² These people were far from the bread from heaven, nor did they know how to hunger for it. They had flaccid jaws of the heart,³ with open ears they were deaf, they saw and remained blind. This bread seeks the hunger of the inner person. That is why in another place he says: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied;⁴ while the Apostle Paul tells us that Christ is our righteousness.⁵

By this we learn that those who hunger for this bread, hunger for righteousness – but for the righteousness which came down from heaven, for the righteousness which God gives, not for the righteousness which humans make for themselves. For if humans had made no righteousness for themselves, the same Apostle would not have said about the Jews: Being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and wishing to establish their own, they were not submissive to God’s righteousness.⁶ That is why these were people who did not understand the bread that comes down from heaven – because, being satisfied with their own righteousness, they did not hunger for God’s righteousness.

What are we saying when we speak of God’s righteousness and human righteousness? What is here called the righteousness of God

¹ John 6.41.
² John 6.42.
³ Augustine means that the people were so morally dull, so spiritually lazy, that their hearts were unable to “chew on” – in the sense of *ruminate on* or *ponder* – the difficult truth that Jesus presented to them. It was as if the Lord had set a thick steak before them, but all they wanted (and could handle) was Jell-O.
⁴ Matthew 5.6.
⁵ 1 Corinthians 1.30.
⁶ Romans 10.3.
Augustine of Hippo: DISCOURSE 26 ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

is not that by which God is righteous, but that which God gives to humans, so that humans may be righteous through God. But what was their righteous-ness? A righteousness to which they presumed on their own strength, and by which they spoke as if they themselves were fullfillers of the Law by their own power. But no one fulfils the Law except the person who is aided by grace, that is, by the bread which comes down from heaven. For, as the Apostle says in summary, love is the fulfilling of the Law \(^7\) – not love of money, but love for God; not love for the earth, not love for heaven, but love for the One who made heaven and earth.\(^8\) How does this love come to humans? The love of God, Paul says, is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us.\(^9\) Thus the Lord, when he was about to give the Holy Spirit, said that he was the bread which came down from heaven, urging us to believe in him. For to believe in him – this is to eat the living bread. The person who believes, eats: he is nourished invisibly, because he is reborn invisibly. He is an infant inside, he is a newborn inside: where he is newly planted, there is he satisfied.

§ 2. What therefore did Jesus reply to such as murmured? Do not murmur among yourselves – as if he were saying: “I know why you do not hunger, and neither understand nor seek this bread. Do not murmur among yourselves: no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me shall have drawn him.”\(^10\) What a great recommendation of grace! No one comes except the person who is drawn. If you do not wish to make a mistake, do not be eager to judge whom the Father draws and whom he does not draw, why he draws this one and not that one. Just accept it, and understand. Are you not yet drawn? Pray that you may be drawn. What are we saying here, brothers? If we are drawn to Christ, we thereby believe against our will: violence is applied, the will is not roused. A person can unwillingly enter the church, can unwillingly approach the altar, can unwillingly receive the sacrament. But he cannot believe unless he is willing. If it were believed with the body, it might happen in those who are unwilling; but it is not believed with the body. Listen to the Apostle: It is believed with the heart, with righteousness as the result. And what follows? But confession is made with the mouth, with salvation as the result.\(^11\)

\(^7\) Romans 13.10.

\(^8\) Psalm 115.15 [LXX 113.23]; 121.2 [LXX 120.2]; 124.8 [LXX 123.8]; 146.6 [LXX 145.6].

\(^9\) Romans 5.5.

\(^10\) John 6.43.
This confession rises from the root of the heart. Sometimes you hear people confessing the faith, and you do not know if they believe. But you should not call that person a confessor whom you do not judge to be a believer. For this is to confess — to speak what you have in the heart. But if you have one thing in the heart and speak something else, you are talking, you are not confessing. Therefore, since one believes in Christ with the heart (which no one, of course, does against their will), while someone who is drawn seems to be compelled as if against their will — how is this question to be resolved, that no one comes to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me?\footnote{John 6.44.}

§ 3. “If people are drawn,” somebody might say, “they come against their will. If they come against their will, they do not believe; if they do not believe, they do not come.” We do not hurry to Christ by walking, but by believing; we draw near not by the movement of the body but by the will of the heart. And so, that woman who touched the hem of his garment, touched him more than the crowd which pressed upon him. That is why the Lord said, Who touched me? The disciples were astonished and said: The crowd closes in on you, and you say: “Who touched me?” And he repeated: Someone touched me! The woman touched him, the crowd pressed in on him.\footnote{Luke 8.42b-48.} What does she touched mean, but that she believed? That is why, after the resurrection, he also said to the woman who wished to cast herself down at his feet: “Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.”\footnote{John 20.17a.} You suppose that what you see is all that I am; do not touch me. What is this? You imagine that I am only as I appear to you — do not believe so; that is, Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. So far as you are concerned I have not ascended, for I never departed from there.” She did not touch him as he stood on earth — how would she touch him as he was ascending to the Father? Yet so, so did he will himself to be touched, so is he touched by those by whom he is truly touched — as the One who ascends to the Father, who dwells with the Father, who is equal to the Father.

§ 4. If you pay attention, this is the reason for what he says here: No one comes to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me.\footnote{Romans 10.10.} Do not think that you are drawn against your will; the soul is...
drawn even by a desirous love. Nor should we be afraid that our interpretation of this Gospel word might be criticised by those who analyse words but are far removed from understanding things, especially divine things, and that it may be said to us: “How do I believe with my own will, if I am drawn?” I myself say: the will is not enough, you must be drawn by desire, too. What does it mean to be drawn by desire? Delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.\(^\text{16}\) It is to a certain desire of the heart that this heavenly bread is sweet.

§ 5. But what is this drawn BY THE FATHER, when Christ himself draws? Why did he want to say, [only those] drawn BY THE FATHER? If we must be drawn, let us be drawn by him to whom anyone who loves says, We will run after the sweet odour of your perfume.\(^\text{17}\) But, brothers [and sisters], let us focus on how he wishes this saying to be understood and take in as much of it as we can. The Father draws to the Son those who believe in the Son because they consider him to have God as his Father. For God the Father begot the Son equal to himself, with the result that those who consider and in their faith feel and chew on the truth that he in whom they have believed is equal to the Father, are the ones whom the Father draws to the Son. Arius believed the Son to be a creature: the Father did not draw him because whoever does not believe the Son to be equal to the Father, does not take the Father into account. What are you saying, Arius? what, O heretic, are you muttering? What is Christ? “Not true God,” he says, “but one whom true God has made.” The Father has not drawn you, for you have not understood the Father, whose Son you deny. You are not thinking of the Son himself, but of something else. You are neither drawn by the Father nor drawn to the Son – for the Son is different, very different from what you say. Photinus said, “Christ is only a human, he is not also God.”\(^\text{18}\) The Father has not drawn him who thus believes. The one whom the Father has drawn says: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.\(^\text{19}\) Not as a prophet, not as

\(^{15}\) John 6.44a.

\(^{16}\) Psalm 37.4 \([\text{LXX 36.4}]\).

\(^{17}\) Song of Solomon 1.3 \([\text{Old Latin/LXX}]\).

\(^{18}\) Photinus. bishop of Sirmium (a city in what is now Bosnia) from ca. 344 to 351, when he was deposed and sent into exile by the emperor Constantius. All of his writings are lost, and Augustine’s comment here is only one of several descriptions of his teaching. In fact, the descriptions of his position are so diverse – and so jumbled in their diversity – that his name seems to have morphed into a synonym for “wacko heretic”.

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John [the Baptist], not as some great and righteous man, but as the one and only, as the equal, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. See that he was drawn – and drawn by the Father. Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. This revealing is itself the drawing. You hold out a leafy branch to a sheep, and you draw it. Nuts are shown to a child, and he is attracted; he is drawn by what he runs to, drawn by loving it, drawn without hurt to the body, drawn by a cord of the heart. If these things, then, which among earthly delights and pleasures are shown to those who love them, draw them – since it is true that “every one is drawn by their own pleasure,” – does not Christ revealed by the Father draw? For what does the soul desire more strongly than the truth? For what ought the soul to have a greedy appetite, whence it may hope for a clear palate within to discriminate things that are true, unless it is to eat and drink wisdom, righteousness, truth, and eternity?

§ 6. But where is this [to happen]? There better, there more truly, there more fully. For here we can more easily hunger – especially if we have good hope – than be satisfied. For blessed, he says, are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness – that is, here – for they shall be filled – but there [in eternity]. Therefore, when he had said, No one comes to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me, what did he add? And I will raise that person up on the last day.

§ 7. For it is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ [As if Christ were saying:] “I give such a person what he loves, what he hopes for. Such a person shall see what, as yet not by seeing, he has believed; he shall eat what he hungers after; he shall be filled with what he thirsts after. Where? In the resurrection of the dead; for I will raise that person up on the last day.”

§ 7. For it is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ [As if Christ were saying:] “Why have I said this, O Jews? The Father has not taught you; how can you know me? For all the people of that kingdom shall be taught by God, not learn from humans.” Even if they do learn from humans, what they understand is given to them within – it flashes within, it is revealed within. What are humans doing when they proclaim things outwardly? what am I doing even now while I speak? I am pouring

19 Matthew 16.16.
20 Matthew 16.17.
21 Matthew 5.6.
22 John 6.44b.
23 John 6.45a.
a rattle of words into your ears. Unless he who is within reveals, what am I saying or what do I speak? The planter of the tree is on the outside, the tree’s Creator is within. The one who plants and the one who waters work on the outside – this is what we do. But neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 24 That is, they shall be all taught by God. All who? Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. 25 See how the Father draws: He delights by teaching, not by imposing a necessity. See how he draws: They shall be all taught by God. This is God’s drawing. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. This is God’s drawing.

§ 8. What then, brothers [and sisters]? If every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Christ, has Christ taught nothing here? What do we mean? – that mortals have not seen the Father as their teacher but have seen the Son? The Son was doing the speaking, but the Father was doing the teaching. I, being a human, whom do I teach? Whom, brothers [and sisters], but the person who has heard my word? If I, being a human, do indeed teach the person who hears my word, the Father also teaches the person who hears his word. And if the Father teaches the one who hears his word, ask what Christ is, and you will find the Father’s Word: In the beginning was the Word. See how the Father draws: He delights by teaching, not by imposing a necessity. See how he draws: They shall be all taught by God. This is God’s drawing. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. This is God’s drawing.

26 Not “in the beginning God made the Word,” as in the beginning God made heaven and earth 27 – because, you see, he is not a creature. Learn to be drawn to the Son by the Father; let the Father teach you, hear his Word. “What Word of his,” you say, “do I hear?” In the beginning was the Word – not WAS MADE, but WAS – and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 28 How do human beings abiding in the flesh hear such a Word? Because the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. 29

§ 9. He himself explains this also, and shows us why he said, Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. He immediately added what we would be able to think: Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God;

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24 1 Corinthians 3.7.

25 John 6.45b.

26 John 1.1.

27 Genesis 1.1.

28 John 1.1.

29 John 1.14.
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he has seen the Father.\textsuperscript{30} What is he saying? “I have seen the Father, you have not seen the Father; and yet you do not come to me unless you are drawn by the Father. And what is it for you to be drawn by the Father except to learn from the Father? what is to learn from the Father except to hear from the Father? what is to hear from the Father except to hear the Word of the Father – that is, to hear me? So, when I say to you, Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, just in case you should say within yourselves, ‘But we have never seen the Father, how could we learn from the Father?’ – hear this from me: Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. I have known the Father. I am from him – but in the way in which the Word is from Him whose Word he is, not in the way of a word which sounds and passes away, but in the way of a word which abides with the speaker and draws the hearer.”

§ 10. Let what follows admonish us: Amen, amen I say to you, whoever believes in me has eternal life.\textsuperscript{31} He willed to reveal himself, what he was. He could have taken a shortcut and said: “Whoever believes in me, has me.” For Christ himself is true God and eternal life. “Whoever therefore believes in me,” he says, “goes into me; and whoever goes into me, has me.” But what is it “to have me”? To have eternal life. Eternal life took death upon itself; eternal life willed to die; but from you – not from itself; from you – it received the capacity to die on your behalf. From humans he did indeed take flesh – but not in the manner of humans. For having his Father in heaven, he chose a mother on earth – there begotten without mother, and here born without father. Thus did life take death upon itself, so that life might slay death. For whoever believes in me, he says, has eternal life – not what is out in the open, but what is hidden. For eternal life is the Word who in the beginning was with God, and the Word was God, and the life was the light of humans.\textsuperscript{32} The same eternal life gave eternal life also to the flesh which it took to itself. He came to die; but on the third day he rose again. Between the Word taking flesh and the flesh rising again, death in the middle was consumed.

§ 11. The Lord says to the muttering Jews, I am the bread of life.\textsuperscript{33} And how is it that they are proud? Your forebears, he says, ate manna in the wilderness, and they died.\textsuperscript{34} What is it that you

\textsuperscript{30} John 6.46.
\textsuperscript{31} John 6.47.
\textsuperscript{32} John 1.1, 4b.
\textsuperscript{33} John 6.35, 48.
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are proud of? They ate manna, and they died. Why does it say that they ate and died? Because they believed only what they saw; what they did not see they did not understand. Therefore are they your forebears, because you are like them. For so far as this visible and bodily life is concerned, my brothers, do we not also die, who eat the bread which comes down from heaven? Thus did they die, just as we shall die – so far, as I say, as the visible and fleshly death of this body is concerned. But when it comes to that death about which the Lord warns us, that death in which their forebears died – well, Moses ate the manna, Aaron ate the manna, Phinehas ate the manna, many ate there who were pleasing to the Lord, and they did not die. How so? Because they understood the visible food spiritually, they hungered spiritually, they tasted of it spiritually, so that they were spiritually satisfied. And we too receive visible food today – but the sacrament is one thing, the power of the sacrament is something else. How many receive from the altar and die – and die by receiving? That is why the Apostle says: They eat and drink judgement upon themselves. It was not the morsel of the Lord which proved poisonous to Judas; and yet he received, and when he received the Enemy entered into him – not because he received something evil, but because he, an evil man, received a good thing in an evil way. Look to yourselves, therefore: eat the heavenly bread spiritually, bring innocence to the altar. Even though you sin daily, do not let your sins be death-dealing. Before you approach the altar, attend to what you will say: Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Forgive, and it shall be forgiven you; approach in peace, and it is bread, not poison. But look well whether you do forgive; for if you do not forgive, you lie – and lie to him whom you do not deceive. You may lie to God, but you cannot deceive God. He knows what you do. He sees you within, he examines you within, he inspects within, he judges within, within he either condemns or crowns. But these were their forebears – evil forebears of evil offspring, the unfaithful forebears of unfaithful offspring, the complainging forebears of complaining children. For in nothing is that people said to have offended God more, than by their muttering complaints against God. Thus the Lord, willing to demonstrate that they were the children of such forebears, began his response to them in this way: Why do you mutter among yourselves, you muttermers, the children

34 John 6.49

35 1 Corinthians 11.29.

36 John 13.27.
of mutterers? Your forebears ate manna, and they died – not because the manna was evil, but because they ate it in an evil way.

§ 12. This is the bread which came down from heaven. Manna signified this bread, the altar of God signified this bread. Those were sacraments – though the signs were different, yet in the reality which they signified they were the alike. Listen to the Apostle: I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food. Note – the same spiritual food. The bodily food differed, because they ate manna and we eat something else, but they ate the same spiritual reality as we eat. But our forebears ate this same spiritual food, not their forebears – those whom we are like, not those whom they were like. And the Apostle adds: And all drank the same spiritual drink. They drank one thing, we another, but in visible form, which nevertheless signified this same reality in spiritual power. For how could it be the same drink? They drank, Paul says, from the spiritual Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. As with the bread, so with the drink. The Rock is Christ in a sign, the true Christ is in the Word and the flesh. And how did they drink? The rock was struck twice with a rod. The double stroke signifies the two beams of the cross. This, therefore, is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that if any eat of it, they will not die.

§ 13. I am the living bread which came down from heaven – living BECAUSE I came down from heaven. Manna also came down from heaven. But manna was a shadow: this is the reality. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world. When did flesh grasp this flesh which he called bread? What flesh cannot grasp is

37 John 6.50.
38 1 Corinthians 10.1-4.
39 1 Corinthians 10.4.
40 1 Corinthians 10.4.
41 John 6.50.
42 John 6.51a.
43 John 6.51b.
called “flesh,” and so flesh finds it all the more incomprehensible that it should be called “flesh”. They were horrified at this; they said it was too much for them; they thought that this could not happen. It is my flesh, he says, for the life of the world. The faithful know the body of Christ, if they do not neglect to be the body of Christ. Let them become the body of Christ, if they wish to live by means of the Spirit of Christ. Only the body of Christ lives by means of the Spirit of Christ. Understand my meaning. You are a human, you have a spirit, and you have a body. What is usually called the “soul” I name “spirit” – I mean that which constitutes you as a human, for you consist of soul and body. Thus, you have an invisible spirit and a visible body. Tell me which is alive by which – is your spirit alive because of your body, or is your body alive because of your spirit? Let everyone who is alive respond – and the person who cannot answer this, I do not think that such a person is alive – what does everyone who is alive respond? “My body is alive by means of my spirit.” Do you therefore also wish to live by means of the Spirit of Christ? Be in the body of Christ. Does my body live by means of your spirit? No, my body lives by means of MY spirit, and your body lives by means of YOUR spirit. The body of Christ cannot live except by means of the Spirit of Christ. So it is that the Apostle Paul, explaining this bread to us, says: We who are many are one bread, one body.44 O sacrament of loving devotion! O sign of unity! O chain of charity! Those who wish to live have WHERE they may live and WHENCE they may live. Let them draw near, let them have faith, let them be incorporated, that they may be made alive. Let them not shrink back from the conjoint life of the members; do not let anyone be a corrupt member which deserves to be amputated; let no one be a deformed member of which the body is ashamed. Let each one be a beautiful, a fit, a sound member; let each cleave to the body, let each live for God by means of God; let each now labour on earth, so that afterwards each may reign in heaven.

§ 14. The Jews therefore disputed among them-selves, saying: “How can this person give us his flesh to eat?”45 Surely they disputed among themselves because they neither understood nor desired to eat the bread of harmony. For those who eat such a bread do not dispute among themselves, since we who are many are one bread, one body. For by this God makes people of one kind to dwell in a house.46

44 1 Corinthians 10.17.

45 John 6.52.

46 Psalm 68.6 [LXX 67.7].
§ 15. But what they ask while disputing among themselves, how the Lord can give them his flesh to eat, they do not immediately hear. Instead, they are further told: Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you do not have life in you.\textsuperscript{47} How it may be eaten, and what the mode of eating this bread might be – of this you are ignorant. Nevertheless, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Next, lest they understand him to mean this earthly life, and dispute about this too, he went on to add: Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.\textsuperscript{48} This eternal life no one has, who does not eat this bread and drink this wine. For humans can have temporal life without that bread and wine, but they are altogether incapable of eternal life without this flesh and blood. Therefore, those who do not eat his flesh or drink his blood do not have life in them. The qualifier that he spoke, eternal, answers for both. It is not so with respect to that we eat for the sake of sustaining this temporal life. For the person who will not take this earthly food will not live – nor will the person who does take such nourishment live. For it can so happen that very many of those who do take this earthly nourishment will die – from old age, from illness, or from some other cause. But in this food and drink – that is, in the body and blood of the Lord – it is not so. For those who do not take this nourishment do not have life; and those who do take it do have life – and ETERNAL life at that. Thus he wishes this food and drink to be understood as the society of his body and members, which is his holy Church in his saints and believers who have been predestined, and called, and justified, and glorified.\textsuperscript{49} Of these attributes, the first has been already accomplished already, that is, predestination; the second and third have been accomplished, are being accomplished, and will be accomplished, that is, calling and justification; the fourth is now in hope, and shall be in reality, that is, glorification. The sacrament of this reality – that is, the sacrament of the unity of Christ’s body and blood – is prepared on the Lord’s table, and received from the Lord’s table, in some places daily, in other places at certain intervals of days. By some it is received with life as the result, by others it is received with destruction as the result. But the reality itself, of which it is the sacrament, is meant to be life for everyone, destruction for no one, whoever shall have been a partaker of it.

\textsuperscript{47} John 6.53.

\textsuperscript{48} John 6.54.

\textsuperscript{49} Cf. Romans 8.30.
§ 16. But just in case they think that eternal life is so promised to them in this food and drink, that those who eat it will never die in the body, he saw fit to forestall this thought. For when he said, Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, he immediately added: And I will raise that person up at the last day.\footnote{John 6.54b.} Thus, in the meantime, so far as the spirit is concerned, a person may have eternal life in that that peace which the spirits of the saints receive. But so far as the body is concerned, it shall not be defrauded of its eternal life, but will have it at the resurrection on the last day.\footnote{John 6.55.}

§ 17. For my flesh is true food, he says, and my blood is true drink.\footnote{John 6.55.} Although humans by food and drink desire not to hunger or thirst, nothing truly affords this except this food and this drink, which make those by whom it is received immortal and incorruptible – that is, the very society of saints, where there will be full and perfect peace and unity. Indeed, for this reason, just as the saints of God understood before us, our Lord Jesus Christ has commended his body and blood in those things which are reduced to one thing from many things. For the one thing is made into a unity out of many grains, while the other flows and is mingled into a unity from many grapes.\footnote{Cf. Sermon 227, § 2 and footnote 3 (p. 75 above), and Sermon 272, § 4 (p. 78 above).}

§ 18. Then the Lord explains how the thing he speaks of comes about, and what it is to eat his body and to drink his blood. Those who eat my flesh and drinks my blood abide in me and I in them.\footnote{John 6.56.} This is to eat that bread and to drink that drink – to abide in Christ, and to have Christ abiding in oneself. But that is why the person who does not abide in Christ, and in whom Christ does not abide, without doubt neither eats his flesh nor drinks his blood, but rather eats and drinks the sacrament of so great a reality to his own condemnation – because such a person presumed to approach the sacraments of Christ in an impure state. These sacraments are not worthily received unless a person is pure. Concerning such a person it is said: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.\footnote{Matthew 5.8.}

§ 19. Just as the living Father sent me, he says, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.\footnote{John 6.56.} He
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does not say: “Just as I eat the Father, and live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.” For the Son, who is the Father’s equal by birth, does not become better by participating in the Father, as we are made better by participating in the Son through the unity of his body and blood, which unity the eating and drinking signify. Therefore we live because of him, by eating him – that is, by receiving him as the eternal life, the life we did not have of ourselves. But he lives because of the Father, being sent by him, because he emptied himself and became obedient even to the death of a cross. For if we understand the statement, I live because of the Father, in light of what he said elsewhere, the Father is greater than I – just as we live because of him who is greater than we are, – it comes from the fact that he was sent, that he became flesh. Indeed, his sending is the emptying of himself and the receiving of the form of a slave. This is rightly understood, provided that it also understood that the Son’s equality of nature with the Father is preserved. For the Father is greater than the Son as a human being, but has the Son as an equal as God, since one and the same Jesus Christ is both God and a human being, Son of God and Son of Man. In this statement, if these words are rightly understood, he spoke thus: Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me shall live because of me – as if he had said: “My self-emptying, in which he sent me, brought it about that I should live because of the Father, that is, refer my life as to the greater; but the sharing by which someone eats me brings it about that such a person lives because of me. Being humbled, I live because of the Father; that person, being raised up, lives because of me.” But if it was said, I live because of the Father, because he is from the Father, not the Father from him, it was said without detriment to the equality of the two. Nor by saying, whoever eats me shall live because of me, did he mean that this same equality of his with the Father would be ours, but he showed the grace of the Mediator.

§ 20. This is the bread which came down from heaven, so that by eating it we might live, since we cannot have eternal life of ourselves. Not as your forebears ate manna and died, whoever eats

55 John 6.57.

56 Philippians 2.8.

57 John 14.28.

58 Philippians 2.7.

59 John 6.58a.
this bread will live for ever. By saying that those forebears died, the Lord wishes it to be understood that they do not live for ever. For even those who eat Christ shall die temporally, but they live for ever, because Christ is eternal life.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{60}}\]

\[\text{John 6.58b.}\]
Augustine routinely preached on the psalms which were sung during the liturgy. He eventually had a sermon (and in some cases, several sermons) on each of the 150 Psalms. These he collected and edited to produce Enarrationes in Psalmos (“Expository Discourses on the Psalms”). He preached this sermon on Psalm 98 (= Psalm 99 in the Hebrew numeration) in the basilica at Carthage during one of his visits to the city between 411 and 413. It consists of fifteen sections; only § 9 is translated here. In this section Augustine expounds verse 5b: *Et adorate scabellum pedum eius, quoniam sanctus est.*

Consider, brothers, this thing that he commands us to worship. In another place of Scripture it is said: The heavens are my seat, the earth is the stool for my feet. Does Scripture [in the verse under consideration] therefore order us to worship the earth, because in that other place it says that the earth is the stool for God’s feet? And how can we worship the earth when Scripture clearly says, You shall worship the Lord your God? And yet here it says, Worship the stool for his feet – even as it explains to me what this footstool is: the earth is the stool for my feet. I am confused. I am afraid to worship the earth, lest the One who made heaven and earth condemn me – and yet I am afraid not to worship the earth because the Psalm tells me, Worship his footstool. I ask what might be his footstool, and Scripture tells me that it is the earth. Wavering to and from, I turn myself to Christ, because I seek him here [in the Psalm]; and I discover how the earth is to be worshipped without impiety, how his footstool is to be worshipped without impiety. For he assumed earth from the earth. Flesh is of the earth, and he received flesh from the flesh of Mary.

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1 The only exception was Psalm 119 (LXX 118); Augustine, for the sake of making his *Enarrationes* complete, specially composed a commentary on it.

2 Isaiah 66.1.

3 Deuteronomy 6.13.

4 Cf. Genesis 2.7: “Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man
because he walked among us in this very flesh and gave us this same flesh to eat for salvation, and because none eat this flesh unless they first have worshipped – we learn how such a stool for the Lord’s feet may be worshipped, and how we not only do not sin by worshipping it, but do sin by not worshipping it.

Is it flesh that gives life? When the Lord himself spoke about the commendation of this same earth, he said: It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail.5 So, whenever you bend toward the earth and prostrate your-self, it is not the earth that you regard, but what you worship is the Holy One whose footstool it is, for the Holy One is the reason why you worship. And so the Psalm adds, Worship the footstool for his feet, for he is the Holy One. Who is holy? The One in whose honour you worship the footstool for his feet. And when you worship that Holy One – lest your thoughts dwell on the flesh and you be not quickened by the Spirit – he says: For it is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail.

When he commended this saying, the Lord then spoke about his flesh and said: Unless you eat my flesh, you will not have eternal life.6 Some of his disciples, about seventy of them, were scandalised and said: “This is a hard saying; who can accept it?” And they turned back and no longer went about with him.7 What seemed hard to them was the saying, Unless you eat my flesh, you will not have eternal life. They understood this saying stupidly, they considered it carnally, and imagined that the Lord would slice off and give them some little bits from his body; that is why they said, This is a hard saying. They themselves were the hard ones, not the saying. If they had not been hard of heart but gentle, they would have said to themselves: “He would not have said this unless a certain great mystery [sacramentum] lay hidden there.” With him they might have remained gentle, not hard of heart, because after they separated themselves from him, those who remained learned [what the Lord meant]. For while the twelve disciples remained with him after the others withdrew, they brought those others to mind as if grieving for their death because they had been scandalised by his saying and had withdrawn. But the Lord instructed them and said to them: “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. Understand spiritually what I have said: it is not this body which you see that you are to eat, nor will you drink that blood

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5 John 6.63.

6 John 6.53, 54.

7 John 6.60, 66.
which those who crucify me are about to shed. I have commended to you a certain mystery [sacramentum]: spiritually understood, it will give you life.” Even though it is necessary to celebrate this mystery visibly, it nonetheless ought to be understood invisibly. Exalt the Lord our God, and worship the stool for his feet, for he is the Holy One.

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From
Letter 98
ON THE SIGNIFICATION OF SACRAMENTS

In 408 a neighbouring bishop named Boniface wrote to Augustine to ask for advice on several points of baptismal doctrine and discipline. Augustine responded almost immediately and in detail. The following selection is the penultimate section (§ 9) of his letter.

This brief statement has been a major bone of contention in the western tradition of eucharistic theology, in large part because of Augustine’s fluidly inclusive use of the term sacramentum. In his discussion, this one term refers to the passion of Christ, the liturgical rites of baptism and the eucharist, the elements of bread and wine, and even faith – whereas the later western tradition tended to restrict the reference of the term “sacrament” and confine its meaning to the visible elements of bread and wine insofar as they signify an inward and spiritual reality. Augustine made the later Catholic tradition really nervous by the way he scouted the difference between sign and reality, between names for things and the things themselves.

THE question at the end of your list, which you seem to have thought up all by yourself, is a difficult one. It is clearly inspired by your habitual and strenuous hatred of untruth. You write: “If I were to place an infant in front of you and were to ask you whether he will be chaste when he grows up, or whether he might not become a thief, you no doubt would answer, ‘I don’t know.’ And if I were to ask you whether a child of that tender age thinks anything, either good or bad, you will say, ‘I don’t know.’ So if you do not attempt to make any promises about the child’s future behaviour, or take any guess about its present thoughts, how is it that parents, when they bring their children to be baptised, answer and profess the faith on their behalf, and say that the children do what they cannot think of at that age or, if they can, we do not know it? For we question those who bring the children and say, ‘Does he or she believe in God?’ And they answer for infants who do not know whether there is a God, ‘He or she believes.’ And they respond in the same way to each of the other questions. I am amazed that parents answer so confidently for their infant in such matters and say that he or she does these great things that the
baptiser asks at the time of baptism – although if I were at the same
time to ask them, ‘Will he or she be chaste? Will he or she not be a
thief?’ I doubt anybody would dare to say whether the baby will
or will not be any of these things. Still, the parent has no hesi-
tation about responding that the baby believes in God.” You end
your letter with these words: “Please be so kind as to answer these
queries briefly – not in a formal way, but still in a way which will
afford me an explanation.”

I read and reread your letter and thought about it in the limited
amount of time at my disposal. It made me think of my friend
Nebridius, who was a very persistent and eager searcher into
speculative issues, especially those which had to do with learning
and devotion. Above all else, he hated a quick answer to an
important question. If anybody asked for such an answer he took
umbrage, and if he knew the person he used to show his
annoyance in his facial expressions and tone of voice. He regarded
anybody as a poor sort who asked such questions without a clue of
how much could or ought to be said in response. But I am not
annoyed with you as he used to be, for you are a bishop burdened
with as many cares as I am. It will not be easy for you to find time
to read long explanations, nor for me to write them. For Nebridius
was a young man when he objected to hearing serious issues
handled quickly, and in our conversations he used to pose many
questions to me when both of us had plenty of spare time. But you
know both the asker and the asked, and you urge me to answer
this difficult question in a few words. I do your bidding as best as I
can; may the Lord assist me to do what you ask.

When we speak of the approach of the paschal season, it is
common for us to say, “Tomorrow” or “The day after tomorrow is
the Lord’s Passion” – even though he suffered many long years
ago, and the Passion itself happened just once. It is also common
for us to say of Easter Day, “Today the Lord has risen!” – although
many, many years have passed since his resurrection. No one
would be so foolish as to accuse us of telling lies when we speak in
this way, because we name those days for their likeness to the days
on which those events happened. So when the day is mentioned,
what is meant is not the actual day itself but a day like it in the
cyclical passage of time; and we name it thus because we celebrate
the mystery [sacramentum] which took place on that day long ago.
Was not Christ offered as a sacrifice in his own person once for all?
And yet in the holy sacrament is he not offered for humankind not
only on Easter Day but every day? And surely it is not a lie when
someone, on being asked, says that Christ is being sacrificed [in the
sacrament]. If the sacraments bore no likeness to the things of
which they are sacraments, they would not be sacraments at all.
For sacraments normally take their names from the mysteries that
Augustine of Hippo: Letter 98

they represent. Thus, just as in a certain sense the sacrament of the body of Christ is the body of Christ, and just as [in a certain sense] the sacrament of the blood of Christ is the blood of Christ, so the sacrament of faith is faith.\(^1\) To believe is the same thing as to have faith. Hence [in baptism] the response is made that an infant believes, even though the child does not yet have any consciousness of faith. What such a response means is that the infant has faith because of the sacrament of faith, and that the child turns to God because of the sacrament of conversion, since the response itself is a part of the sacrament. When the Apostle [Paul] spoke about baptism, he said: We have been buried with him [Christ] by baptism into death.\(^2\) He did not say, “We have represented burial in a symbolic way” – he said plainly, We have been buried. He thus names the sacrament of so great a thing by the same name as the thing itself.

\(^1\) the sacrament of faith: Augustine means baptism.

\(^2\) Romans 6.4.
Notes on Augustine

Sermons 227 & 272

A. will have none of that habit of mind which makes us want to pin down a sign or symbol’s meaning and have it signify or symbolize one thing alone. The HE is a sacrament (mystery) precisely because its signification, its meaning, is INCLUSIVELY POLYVALENT – i.e. it refers to all the several dimensions of the same reality all at once; it includes all those references.

Yes, the corpus verum, the body of Christ proper to Christ himself – 227, § 1 (The bread which you see on the altar, when it is sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. The cup, or rather what the cup contains, when it is sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ). 272, § 1 (The bread is the body of Christ, the cup is the blood of Christ. This is the point in a nutshell, and perhaps faith should be satisfied with that. But faith desires instruction.)

BUT body of Christ now includes us.

227, § 2, 272, §§ 3-4 [cf. In Ioh. evan. tract 26, § 17 (p. 79)]:
A. deploys the production of bread and wine as a – what? metaphor? Or argument ex convenientia? Or as something more? – for his appeal really serves to establish the capacity of the bread and wine to signify corpus Christi; their unum ex multis defines not only the appropriateness of their significance-bearing but also their intrinsic (natural?) power to represent the mystery. Cf. 98 ad Bonifacium, § 9 (84): If the sacraments bore no likeness to the things of which they are sacraments, they would not be sacraments at all. For sacraments normally take their names from the mysteries that they represent. Cf. ARTICLE XXVIII.
So bread and wine signify and communicate the corpus mysticum even as they signify and communicate the corpus verum.

In Iohannis evangelium tract. 21.8 [CCL 36:216-217]: “Ergo gratulemur et agamus gratias, non solum christianos factos esse, sed

In epistolam Iohannis ad Parthos tract. 10.3 [PL 35, col. 2055]: “Et diligendo fit et ipse membrum, et fit per dilectionem in compage corporis Christi; et erit unus Christus amans seipsum. Cum enim se invicem amant membra, corpus se amat.”

But does the signifying capacity of the bread and wine work only quoad nos – as if they signified our community before consecration, such that it is our (natural) community which is consecrated and converted into corpus Christi? Or is their capacity to signify defined by the whole mystery? NB – how he grounds the metaphor of bread in baptism: 227, § 3 (The Holy Spirit comes, fire after water, and you are made into the bread which is the body of Christ. And so, in a certain way, unity is signified) and in 272, § 3 (When you were exorcised, you were (so to speak) ground up. When you were baptised, you were (so to speak) sprinkled with water. When you received the fire of the Holy Spirit, you were (so to speak) baked).

It is not the eucharist that makes us the bread/body of Christ – it is baptism. And where does this being the body of Christ happen? 227, §§ 4-6. Sursum corda? Communion happens in “heaven,” in glory, in the glorified Christ.

Discourse 26

§ 1 – p. 71. What is here called the righteousness of God is not that by which God is righteous, but that which God gives to humans, so that humans may be righteous through God. Cf. De spiritu et littera 56: “Caritas quippe Dei dicta est diffundi in cordibus nostris [cf. Romans 5.5], non qua nos ipse diligit, sed qua nos facit dilectores suos.”

For to believe in him – this is to eat the living bread. The person who believes, eats: he is nourished invisibly, because he is reborn invisibly. Is A. speaking a general truth, so that whenever and wherever believing in IHS happens, one eats him? Or is he referring to the text specifically, so that it is by
believing *this* word of IHS that one eats? Or is it both? – Remember what was said about receiving your own mystery and inclusive polyvalence.

§ 3 (72-73). Question re: the Father’s drawing. If one is drawn – here A. seems to understand the word in the sense of dragged – one is moved against one’s will. So they cannot be said to believe. § 4. But will is not enough – there must be desire (diligo, delight).

§ 5 (81). Desire is a matter of recognising one’s own beloved; so one is drawn by the nut’s presence, under the power of one’s own desire/delight. God draws, but we move under the steam of desire.

And what is it that we (are to) desire? Eternal life. BUT § 10 (75) For Christ himself is true God and eternal life. Cf. § 20 (80): For even those who eat Christ shall die temporally, but they live for ever, because Christ is eternal life.

§ 11-12 – pp. 76-77. How does A. deal with the issue of manna? Is it in the same way as Ambrose? What does this say about Augustine’s view of the OT – and about the relation of the economies of God’s revelation?

§ 11 – the case of manna (“and they died”) and Judas.

§ 12. How can A. maintain that Moses, Aaron, Phinehas, eating the manna, “ate the same spiritual food [as we do]” – partook of Christ as we do? The sacraments (outward & visible signs) different, but the reality the same. NB our forebears (Moses, Aaron, Phinehas) and *theirs* (those who died – not merely temporally, but eternally?). Cf. Galatians 3.6-9 (“Just as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you. For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed.”)

Intrinsic power of sacrament, not to the visible sign.

§ 13 – pp. 77-78. What is A.’s point about body and the spirit that gives it life? The faithful know the body of Christ, if they do not neglect to be the body of Christ. If each of us is
constituted of soul and body, so that my body lives by means of my spirit, and your body lives by means of your spirit. The body of Christ cannot live except by means of the Spirit of Christ. So it is that the Apostle Paul, explaining this bread to us, says: We who are many are one bread, one body [1 Corinthians 10.17]. O sacrament of loving devotion! O sign of unity! O chain of charity! Those who wish to live have where they may live and whence they may live.

§ 15 (78) – life and ETERNAL life.

§ 15 (78). Thus he wishes this food and drink to be understood as the society of his body and members, which is his holy Church in his saints and believers who have been predestined, and called, and justified, and glorified.... But the reality itself, of which it is the sacrament, is meant to be life for everyone, destruction for no one, whoever shall have been a partaker of it.

AND § 17 (79). Nothing truly affords this except this food and this drink which makes those by whom it is received immortal and incorruptible – that is, the very society of saints, where there will be full and perfect peace and unity. Indeed, for this reason, just as the saints of God understood before us, our Lord Jesus Christ has commended his body and blood in those things which are reduced to one thing from many things. For the one thing is made into a unity out of many grains, while the other flows and is mingled into a unity from many grapes.

Cf. Cf. Sermon 227, § 2 and footnote 6 (p. 47 above), and Sermon 272, § 4 (p. 50 above).

§ 18 (79) – Eating and drinking = abiding in Christ, Christ abiding in one.

Expository Discourse on Psalm 98

p. 60. Understand spiritually what I have said.... What is A.’s point here?
p. 62. N.B. Baptism is the issue. .... because we name those days for their likeness to the days on which those events happened.... If the sacraments bore no likeness to the things of which they are sacraments, they would not be sacraments at all. For sacraments normally take their names from the mysteries that they represent. Thus, just as in a certain sense the sacrament of the body of Christ is the body of Christ, and just as [in a certain sense] the sacrament of the blood of Christ is the blood of Christ, so the sacrament of faith is faith [baptism]. To believe is the same thing as to have faith.... When the Apostle spoke about baptism, he said: We have been buried with him by baptism into death [Romans 6.4]. He did not say, “We have represented burial in a symbolic way” – he said plainly, We have been buried. He thus names the sacrament of so great a thing by the same name as the thing itself. Do names say – or mean – exactly what they name? And what does A. mean by: in a certain sense the sacrament of the body of Christ is the body of Christ – just what is the “sense” that is at issue here?

In his reflections on the things (or events) designated as “sacraments,” Augustine tended to place both the term and what it named in the category of SIGNS. At the same time, he tended to interpret the category of signs itself in light of the spoken word, as if sacrament-as-sign were interchangeable with language-as-speech.

Treating signs as speakable entities made sense in Augustine’s culture, where language and words were primarily heard rather than read (that is, seen). [Remember Augustine’s astonishment at Ambrose’s habit of reading silently – Intro to Ambrose.] This cultural assumption, this reflex of his own imagination, lay behind one of his most famous aphorisms about sacraments. Commenting on John 15.3 (You have already been cleansed by the word [sermonem] that I have spoken to you), Augustine remarked: “Why doesn’t [Christ] say, ‘You have been cleansed because of the baptism with which you have been washed,’ instead of saying: because of the word that I have spoken to you – unless it is because the word also cleanses through water? Take away the word, and what is water except mere water? Accedit verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum, etiam ipsum tamquam visibile verbum – The word comes to the
element and makes it a sacrament, itself as it were a visible word.”¹ The punch of this aphorism is in the final “as it were”: Augustine takes it for granted that a word is normally invisible because heard – whereas we tend to take it for granted that a word is normally visible and silent because read.

Interpreting signs in the light of words, whether spoken-and-heard or silently read, also makes some sense philosophically. For words themselves may be considered signs. They allow people within any given linguistic culture to refer to things in the world around them, in such a way that they can communicate with one another about those things even (or especially) when those things are either invisible or absent; and Augustine was the first Christian teacher to realise that what makes words signs, what defines them as signs, is the fact that words are never simply identical with the realities which they are taken to name, but are always other than those realities. This being the case with words, Augustine sensed that the same must be true with signs in general. – and thus with sacraments insofar as they are signs. As he remarked in a debate with an Arian bishop named Maximin: “In sacraments we need to consider not what they are, but what they show; for they are signs of other things, being one thing and signifying another.”²

This insight was possible for Augustine because he lived and persistently struggled with a keen sense of the fault-line embedded in all human discourse, including scriptural discourse. The fault-line, the issue, is not simply the gap between the visible and the invisible; it is the gap between the sensible and the intelligible – that is, between what the physical senses can perceive and what the rational soul can understand. There is, of course, a massive neo-Platonic bias in the apprehension of such a distinction, such a gap, such a fault-line. It assumes that intelligibility belongs primarily, if not exclusively, to the immaterial order of spirit, which is deemed to be the source, the ongoing transcendent context, and the final goal of all that is. As such, the order of spirit is


² Augustine, Contra Maximinum III, 22 {Conlatio con Maximino Arianorum episcopum? PL 42:709-742}. 

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not opposed (at least in principle) to the sensible order or to the sense-perceptions proper to that order. But it is opposed to the atomisation of understanding which results when the soul becomes subservient to the perceptions of the physical senses and in unable (or unwilling) to connect what is seen here with what is seen there. For Augustine and the intellectual tradition to which he belonged, the only way to prevent this atomisation and to secure the connectability as well as the actual connections of reality’s phenomena was to reverse the relation and to make the sensible order subservient to the intelligible order. Hence, when it came to sacraments-as-signs, the issue was not the sensible sign but the intelligible reality thus signified.

Take his use of 1 Corinthians 10 while commenting on John 6.49 (26, § 11-12). Moses – manna – eating the same spiritual food as “we” do. The situations were diverse, the subjects were diverse, the sensible signs (the manna, the bread and wine) were diverse. But insofar as the diverse subjects in the diverse situations had not projected their own intelligible reality (rational souls) onto the diverse sensible signs, and thus alienated the intelligible basis of their own lives, but instead attuned their intelligible selfhood to the one transcendently intelligible reality of Christ, as signified by those diverse sensible signs, they all “ate” of the same reality. Possessing our own intelligibility allows us to negotiate the diversity of signs and discover the identity of their signification; in other words, different things can signify one and the same reality.

The fruitfulness of this approach can be seen by contrast with Ambrose’s view of the relation between the “sacrament” of the manna and the eucharistic sacrament. Ambrose took the Johannine position neat, as part of his larger argument that Christian sacraments were older – and therefore better – than Jewish “sacraments”. He stopped short of saying that Jewish sacraments were devoid of any transcendent significance; but he does suggest that they did not signify Christ. (Melchizedek may have represented, or even may have been, Christ; but M. was not a Jew, he was a gentile.) It is hard to imagine what else Ambrose could have done, given his identification of the eucharistic sacrament with the actual flesh and blood of Christ that was natus ex virgine. There
was, so to speak, no extra significance left over to be discovered in other signs.

Augustine made statements which to our ears sound as painfully and even as brutally anti-Semitic as those made by Ambrose. But his view of the relation between signs and the intelligible reality they signified allowed him to teach that Jews had been saved before the Incarnation. Following Paul, he confessed that Israel in the wilderness – or at least some righteous Jews like Moses, Aaron, Phinehas – had, by means of the manna, shared in the same intelligible reality of Christ as Christians now shared in by means of the eucharistic sign/sacrament.

One thing more. In Augustine’s thinking, sensible signs exist in their own right and as such are other than, different from, the intelligible reality they signify. But this did not mean that the sign had a more or less self-sufficient integrity. For the proper integrity of every sensible thing resided not in itself but in the degree to which it not only referred the rational soul to God but also in the degree to which it mediated God’s transcendent intelligibility to the rational soul. Thus things of the sensible order were used by God to mediate real understanding to the soul – and should be used by the soul as means to the same goal of participating in the supreme intelligibility of God.
III.

Two Ancient Eucharistic Prayers

THE ANAPHORA OF THE LITURGY OF SAINT BASIL

AND

THE ROMAN CANON
1. The Anaphora of The Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great
INTRODUCTION

THE ORTHODOX communion has two eucharistic liturgies. The liturgy used at most celebrations on Sundays, feasts, and weekdays is The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. The other is The Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great. It is used on all Sundays in Lent (except Palm Sunday), on Maundy Thursday, at the Vigils of Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter, and on the feast of St Basil himself (January 1st).\(^1\) These two liturgies are identical in structure, and very, very close to one another in content. In fact, the biggest difference between them is the anaphora — the classical Greek term for the eucharistic prayer.\(^2\) The anaphora of Chrysostom is considerably shorter than that of Basil, and it differs in textual details as well; but liturgical scholars generally assume that the anaphora of Chrysostom is an abridgement and revision of the Basilian anaphora. Which is to say that Basil is the older of the two anaphoras, even as it was once the “ordinary” eucharistic prayer of the Byzantine church. It is probably for this reason that the Chrysostom supplanted Basil as the “ordinary” liturgy — simply because its anaphora took less time to do.

Nevertheless, the anaphora of Basil was the eucharistic prayer of the Byzantine Orthodox tradition during its classical period. What is more, it has had a new lease on life among the churches of the West. The anaphora of Basil was the source of the fourth eucharistic prayer in the Roman Missal issued in 1970. It was also the source of the so-called

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\(^1\) This is the anniversary of his death in 379. In the western Church, his feast-day was traditionally June 14th. In 1969 the Roman Catholic Church changed his feast-day to January 2nd, and made the day a joint memorial of Basil and his friend Gregory of Nazianzus; the Anglican Church of Canada followed suit in the Calendar of The Book of Alternative Services. The Roman Catholic Church appointed his memorial on January 2nd because their Calendar designates January 1st as the Solemnity of Mary the holy Mother of God; and the Calendar of The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada did likewise because January 1st is the feast of the Naming of Jesus.

\(^2\) The word anaphora strictly means “that which is borne up,” i.e. “the offering” or “the sacrifice.”
Introduction

“Ecumenical Prayer” which a group of Roman Catholics, Episcopalians (Anglicans), Lutherans, and Methodists produced in 1974. The latter prayer is Eucharistic Prayer D in The Book of Common Prayer (1979) of the Episcopal Church of the United States, and it is Eucharistic Prayer 6 in The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada (pp. 207-210). Indeed, as Marion Hatchett has pointed out, “In its main substance [the anaphora of Basil] is authorized among more Christians than any other eucharistic prayer.” 3

As is the case with the other classical eucharistic prayers of the Christian tradition, the origins and development of the anaphora of Basil have been a matter of debate among liturgical scholars. One point, however, is generally taken as settled – that the ascription of the anaphora to Basil the Great is not wide of the mark.

Basil (c. 330-379) was indeed one of the very greatest of the Church Fathers. As a teacher of the faith, he stands second only to Athanasius in bringing about the final victory of Nicene orthodoxy over Arianism; and even then, he was the abler theologian, for Basil’s insights broke through the semantic log-jam which had stymied Athanasius, and helped to forge the doctrinal consensus whereby the conservative majority of bishops finally felt comfortable about uniting with the Nicene party. Basil was also one of the true founders of Orthodox monasticism; his Longer and Shorter Rules, which he devised for his own community of ascetic men and women, are to the religious of the Eastern Church what Benedict of Nursia’s Rule is to western monasticism.

In the previous set of readings we met Basil’s younger brother Gregory, and saw that Basil, in his zeal for the Nicene cause, was not always scrupulous about the way he used relatives, friends, and colleagues. Nevertheless, his theological and ascetical writings formed a very considerable heritage, such that no subsequent Byzantine theologian could do doctrine or spiritual direction without consulting him.

And the anaphora which goes by Basil’s name is very much a part of his heritage. It is fairly certain that Basil did not

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compose the anaphora from scratch, but took an already existing anaphora and reworked it. The question is, what anaphora did he take? We know that in the 350s he spent time among the monks of Egypt; and there are two eucharistic prayers of Egyptian provenance – one in Greek, the other in a now-dead language known as Sahidic – which have close verbal and structural similarities to the Basilian anaphora. Right now, scholars favour the Greek version (known as *Egyptian Basil*) as Basil’s source, though the Sahidic version is more ancient. Basil enriched its scriptural allusions and made its doctrinal bias sharper, apparently in order to exclude any attempt by the Arians to twist the *lex orandi* of the Cappadocian churches to the purposes of their (heretical) *lex credendi*. But all this is a matter of probabilities, likelihoods, and educated guesses. For the anaphora of *Basil* as it now stands is not the anaphora as Basil left it; over the next four centuries it appears to have undergone further enrichments here, and some nipping-and-tucking there.


Passages preceded by an asterisk (*) and followed by a footnote-reference designate the text to which the footnote refers.
Introduction

FURTHER READING


See esp. Part I, Chapter One, pp. 3-17, and Part II, Chapters One & Two, pp. 139-159.


The Anaphora
of the Liturgy of Saint Basil

After the Creed the deacon says,
    Let us stand in a becoming way, let us stand with
    awe, let us be attentive to offer the holy anaphora in
    peace.

People   Mercy, peace, a sacrifice of praise!

Priest   *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of
         God the Father, and the communion of the Holy
         Spirit, be with you all.¹

People  And with your spirit.

Priest  Let us lift up our hearts.

People  We have them with the Lord.

Priest  Let us give thanks to the Lord.

People  It is fitting and right to worship the Father, the Son,
         and the Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and undivided
         Trinity.

And the Priest begins the holy anaphora:

Being itself,² Master, Lord God, almighty and
worshipful Father, it is truly fitting, right, and
proper to *the magnificence of your holiness³ to
praise you, to hymn you, to bless you, to worship
you, to give you thanks, to glorify you, the only true
God that exists, and to offer to you *with a contrite
heart and a humble spirit⁴ this *our reasonable
service.⁵ For it is you who granted us *the knowledge

¹ 2 Corinthians 13.14.

² 'Ο ΩΝ. (ho ΩN). This is the participial form of the Greek verb εἰµι

³ Cf. Psalm 145.5.

⁴ Prayer of Azariah 16 ( = LXX Daniel 3.39).

⁵ Prayer of Azariah 16 ( = LXX Daniel 3.39).
of your truth; and *who is sufficient to declare your powers, *to make your praises to be heard, or to recount all your wonderful deeds at all times? O Master, Master of all, Lord of heaven and earth and all creation, visible and invisible, *you sit on the throne of glory and behold the depths, without beginning, invisible, incomprehensible, infinite, unchangeable, *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ *the great God and Saviour of our hope, *who is the image of your goodness, *manifesting you, the Father, in himself, the living Word, true God, before all ages *Wisdom, Life, Sanctification, and Power, the true Light, by whom the Holy Spirit was revealed, the spirit of truth, the grace of adoption, *the pledge of the inheritance to come, the first-fruits of eternal good things, the life-giving power, the fount of sanctification, who enables the whole rational and spiritual creation to offer you service and render you unceasing praise; for all things are your servants. For angels, arch-angels, *thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, virtues, and the cherubim with many eyes praise you, the seraphim stand around you, *each having six wings; with two they cover their faces and with two their feet, and

5 Romans 12.1.
7 Psalm 106.2.
8 Cf. Psalm 26.7.
9 Cf. Song of the Three 32 ( = LXX Daniel 3.55).
10 2 Corinthians 11.31.
11 Cf. Titus 2.13; 1 Timothy 1.1.
14 Cf. 1 Corinthians 1.24, 30; John 14.6, 1.9.
16 Colossians 1.16.
The Anaphora of the Liturgy of St Basil the Great

with two they fly, as they cry to one another 17 with unwearying voices and never-silent praises, (aloud) singing, crying out, raising the song of triumph, and saying:

*People Holy, holy, holy Lord Sabaoth: heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. 18
*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. 19

The priest says privately:

With these blessed powers, Master, lover of human-kind, we sinners also cry and say: You are truly holy and all-holy, and there is no measure of the magnificence of your holiness, and you are holy in all your works, for in righteousness and true judgement you brought all things upon us. 20 For you took dust from the earth and formed man; 21 you honoured him with your image, O God, and set him in the paradise of pleasure, and promised him immortality of life and enjoyment of eternal good things in the keeping your commandments. But when he disobeyed you, the true God who created him, and was led astray by the deceit of the serpent, and had been subjected to death by his own transgressions, you, O God, expelled him in your righteous judgement from paradise into this world, and turned him back to the earth from which he was taken, 22 while planning for him the salvation by new birth in your Christ. For you did not renounce your creature for ever, O God of goodness, nor did you forsake the works of your hands, 23 but in your tender mercy you visited your

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17 Cf. Isaiah 6.2-3.
18 Isaiah 6.3; cf. Psalm 118.25.
19 Psalm 118.26; Matthew 21.9.
20 Prayer of Azariah 1.4, 5 ( = LXX Daniel 3.28, 31).
21 Cf. Genesis 2.7.
22 Cf. Genesis 3.19.
creature *in many and various ways.25 You sent prophets; you performed works of power through your saints who were pleasing to you in every generation; you spoke to us *through the mouth of your servants the prophets,26 foretelling the salvation that was to come; you gave the Law for our help; and you set angels to guard over us.

*But when the fullness of time had come,27 you *spoke to us in your own Son, through whom you made the worlds; 28 who, being the reflection of your glory and *the exact imprint of your being, and sustaining all things by the word of his power,29 *thought it not robbery to be equal with you, God30 and Father, but he, God who was before all ages, *appeared on earth and lived with humankind;31 and being made flesh from a holy Virgin *he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave.32 He was conformed *to the body of our humiliation, that he might conform us to the image of his glory.33 For *since by a man sin had entered the world, and by sin death,34 your only *Son, who is in your bosom,35 O God and Father, *was born of a woman,36 the holy

24 Luke 1.79.
25 Hebrews 1.1.
26 Luke 1.70.
27 Galatians 4.4.
28 Hebrews 1.2.
29 Hebrews 1.3.
30 Philippians 2.6.
31 Baruch 3.37.
32 Philippians 2.7.
33 Cf. Philippians 3.21, Romans 8.29.
34 Romans 5.12.
35 John 1.18.
36 Galatians 4.4.
*Theotokos* and ever-Virgin Mary, and was *born under the law,* and was pleased to *condemn sin in his flesh,* that *those who died in Adam should be made alive in him, your Christ.* And having become a citizen of this world, he gave us saving precepts, turned us away from the error of the idols, and brought us to the knowledge of you, the true God and Father. He gained us as *a people of his very own,* *a royal priesthood, a holy nation;* and when he had *washed us with water and sanctified us by the Holy Spirit,* *he gave himself as a ransom* to death, *by which we were held captive, having been sold under sin.* By means of the cross he descended into hell, *that he might fill all things with himself, and loosed the pains of death; he rose again on the third day and forged for all flesh the way to resurrection from the dead, since it was not possible for the prince of life to be subjugated by corruption. He became *the first-fruits of those who had fallen asleep, the first-born from the dead, so that in all things he might have first place in everything.* And ascending into the heavens, *he sat down at the right

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37 *Theotokos* (θεοτόκος): Literally, “God-bearer”; in the western tradition usually rendered “Mother of God”. This title of the Blessed Virgin Mary was proclaimed as a necessary part of the Catholic faith at the council of Ephesus in 431.

38 Galatians 4.4.

39 Romans 8.3.

40 1 Corinthians 15.22.

41 Titus 2.14.

42 1 Peter 2.9.

43 Cf. Ephesians 5.26; Romans 15.16.

44 Cf. Mark 10.45.

45 Romans 7.6, 14.

46 Ephesians 4.10.

47 1 Corinthians 15.20; Colossians 1.18.
hand of your majesty on high, and will also come again to reward each according to each one’s works.

And he left us memorials of his saving passion, these things which we have set forth according to his commands. For when he was about to go out to his voluntary and praiseworthy and life-giving death, on the night when he gave himself up for the life of the world, he took bread in his holy and undefiled hands and presented it to you, O God and Father, gave thanks, blessed, sanctified, and broke it, and gave it to his holy disciples and apostles, saying, “Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

People Amen.

In the same way he took the cup of the fruit of the vine also and mixed it, gave thanks, blessed, sanctified, and gave it to his holy disciples and apostles, saying, “Drink of this, all of you; this is my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. (People: Amen.) Do this for the remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim my death, you confess my resurrection.”

Therefore, Master, remembering his saving passion, his life-giving cross, his three-day burial, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven, his sitting-down at your right hand, O God and Father, and his glorious and fearful second coming, (aloud) we offer to you, from your own, what is your own, in all and through all,

People We praise you, we bless you, we give thanks to you, O Lord, and we pray to you, our God.

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48 Hebrews 1.3.

49 Romans 2.6.

50 John 6.51.

51 Cf. 1 Corinthians 11.26.
The Anaphora of the Liturgy of St Basil the Great

Priest Therefore, Master all-holy, we your sinful and unworthy servants, who have been accounted worthy to minister at your holy altar, not by reason of our own righteousness, for we have done nothing good upon earth, but by reason of your mercies and compassions which you have bountifully poured upon us, we also are bold to approach your holy altar. And having set forth *the antitypes52 of the holy body and blood of your Christ, we pray and beseech you, O Holy of Holies, by the favour of your goodness, that your Holy Spirit may come upon us and upon these gifts here set forth, and bless them and sanctify and make (the priest signs the holy gifts with the cross three times, saying:) this bread to be the precious body of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen! and this cup to be the precious blood of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen! which is shed for the life and salvation of the world, Amen!

Prayer:
Unite all of us who *partake of the one bread53 and cup with one another in *the communion of the one Holy Spirit;54 and grant that none of us may partake of the holy body and blood of your Christ *for judgement or for condemnation,55 but that we may find mercy and grace with all the saints who have been well-pleasing to you in ages past, forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, teachers, and *every righteous spirit made perfect56 (aloud) especially our all-holy, immaculate, highly blessed and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever-

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52 *the antitypes: This is a technical term in patristic Greek (and Latin), which has no exact equivalent in English. It refers to a copy or representation of something which communicates and imparts the reality of the thing copied or represented.

53 1 Corinthians 10.17.


55 Cf. 1 Corinthians 11.29, 34.

56 Cf. Hebrews 12.23.
Virgin Mary; (while *the diptychs are read by the deacon, the priest says the prayer:) Saint John the prophet, forerunner and Baptist, the holy and honoured apostles, Saint N., whose memorial we are keeping, and all your saints: by their prayers, visit us, O God.

And remember those who have fallen asleep in hope of the resurrection to eternal life, and grant them rest where *the light of your countenance watches over them.

Again we pray you, Lord, remember your holy, catholic, and apostolic Church from one end of the world to the other; and grant it peace, for you *obtained it by the precious blood of your Christ, and establish this holy house *until the end of the age, and grant it peace.

Remember, Lord, those who presented these gifts, and those for whom, and through whom, and on whose account they presented them.

Remember, Lord, those who bring forth fruit and do good work in your holy churches and remember the poor. Reward them with bountiful and heavenly gifts, and grant them *heavenly things for earthly, *eternal things for temporal, *imperishable things for perishable.

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57 the diptychs: From διπτυχον, a leaflet of two folded pages listing the names of living and dead Christians with whom a church held it a special honour to be in communion. By the same token, if a name were omitted from the diptychs, it meant that the person in question had been excommunicated.

58 Psalm 4.7.

59 Acts 20.28; 1 Peter 1.19.

60 Matthew 28.20.


62 Cf. 2 Corinthians 4.18.

63 Cf. 1 Corinthians 9.25.
The Anaphora of the Liturgy of St Basil the Great

Remember, Lord, those in deserts and mountains and in caves and in holes in the ground.64

Remember, Lord, those who live in virginity and piety and self-discipline, and in a worthy manner of life.

Remember, Lord, our most religious and faithful emperor, whom you thought fit to rule the land. Crown him with the weapon of truth, with *the shield of your favour;65 *cover his head in the day of battle;66 strengthen his arm, exalt his right hand; make his empire mighty; subject to him *all the barbarous peoples that delight in war;67 grant him help and deep peace that cannot be taken away; speak good things to his heart for your Church and all your people; that in his peace we may *lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.68

Remember, Lord, all rule and authority, our brothers at the imperial palace and all the army; preserve those who are good in your goodness, and make the wicked good in your bounty.

Remember, Lord, the people who stand around [this altar] and those who for reasonable cause are absent, and have mercy upon them and upon us according to the abundance of your mercy. Fill their storehouses with all good things, preserve their marriages in peace and concord; nourish the infants, instruct the youth, strengthen the elderly; comfort the fainthearted, gather the scattered, bring back the wanderers and join them to your holy, catholic, and apostolic Church; set free those who are *troubled by unclean spirits;69 sail with those who sail, journey

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64 Hebrews 11.38.
65 Psalm 5.13.
66 Psalm 140.7.
67 Psalm 68.31.
68 1 Timothy 2.2.
with those who journey; defend the widows, protect the orphans, rescue the captives, heal the sick.

Remember, O God, those who face trial, *those in the mines,*70 in exile, in bitter slavery, in every tribulation, necessity, and affliction; remember all who need your great compassion, those who love us and those who hate us, and those who have bidden us, unworthy as we are, to pray for them.

Remember all your people, O Lord our God, and pour out your bountiful mercy upon all, granting to all their petitions for salvation. May you yourself be mindful of those whom we have not remembered through ignorance, through forgetfulness, or through the number of the names; O God, you know the age and the title of each, you know every one from their mother’s womb. For you, Lord, are the help of the helpless, the hope of the hopeless, the Saviour of the tempest-tossed, the haven of sailors, the physician of the sick; be all things to all people, for you know every human and each one’s petition, every household and each one’s need.

Rescue, Lord, this city (or this monastery), and every city and country, from famine, plague, earthquake, flood, fire, the sword, invasion by foreigners, and civil war.

(aloud) Above all, remember, Lord, our father and archbishop N.: grant him to your holy churches in peace, safety, honour, health, and length of days,* rightly explaining the word of your truth.71

The diptychs of the living are read.

Deacon   N. the all-holiest metropolitan (or bishop), and him who presents these holy gifts .... and all men and women.

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70 **those in the mines**: i.e. prisoners sentenced to hard labour in rock quarries and underground mines. Treatment was so brutal in the open-air prisons that “being sent to the mines” was tantamount to a death-sentence.

71 2 Timothy 2.15.
People  And all men and women.

Remember, Lord, all the orthodox episcopate who rightly explain the word of your truth.  
Remember, Lord, also my unworthiness, according to the multitude of your mercies; forgive me every offence, willing and unwilling; and do not keep back, because of my sins, the grace of your Holy Spirit from the gifts here set forth.

Remember, Lord, the priesthood, the diaconate in Christ, and every order of the clergy, and do not put to shame any of us who stand around your holy altar.

Look upon us, Lord, in your goodness; appear to us in your bountiful mercies; grant us temperate and favourable weather; give kindly showers to the earth for bearing fruit; *bless the crown of the year with your goodness,  
O Lord. End the divisions of the churches; quench *the ragings of the nations;  
by the power of your Holy Spirit, quickly destroy the uprising of heresies. Receive us all into your kingdom, making us children of light and children of the day;  
grant us your peace and your love, O Lord our God, for you have given us all things;  
(aloud) and grant us with one mouth and one heart to glorify and hymn your all-honourable and magnificent name, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and to the ages of ages.

People  Amen.

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72 Psalm 65.12.

73 Cf. Psalm 2.1.

74 1 Thessalonians 5.5.
The Anaphora of the Liturgy of St Basil the Great

[THE BLESSING]

Priest And may the mercies * of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ75 be with you all.
People And with your spirit.

[THE MIDDLE LITANY]

Deacon Having commemorated all the saints, again and again in peace let us pray to the Lord.
People Lord, have mercy.
Deacon For the precious gifts which have been offered and sanctified, that our God, who loves humankind, who has received them at his holy and heavenly and spiritual altar as a fragrant offering, may in return send down to us divine grace and the gift of his Holy Spirit, let us pray:
People Lord, have mercy.
Deacon That he would free us from all affliction, wrath, danger, and necessity, let us pray to the Lord:
People Lord, have mercy.
Deacon Assist us, save us, have mercy upon us, and protect us, O God, by your grace.
People Lord, have mercy.
Deacon Having asked for unity of faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us commend ourselves, and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.
People To you, O Lord.

While the deacon and people are doing this litany, the priest prays:

Priest O our God, the God of salvation, teach us to render thanks in such a way as is worthy of the favours that you have given and continue to give us. You are our God, and you have accepted these gifts. *Cleanse us from every defilement of body and spirit,76 and teach us to attain *perfect holiness in the fear of you;77 that

75 Titus 2.13.
76 2 Corinthians 7.1.
77 2 Corinthians 7.1.
The Anaphora of the Liturgy of St Basil the Great

receiving a portion of your sacraments in the spotless testimony of our conscience, we may become one by the holy body and blood of your Christ; and that, having received them worthily, we may have Christ dwelling in our hearts, and may become the temple of your Holy Spirit. Yes, O our God, and may you make none of us guilty of these your awesome and heavenly mysteries, nor become weak in body and soul by partaking of them unworthily; but let us, until our last breath, receive worthily the hope of your sacraments as provisions for the journey to eternal life and for an acceptable defense before the fearful judgement-seat of your Christ that with the saints who have been well-pleasing in your sight in ages past, we also may become sharers of your eternal good things, which you have prepared for those who love you. O Lord (aloud) and count us worthy, O Master, to be bold, with confidence and without condemnation, to call upon you as Father and heavenly God, and to say:

People Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us to the time of trial, but deliver us from evil.

Priest (aloud) For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory of the Father, and of the Son, and of

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78 Ephesians 3.17.
79 1 Corinthians 6.19.
80 Cf. 1 Corinthians 11.27, 30.
81 2 Corinthians 5.10.
82 1 Corinthians 2.9.
The Anaphora of the Liturgy of St Basil the Great

the Holy Spirit, now, and for ever, and throughout all ages.

People Amen.
Priest Peace to all.
People And to your spirit.

And while the deacon says,
Let us bow our heads to the Lord.

The priest says,

[The Prayer of Inclination]

Master, Lord, Father of all mercies and God of all consolation, bless, sanctify, protect, fortify, and strengthen those who have inclined their heads to you; separate them from every evil deed, join them to every good deed, and count them worthy to partake, without condemnation, of these immaculate and life-giving mysteries, for the forgiveness of sins, for the communion of the Holy Spirit, (aloud) by the grace, mercies, and love for humanity of your only-begotten Son, with whom you are blessed, together with your all-holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now, and for ever, and throughout all ages.

People Amen.

[Prayer of the Elevation of the Bread]

Priest Give ear, O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, from your holy dwelling place, and come to bless us, you who are enthroned on high with the Father and present invisibly here with us, and by your mighty hand impart to us, and through us to all your people

Deacon Let us be attentive!

The priest raises the holy bread and says,
Holy things for the holy people!

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84 2 Corinthians 1.3.
People  One is holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ, *to the glory of God the Father.\textsuperscript{85}

The priest takes the portions of the holy body and puts them into the holy cups, and says,
   For the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

[THE \textsuperscript{86}EKPHONESIS OF COMMUNION]

Deacon  Approach with the fear of God, and with faith, and with love.

THE COMMUNION

\textsuperscript{85} Philippians 2.11.

\textsuperscript{86} Ekphonesis (ἐκπηώνησις): announcement.
2.

**Canon Romanus**

*The Canon of the Roman Mass*
INTRODUCTION

The Canon of the Roman Mass stands in a class by itself among the eucharistic prayers of the Christian tradition. Even its name is *sui generis*: the title *Canon Actionis*, “the rule of the action,”\(^1\) appears in the earliest manuscripts of its text, but it is unique among descriptive labels for the eucharistic prayer. And whereas the Eastern churches have usually had two or even three “canonical” eucharistic prayers to draw upon, the Roman Canon was the one and only eucharistic prayer of the church of Rome from the fifth or sixth century until 1970 – and the one and only eucharistic prayer of western Christendom from the close of the eighth century until the Protestant Reformation at the opening of the sixteenth century.\(^2\)

Historians have had little difficulty explaining how the hegemony of the Roman Canon came about. It was due to the quest of various “barbarian” rulers for legitimacy in the social, political, and cultural vacuum left by the collapse of the Roman empire in the west. This was most especially the case among the Franks, a cluster of Germanic peoples who had already been converted to Arian Christianity when they settled in Roman Gaul early in the fifth century. Like other “barbarian” peoples of the time, they had entered the empire in order to enjoy its benefits, not to destroy it. They did not “conquer” Rome so much as find themselves holding the bag

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\(^1\) The “action” in question is the offering of the eucharistic sacrifice; but one may wonder whether the *actio* originally was not meant to be *gratiarum actio*, “thanksgiving” – hence, the Canon would be the canon or rule of the thanksgiving (*eucharistia*).

\(^2\) With the single exception of the “Mozarabic Rite,” the liturgy of the Spanish church during the long centuries when the Moors, who were Muslim, ruled most of Spain. This rite was supplanted by the Roman Rite in the wake of the Christian re-conquest of Spain during the eleventh century. But six parishes in the city of Toledo won the right to continue its use, and Cardinal Ximines revived it in the archdiocese of Toledo at the close of the fifteenth century.
when the imperial regime disintegrated.\textsuperscript{3} Precisely because they were one of the empire’s successors, governing a Celtic population whose native élites were thoroughly Latinised (and Catholic), the Franks longed to prove their bona fides as defenders and participants of the Roman heritage. In their imaginations Rome itself was still the first of all cities of world, and the bishop of Rome, being the sole surviving link with the empire and its civilisation, became the guarantor of the legitimacy they sought. The result was a gradual Romanisation of the church in Frankish domains. The process culminated under Charles the Great (Charlemagne), who ruled all of Europe west of the River Elbe. In 790 he abolished the Gallican rites (the liturgies of the church of Gaul) and decreed that the Roman Rite alone was to be used throughout his empire. Although Pope Hadrian was undoubtedly gratified, he and his predecessors had not meddled at all with the liturgies of the other western churches.\textsuperscript{4} It was not “papal aggression” which led to the imposition of the Roman Rite throughout western Christendom; it was Charlemagne’s lech for legitimacy.

\textsuperscript{3} As a result Gaul came to be called by the name Frankia – France.

\textsuperscript{4} In 600 Augustine of Canterbury sought guidance from Gregory the Great on a number of questions, the second of which read: “Even though the faith is one, are there varying customs in the churches? and is there one form of mass in the holy Roman church and another in the churches of Gaul?” Gregory replied: “My brother, you know the customs of the Roman church in which, of course, you were brought up. But it is my wish that if you have found any customs in the Roman or Gaulish church or any other church which may be more pleasing to almighty God, you should make a careful selection of them and sedulously teach the church of the English, which is still new in the faith, what you have been able to gather from other churches. For things are not to be loved for the sake of a place, but places are to be loved for the sake of their good things. Therefore, choose from every individual church whatever things are devout, religious, and right. And when you have collected them as it were into one pot, put them on the English table for their use.” Bede, \textit{Ecclesiastical History of the English People}, trans. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), I.27, pp. 81, 83, and 82 n. 1.
Introduction

If historians have had little trouble explaining how the Roman Canon came to be the one and only eucharistic prayer of the mediæval West, they have faced rather more difficulty trying to explain how the Roman Canon came to be. Its development “is a point, though most needful to be known, yet beyond belief obscure, intricate, and perplexed”.5

1. The Hippolytan Problem

The earliest complete text of the Canon is to be found in an eighth-century document known as the Gregorian Sacramentary. As with other ancient liturgies which have continued in use through the modern age, the greatest obstacle to tracing the Canon’s genealogy up to the Gregorianum is the meagreness of the evidence. That, and the existence of one piece of evidence too many – namely, The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus.

This document was originally composed in the early third century – scholars tend to date it around the year 215. It is basically a compendium of the usages then current in the church of the city of Rome. What makes this work so important – and the early history of the Canon appear to be so “obscure, intricate, and perplexed” – is the fact that it contains a sample eucharistic prayer for use at the ordination of a bishop. This prayer is brief enough to quote in full:

And when he has been made bishop, all shall offer the kiss of peace, greeting him because he has been made worthy. The deacons shall present the oblation to him and he, laying his hands on it with all the college of presbyters, shall say, giving thanks:

The Lord be with you.
And all shall say: And with your spirit.
Hearts on high.
– We have them with the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord.
– It is worthy and just.
And he shall then proceed in this way:
We yield thanks to you, O God, through your beloved child Jesus Christ, whom in the last times you have sent to us as saviour and redeemer and messenger of your will, who is your inseparable Word, through whom you made all things; and when it was well-pleasing to you, you sent him from heaven into the womb of the Virgin; and conceived in the womb, he became flesh and was shown to be your son, born from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin. Who, fulfilling your will and acquiring for you a holy people, he stretched out his hands when he was to suffer so that he might free from suffering those who have believed in you. And when, of his own free will, he was betrayed to suffering in order to undo death and Sunder the bonds of the devil, to trample hell under-foot and make the righteous shine, to set a term and manifest the resurrection, he, taking bread and giving thanks to you, said: “Take, eat; this is my body which will be broken for you.” In the same way also the cup, saying: “This is my blood which is poured out for you; whenever you do this, you do my remembrance.” Therefore, remembering his death and resurrection, we offer to you the bread and the cup, giving thanks to you because you have counted us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you. And we ask that you will send your Holy Spirit upon the oblation of the holy church; gathering [it] into one, may you give to all who receive the holy things for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, for the strengthening of faith in the truth, that we may praise and glorify you through your child Jesus Christ; through whom be glory and honour to you, to the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit, in your holy church, both now and for evermore. Amen.


For another, somewhat looser translation of this prayer, see Eucharistic Prayer 2 in The Book of Alternative Services, pp. 196-197. It should be noted, however, that the original prayer did not have the Sanctus and Benedictus; these acclamations (together with the introductory phrase, “Now with all creation.....” and the post-Sanctus transitional address, “Holy and gracious God, accept our
This eucharistic prayer has four movements: (1) a terse summary of God’s work of salvation through Christ, (2) the institution narrative, (3) anamnesis, and (4) epiclesis-doxology. Though originally composed in Greek, it is what liturgical scholars like to think of as “typically Roman”: spare in its structure, terse in its style, and succinct in its content. It also has a very strong affinity with that anaphoral tradition known as the Antiochene model, of which the anaphora of *The Divine Liturgy of St Basil* is a classic example. But this is the heart of the problem. The fully developed text of the Roman Canon is anything but spare, terse, or succinct, and it certainly does not conform to the Antiochene pattern. It is a sprawling sequence of some fourteen paragraphs of prayer: several of these paragraphs have a closure (*per Christum dominum nostrum*) which seems to make them quite independent within the whole sequence. Nor does the sequence of paragraphs seem to follow any readily discernible pattern, such as we find in the prayer of Hippolytus. So what happened between c. 215, when Hippolytus produced his sample anaphora, and the eighth century?

2. The evidence of Ambrose

As it happens, references and allusions to the Canon, and even direct quotations from its text or from texts of kindred anaphoras, are sprinkled here and there in the writings of a handful of ancient Latin Christian authors. All of these tidbits and morsels of evidence make one thing clear: By the middle of the fourth century, the church of Rome had long since jettisoned the Hippolytan model and adopted the basic shape and much of the characteristic text of what was to become the Roman Canon.

The fullest evidence that the shift had taken place comes to us in *On the Sacraments*, the transcript of mystagogical lectures that Ambrose of Milan delivered to a class of newly baptized Christians around the year 390. In the fourth and fifth of these lectures Ambrose drew upon the text of the eucharistic prayer then used in the church of Milan. He even quoted sections of that prayer *verbatim*, and they bear striking similarities to the text of (what

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(what praise, through...”) were inserted by William Crockett and David Holeton, who produced this version for the BAS.

Greek was the language used in the liturgy of the church of Rome until the beginning of the third century.
Perhaps you will say: “My bread is of the ordinary kind.” But this bread is bread before the word of the sacraments: when the consecration is added, the flesh of Christ is made from the bread. How can that which is bread be the body of Christ? By what words, then, and by whose speech, is the consecration? The Lord Jesus’. For all the other things that are said earlier on in the liturgy, are said by the bishop (sacerdos) – praises and prayers are addressed to God, intercession is offered for the people, for kings, and for others. When it comes time for the venerable sacrament to be produced, the bishop (sacerdos) no longer uses his own words but the words of Christ. Therefore, the word of Christ produces the sacrament. Do you want to know how the sacrament is consecrated with heavenly words? Hear what those words are. The bishop says:

Make this oblation to be for us approved, spiritual, and acceptable, because it is the figure of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; who, on the night before he suffered, took bread in his holy hands; he looked up to heaven, to you, holy Father, almighty, eternal God, and giving thanks, he blessed and broke it and, having broken, delivered it to his apostles and disciples, saying, Take and eat of this, all of you, for this is my body which is broken for you. Likewise after supper, on the before he suffered, he took the cup; he looked up to heaven, to you, holy Father, almighty, eternal God, and giving thanks, he blessed it and delivered it to his apostles and disciples, saying, Take and drink of this, all of you, for this is my blood.  

When Ambrose says that “praises and prayers are addressed to God, intercession is offered for the people, for kings, and for others,” he is referring to the opening of the eucharistic prayer; and the actions he lists roughly correspond to what happens in the Vere dignum (Preface), Te igitur, and Memento domine (II – IV) of the Roman Canon. We might wish that Ambrose had indulged us and quoted the text of those “praises and prayers” and “intercession,” so that we could be sure. But quite apart from the fact that his argument did not call for such direct quotation of these sections, he

8 De sacramentis, 4.5.21-22.
probably did not have a set text to quote. For he immediately goes on to say, “When it comes time for the venerable sacrament to be produced, the bishop no longer uses his own words but the words of Christ.” It appears that the bishop composed the opening sections himself, more or less extemporaneously, at each celebration; the structure and themes were set, but not the actual text of these sections. The institution narrative, however, together with the introductory supplication for acceptance of the oblation (“Make this oblation to be for us approved, spiritual, and acceptable, because it is the figure of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; who....”) was set, fixed, and invariable.

So, too, it appears, was the section immediately following the narrative, which contained the anamnesis (or memorial) and supplication for consecration. Ambrose continues:

Know, then, how great the sacrament is. Consider what the Lord says: As often as you do this, you do it for the remembrance of me, until I come again. And the bishop says: Therefore, mindful of his most glorious passion, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, we offer to you this unspotted sacrifice, this spiritual sacrifice, this unbloody sacrifice, this holy bread and the cup of eternal life. We implore you, and we beg you, to take this oblation up to your altar on high, by the hands of your holy angels, just as you deigned to accept the gifts of your servants Abel, and the sacrifice of our forebear Abraham, and that which the high-priest Melchizedek offered to you.  

This single section corresponds to the Unde et mémores, Supra quae, and Súpplices te (X – XII) of the Roman Canon. We cannot know, of course, whether the Roman Canon’s anamnesis and supplication were originally as condensed as the Milanese prayer, or always a set of three distinct prayers.

This point reminds us that Ambrose was discussing and quoting the eucharistic prayer of Milan, not the Roman Canon; we must be careful, then, in the way we use his evidence. In the late fourth century, individual churches were still free to develop their own patterns of eucharistic praying, and we have no right to conclude that Ambrose of Milan was praying in exactly the same way as his

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9 Ibid., 4.6.26-27.

10 See sections X, XI, XII, below.
contemporary, bishop Siricius of Rome, or vice versa. That said, we
do know that the churches in Italy and North Africa formed a kind
of liturgical family, with rites which resembled one another quite
closely. So Ambrose’s evidence may be taken as reflection of the
way eucharistic prayers were developing among the major
churches of the Italian peninsula. Still, the Roman Canon’s
development between The Apostolic Tradition in the early third
century and the Gregorian Sacramentary in the early eighth century
remains a puzzle with several pieces missing. Such evidence as
Ambrose and other ancient writers supply only pushes back the
time when the missing pieces went missing; they do not tell us
where the missing pieces might be hiding.

At the same time, it is just possible that the sample eucharistic
prayer in The Apostolic Tradition has seduced liturgical scholars by
its textuality. That is to say, it is a written text, vested with all the
authority and prestige that modern critical scholarship gives to such
an artifact. Moreover, it is a written text from an era when the
eucharistic prayer was normally not a text at all but rather an oral
performance “to the best of [the presiding celebrant’s] ability”.11
Indeed, Hippolytus himself took account of this fact in section 9 of
Apostolic Tradition, which concerns the ordination of someone
who has suffered ostracism or derision for the Christian faith.
Following the laying-on of hands, the eucharist was to be
celebrated:

And the bishop shall give thanks according to what we said
above [in section 3]. It is not at all necessary for him to utter
the same words as we said above, as though reciting them
from memory, when giving thanks to God; but let each pray
according to his ability…. Only, he must pray what is sound
and orthodox.12

11 Justin Martyr, First Apology, 67: “… [A]fter we finish our prayers,
bread and wine and water are presented. The president likewise
offers prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability, and
the people express their approval by saying ‘Amen’.” Justin was writing
c. 153 C.E.

12 Apostolic Tradition, 9; trans. Geoffrey J. Cuming, Hippolytus: A
Text for Students. Grove Liturgical Study 8 (Bramcote, Notts.: Grove
It is interesting that Hippolytus makes such a point of not requiring the celebrant to use his sample eucharistic prayer “as though reciting [it] from memory”. This prompts two observations. First, the presiding celebrant does not seem to have been bound to extemporize the eucharistic prayer “on the spot” at the altar. He could compose such a prayer beforehand, so long as he memorised it for recital at the eucharist. Secondly, it appears to have been “against the rules” to read from any text while “giving thanks” at the altar. Hippolytus clearly assumed that reciting his prayer from memory was one of the options available to a celebrant, but that reading a copy of it was not. This leads to a third point: The very fact that the Hippolytan prayer is a text probably makes it atypical of eucharistic praying in early third-century Rome. It is not like a speck of sand in an oyster, around which a pearl eventually develops, so much as like a snippet of paper in a bowl of gelatin which is still setting and as yet rather fluid.

The structure of the Hippolytan eucharistic prayer – in particular, its affinity with the Antiochene model – needs to be seen in this light. Even if Hippolytus composed *Apostolic Tradition* in order to maintain (and enforce) “the way we’ve always done it,” his eucharistic prayer remains nothing more than an example of a form whose elements could be expanded, contracted, even re-arranged at the discretion of the presiding celebrant.

### 3. The variable propers of the Canon

The Roman Canon itself offers some further bones on which speculation may gnaw, in the three sections whose texts vary on certain occasions. These are: the *Vere dignum* (II), the *Communicantes* (V), and the *Hanc igitur* (VI).

The *Vere dignum* is generally known as the “preface”. This word has come to mean a text which is placed before the main body of a work – a meaning which is largely a consequence of the mediaeval notion that the Roman Canon properly began at the *Te igitur* (III). Sections I and II (including the Sanctus and Benedictus)

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13 The *Communicantes* bears the rubrical title, *Infra actionem* (“Within the action”). This refers to the conventional title of the prayer as a whole, *Canon actionis*.

14 This notion was visually reinforced by the nearly universal practice of turning the initial “T” of the *Te igitur* into a full-page illuminated capital, invariably depicting the crucifixion. Such a treatment of the
were regarded as indeed merely “prefatory” and not part of the Canon. But strictly speaking the word preface means “something done (factum) in the presence of (præ) others” – in short, something proclaimed in public.\(^\text{15}\)

The number of occasions requiring a proper Vere dignum has fluctuated enormously over the centuries. Throughout the Middle Ages there were never more than ten different Prefaces, whereas the present Missal (1970) provides forty-five proper prefaces, plus six more “common” prefaces. Even this is paltry by comparison with the Verona Sacramentary (Sacramentarium Veronense),\(^\text{16}\) which dates from the seventh-century. The surviving sections of this manuscript, really a collection of libelli (“wee bookies”), provide a set of preludes for each celebration of Mass between mid-April and December. Every single Mass-set has its own separate Vere dignum – a total of 267 proper prefaces!

From the earliest manuscript copies to the present Roman Missal (1970), the number of occasions calling for the insertion of a proper Communicantes have been relatively few, and those occasions calling for the insertion of a proper Hanc igitur have been even fewer. But combined with the Verona Sacramentary’s provision of a proper Vere dignum for each Mass, we are looking at the vestiges of an earlier stage of the Canon, when it “worked” in much the same way as the eucharistic prayer that Ambrose of Milan described. That is to say, only a few core elements of the prayer were “set” and invariable – almost certainly the Qui pridie – Simili modo (VIII – IX), and perhaps the Quam oblationem (VII) and Unde et memoriae – Supra quæ – Supplices te (X – XII). The rest would have been composed by the presiding celebrant more or less extemporaneously – although Ambrose’s evidence suggests

\(^{15}\) In some of the most ancient sacramentaries, this same title præfatio is applied not only to the Vere dignum but also two the other variable sections of the Canon, the Communicantes and the Hanc igitur.

\(^{16}\) Also known as Leoninum, “The Leonine Sacramentary” after Leo the Great, bishop of Rome 440-461. Some of the prayers in this sacramentary may have been composed by Leo, but modern scholars tend to prefer the more neutral designation Veronense, which refers to the location of the manuscript in the chapter library of the cathedral of Verona, in Italy.
that a definite outline was already in place, and that the celebrant would have been expected to follow it. Between the early fifth and the seventh centuries, as the Roman church sought to consolidate its heritage in a war-ravaged and socially destabilized Italy, such liberty in the central prayer of Mass came to look like a luxury. The text of the Canon became more and more fixed. The 267 prefaces of the *Veronense* thus reflect a stage in the transition from extempore composition to codification of the Roman Canon as a prescribed and set text.

**Conclusion**

Once the canon was established (whenever exactly that was), the church of Rome never looked back. But all the evidence we have been considering suggests that it is probably futile to seek an *Ur-Canon*, a text which is the missing link between the eucharistic prayer of Hippolytus and the “classical” Canon of the eighth-century sacramentaries. For there was no *text* as such much before the sixth century, only a traditional outline and a set of conventions as to how it should be fleshed out. The Hippolytan prayer may represent the bare bones of this outline, which over the course of the next three or four centuries of eucharistic praying was gradually expanded and enriched – or, depending upon one’s point of view, inflated and distended – into the Roman Canon.

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**FURTHER READING**


CANON ROMANUS

I.
Per ómnia sáecula sæculórum. Amen.1
Dóminus vobíscum.
Et cum spíritu tuo.
Sursum corda.
Habémus ad Dóminum.
Grátias agámus Dómino Deo nostro.
Dignum et iustum est.

II.
VERE DIGNUM et iustum est, æquum et salutáre, nos tibi
semper et ubíque grátias ágere, Dómine, sancte Pater, omni-
potens, aétérne Deus, per Christum Dóminum nostrum; per
quam maiestátem tuam laudant angeli, adórant
dominationes, tremunt potestátes, cæli cælorúmque
virtútes, ac séraphim sócia exsultatióne concélébrant; cum
quibus et nostras voces ut admítte iúbeas deprecámur
supplíci confessióne dicéntes.

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dóminus Deus Sábaoth.
Pleni sunt cæli et terra glória tua.
Hosánna in excélsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nómine Dómini.
Hosánna in excélsis.

THE ROMAN CANON

I.
Throughout all ages and for ever. Amen.1
The Lord be with you.
And with your spirit.
Hearts on high!
We have them with the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is fitting and just.

II.
It is indeed fitting and just, right and salutary, that we
should always and everywhere give thanks to you, O Lord,
holy Father, almighty, eternal God, through Christ our
Lord; through whom the angels praise, the dominions
adore, the powers fear your majesty, and through whom
the heavens, the hosts of heaven, and the seraphim
together sing your praise with exultation; with whose
voices, by your command, may ours also be admitted in
supplication and praise, as we say,
Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

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1 This is how the super oblata, the Prayer over the Gifts, was
to be concluded.
III. Therefore, most merciful Father, we humbly beg and beseech you, through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, to accept and bless these gifts, these offerings, these holy and unblemished sacrifices, which we especially offer you for your holy catholic Church. Keep it in peace, watch over it, make it one, and govern it in all the world, in union with N. our pope and N. our bishop, and with all who worship according to the orthodox, catholic, and apostolic faith.

IV. Remember, Lord, your servants and handmaids, and all who stand around [this altar], whose faith you know and whose devotion you recognize, (for whom we offer or) who offer you this "sacrifice of praise" for themselves and for all their own, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their salvation and safety, and render their vows to you, the eternal "God, living and true."

V. Joined in communion with, and venerating above all the memory of the glorious ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and also of your blessed apostles and martyrs Peter, Paul, Andrew, James and John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Simon, and Thaddeus, Linus, Cletus, Clement, Xystus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Laurence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian, and all your saints: by whose merits and prayers grant that in all things we may be defended by the aid of your protection; through Christ our Lord.

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2 Psalm 49 (50).14.

3 1 Thessalonians 1.9.
VI. HANC ÍGITUR oblatiónem servítūs nostrae, sed et cunctae famíliae tuae, quáesumus, Dómine, ut placátus accípias: diésque nostros in tua pace dispónas, atque ab ætérna damnatióne nos éripi et in electórum tuórum iúbeas grege numerári; per Christum Dóminum nostrum.

VII. QUAM OBLATIÓNEM tu, Deus, in ómnibus, quáesumus, bene-dictam, adscíptam, ratam, rationábilem, acceptabilémque facere dignéris, ut nobis corpus et sanguis fiat dilectíssimi filii tui, Dómini Dei nostri Iesu Christi.

VIII. QUI PRÍDIE quam paterétur accépit panem in sanctas et venerábiles manus suas, elevátis óculis in caelum ad te, Deum Patrem suum omnipótentem, tibi gratias agens benedíxit, fregit, dedítque discipulis suis dicens: Accípite et manducáte ex hoc omnes, hoc est enim corpus meum [quod pro vobis tradétur].

IX. SÍMILI MODO postquam cænátum est, accípiens et hunc praeclárum cálicem in sanctas ac venerábiles manus suas, item tibi grátias agens, benedíxit, deditque discipulis suis dicens: Accípite et bíbite ex eo omnes, hic est enim calix sáanguinis mei novi et aetérni testaménti, mystérium fidei qui pro vobis et pro multís effundétur in remissionem peccatorum; haec quotiescúmque fecéritis in mei memóriam faciétis.

VI. We therefore beseech you, O Lord, that you may graciously accept this oblation of our worship which we and all your household offer, and fix our days in your peace; and grant us to be snatched from eternal damnation and counted among the flock of your chosen people; through Christ our Lord.

VII. We pray, O God, that you will deign to make this oblation blessed, approved, ratified, reasonable, and acceptable in every way, so that it may become for us the body and blood of your dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord;

VIII. Who, on the night before he suffered, took bread in his holy and venerable hands; and while his eyes were lifted up to heaven to you, O God, his almighty Father, giving thanks to you, he blessed, broke, and gave to his disciples, saying: Take and eat of this, all of you, for this is my body [which is handed over for you].

IX. In the same way, after supper, taking also this glorious cup into his holy and venerable hands, and again giving thanks to you, he blessed and gave to his disciples, saying: Take and drink of this, all of you, for this is the cup of my blood of the new and eternal testament, the mystery of faith, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins; as often as you do this, do it for the remembrance of me.
X.

UNDE ET MÉMORES sumus, Dómine, nos tui servi sed et plebs tua sancta Christi filii tui, Dómini Dei nostri tam beátae passiónis necnon et ab ínferis resurrectiónis, sed et in caelos gloriósae ascensiónis, offérimus praeclárae maiestáti tuae de tuis donis ac datis hóstiam puram, hóstiam sanctam, hóstiam immaculátam, panem sanctum vitae aetérnæ et *cálicem salútis perpétuæ.4

XI.

SUPRA QUÆ propítio ac seréno vultu respícere dignéris et accépta habére sícuti accépta habére dignátus e s múnera púeri tui iusti Abel, et sacrificium patriárchæ Abrahae, et quod tibi óbtulit summus sacérdos tuus Melchísedech, sanctum sacrificium, immaculátam hóstiam.

XII.

SÚPPLICES TE rogámus, omnípotens Deus, iube hæc perférri per manus angeli tui in sublíme altáre tuum in conspéctu divínae maiestátis tuae, ut quotquot ex hac altáris participatióne sacrosánctum filii tui corpus et sánquinem sumpsérimus omni benedictióne caeléstì et grátia repleámur; per Christum Dóminum nostrum.

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XIII.
MEMÉNTO ÉTIAM, Dómine, famulórum famularúmque tuárum N. et N., qui nos præcessérunt cum signo fidei et dómiunt in somno pacis, ipsis et ómnibus in Christo quiesántibus locu refrigérii lucis et pacis ut indúlgeas depre-cámur; per Christum Dóminum nostrum.

XIV.
NOBIS QUOQUE peccatóribus fámulis tuis de multitúdine miseratiónum tuarum sperántibus partem álquam et societátem donáre dignéris cum tuis sanctis apóstolis et martýribus – cum Iohánne, Stéphano, Matthía, Bárnaba, Ignátio, Alexándro, Marcellíno, Petro, Felicitáte, Perpétua, Agatha, Lucía, Agnéte, Cecilia, Anastásia, et cum ómnibus sanctis tuis, intra quorum nos consórtium non æstimátor mériti sed véniæ quáesumus largítor admítte; per Christum Dóminum nostrum;

XV.
PER QUEM hæc ómnia, Dómine, semper bona creas, sanctíficas, vivíficas, benedícis, et præstas nobis; per ipsum, et cum ipso, et in ipso est tibi, Deo Patri omnipoténti, in unitáte Spíritus Sancti, omnis honor et glória per sǽcula sæculórum.
Amen.
Canon Romanus

XVI.
Oremus.
Præcéptis salutáribus móniti et divína insitutióne formáti, audémus dicere:

PATER NOSTER, qui es in cælis, sanctificétur nomen tuum; advéniat regnum tuum; fiat volúntas tua, sicut in cælo et in terra. Panem nostrum cotidiánum da nobis hódie. Et dimítte nobis débita nostra, sicut et nos dimíttimus debítóribus nostris. Et ne nos indúcas in tentatiónem, sed líbera nos a malo.

XVII.
LÍBERA NOS, quáesumus Dómine, ab ómnibus malis, prætéritis, præséntibus, et futúris; et intercedénte beáta et gloriósa semper vírgine Dei genetríce María, et beátis apóstolis tuis Petro et Paulo atque Andréa, da propítius pacem in diébus nostris ut, ope misericórdiæ tuæ adiúti et a peccáto simus semper líberi, et ab ómni perturbatióne secúri; per Dóminum nostrum Iesum Christum fílium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat Deus in unitáte Spírius sancti, Deus, per ómnia sáecula sæculórum. Amen.

XVIII.
PAX DÓMINI sit semper vobíscum.
R. Et cum spíritu tuo.

The Roman Canon

XVI.
Let us pray.
Taught by the saving precepts and guided by the divine ordinance, we are bold to say:

OUR FATHER in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done on earth just as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, just as we forgive our debtors. And do not bring us to the test, but deliver is from evil.

XVII.
Deliver us, we pray, O Lord, from all evils, past, present, and to come; and by the intercession of the blessed and glorious ever-virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and of your holy apostles Peter and Paul and Andrew, mercifully give us peace in our time, that strengthened by the aid of your loving-kindness, we may be always free from sin and safe from every anxiety.; through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, God, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, throughout all ages and for ever. Amen.

XVIII.
The peace of the Lord be always with you.
Response. And with your spirit.
IV.

Transubstantiation
INTRODUCTION

Augustine died in 430, and for the next four centuries the western Church was untroubled by any serious dispute about its eucharistic faith. This state of affairs, however, was not a matter of “peaceful possession,” so much as a case of default-mode thinking. The infrastructure of the Roman empire in the West totally disintegrated during the fifth century, to be replaced by a shifting agglomeration of Germanic warrior kingdoms. The Roman province of Britannia became *Engla-land*, the land of the Angles (and Saxons). Roman Gaul (and the rest of what would become France, Belgium, and Austria) was divided between two different two groups of Franks. Vandals ruled Hispania (Spain) and North Africa, while other Vandals, the Visigoths, and the Lombards overran Italy in succession, devastating the land, its peoples, and their culture each time.

In such circumstances, controversy about the eucharist (or about anything else) was a luxury that western Christendom could not afford, even if there had been occasion for one. No such occasion appears to have arisen; and the Church devoted all its time and energy to preserving its eucharistic heritage, doctrinally as well as liturgically. This was the era when the Roman church consolidated its eucharistic rite and fixed the both the shape and the texts of the Mass. It was also the era of Isidore of Seville and his grab-bag compendiums of theological knowledge, and of the first great monastic scriptoria devoted to copying the surviving literature of both pagan and Christian antiquity. Bishops and monks produced treatments of eucharistic themes, but these were almost

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1 The emperor Diocletian, who reigned 284-305, divided the empire into eastern and western “zones,” each with its own emperor and emperor-in-training. (In principle, the *imperium* was undivided, for the emperor in the West and the emperor in the East were supposed to be co-emperors, ruling conjointly rather than independently. It rarely worked out that way.) The western Roman empire dissolved within a century of Diocletian’s reign. The eastern Roman empire, by contrast, not only held together but also expanded; it eventually came to be known as the Byzantine empire, after Byzantium, the name of the city which Constantine the Great designated as the capital of the eastern empire in 330 and then, with truly imperial vanity, dubbed Constantinople, “city of Constantine”.

exclusively in the form of homilies and incidental references made in the course of discussing other matters; and most did little more than recycle or re-state the views of Ambrose and (especially) Augustine, without attempting to synthesise their distinctive approaches to the eucharistic mystery.

At the close of the eighth century, however, the peoples of western Europe entered the first extended period of peace and stability that the continent had known in four hundred years. Under Charlemagne, the Frankish empire ruled, virtually undisputed, from the Elbe in the east to the English Channel in the west, and from the Pyrenees and Sicily in the south to the Baltic in the north. In recognition of this fact Pope Hadrian crowned Charlemagne himself as holy Roman emperor on Christmas Day in the year 800. The latter event marked the culmination and fulfillment of the barbarians’ long drive for legitimacy – a legitimacy defined by reminiscences of the empire which they had undermined and replaced. As I said in the introduction to the previous set of readings, this drive had given the Catholic church a peculiar leverage. For in the West the church – especially the church of Rome – was the only authority still standing amidst the wreckage of the old imperial order. The Church thus became the source of legitimacy; and warrior peoples whose forebears had come sweeping out of the Carpathians began to assimilate a religious tradition which belonged to the Mediterranean world, a religious culture whose reflexes of thinking and praying had been conditioned by the city-life of Graeco-Roman civilization. Charlemagne’s imposition of the Roman rite on the Frankish church in the late eighth century symbolised this assimilation. It also signalised a renewal of intellectual and cultural confidence in the Frankish heartland – a renewal so rich and wide-ranging that it has come to be known as “the Carolingian renaissance”. Among the principal offshoots of this renaissance were the first eucharistic controversy and the first systematic treatises on the eucharistic sacrament.

1.

The Amalarian Controversy

When Charlemagne imposed the Roman rite on the church throughout his empire, he did not decree a sudden
innovation so much as finalise a process which had been taking place for a long time. When the churches began fixing and codifying the texts of their liturgies, the liturgy of the church in Gaul – the so-called Gallican rite – did not make the transition easily or well. Where the church of Rome reduced the range and number of variable texts in its Mass, the Gallican rite actually generated more variable propers. This pullulation of propers made celebration of the rite a very complicated affair, and it may even have become unworkable in several regions. Hence, the Roman rite had been edging out the Gallican liturgy for several generations before Charlemagne’s decree.

Nevertheless, the Frankish church still had to undergo a process of assimilating and “owning” the Roman rite. A wide variety of writers facilitated this process through a genre known as expositiones missæ, explanatory commentaries on the Mass. The most ambitious as well as the most exhaustive of these commentaries was the Liber officialis (“Book of [Liturgical] Offices”), produced by one Amalar of Metz around 823. In this work, Amalar (c. 780-850/1) interpreted the Roman rite (and especially its rubrics) on the same principle by which patristic authors had interpreted Scripture – “Everything has meaning, nothing is without significance, but only requires someone who understands.”

Because the eucharist was held to be a memorial of Christ, Amalar read into every single detail of the Mass and its rubrics a specific allegory of Christ and his passion. A younger contemporary named Florus of Lyons did not exaggerate when he gave the following example of Amalar’s style:

He asserts that the deacons, when they bow while assisting at the altar, signify the apostles when they were afraid and hid themselves at the Lord’s passion. The subdeacons, he says, signify the women who fearlessly stood by the cross; the priest signifies Joseph of Arimathea; the archdeacon, Nicodemus; the cup, the sepulchre.

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2 “Nihil vacat, omnia innuunt, sed intellectorem requirunt.” Augustine, Discourses on the Gospel of John 24, § 6 [Corpus Christianorum Latinorum 36, p. 246].

3 Florus, An Account of the Synod of Quierzy, 5.
There was nothing very unusual about this programme in itself: it had solid precedent in the clutch of expositiones missae which other Frankish authors had produced. But Amalar’s Liber officialis carried allegorism to an extreme – and thereby revealed its weakness. An image or symbol is polyvalent in its reference, it works by suggesting a cluster of meanings all at once. Allegory, by contrast, involves “a strategy of reduction”; it seeks to limit an image or symbol to a single meaning, to nail it down rather than to explain it. Amalar practised this strategy of reduction on system and in every detail of the Mass.

Even so, his work proved highly popular; indeed, it did not encounter any opposition until a decade after its initial publication. And when it did arouse controversy, the occasion seems not to have been Amalar’s teaching so much as Amalar himself. In 833, a set of Frankish grandees launched a coup against the emperor Louis the Pious, Charlemagne’s son and successor. Louis foiled the coup and immediately launched a purge of his own. Agobard, bishop of Lyons, had been one of the churchmen who took part in the conspiracy against Louis; after its failure, he fled to Italy and from thence refused all demands that he resign his see. Louis thereupon appointed Amalar, sometime archbishop of Treves and a loyalist, to be administrator of the church of Lyons. Amalar seems to have been less interested in politics than in the opportunity his new position gave him to tinker with the liturgical usages of Lyons, particularly the chant employed by the cathedral clergy. That was the last straw for Florus (c. 790-c. 860), a deacon on the staff of the cathedral. An able theologian whose critical faculties were thoroughly steeped in the writings of the great Latin Fathers, Florus launched a three-year campaign of polemics and politics against Amalar. He concentrated his angry energies on Amalar’s Liber officialis and drew especial attention to one feature in particular – Amalar’s interpretation of the fractio panis (“the breaking of bread”).

At the fraction, the rubrics of the Roman rite directed the priest to break the sacrament in half and then, from one of

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these halves, to break off a particle – a threefold fraction, resulting in three distinct portions of the corpus Christi (“the body of Christ”). The particle was to be placed in the consecrated wine (immixtio); one of the remaining portions was to be left on the altar, and the other was to be used for communion. The direction that a portion of the corpus Christi be left on the altar prompted Amalar to this analysis:

The body of Christ – that is to say, the body of those who have tasted death and are about to die – has three forms. The first is the holy and immaculate body which was assumed from the Virgin Mary; the second is the body which walks on earth; and the third is the body which lies in tombs. By the particle of the offering which is introduced into the cup is shown the body of Christ which has already risen from the dead. By that portion which is eaten by the priest or by the people, is shown [the body of Christ] which is even yet walking upon the earth. And by that portion which is left on the altar, is shown [the body of Christ] which is lying in tombs. The same body takes the oblation with itself to the tomb and the holy church calls it the viaticum of one who is dying, so that it might be shown that those who die in Christ ought not to be considered dead, but sleeping… And this same portion remains on the altar until the end of Mass, because the bodies of the saints rest in tombs until the end of the age.5

Amalar thus distinguished three references for the eucharistic corpus Christi: (1) the historical body of Christ risen and dwelling in glory, (2) the living members of Christ’s body, and (3) those members of Christ’s body who have fallen asleep in the Lord. The question is: Did Amalar’s assertion of corpus Christi triforme, “the threefold body of Christ,” mean that there are three individual and different bodies of Christ? Florus of Lyons insisted that this was indeed the only meaning that Amalar’s words could have; and the churchmen who gathered in synod at Quierzy in 838 agreed with him. Amalar’s teaching (as interpreted by Florus) was formally condemned. Subsequent generations of scholars generally

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accepted Florus’s reading of what Amalar meant by the *corpus triforme*.

This interpretation was challenged by Henri de Lubac in his now-classic study, *Corpus mysticum* (1949). De Lubac noted, in the passage from the *Liber officialis* quoted above, that Amalar qualified “the body of Christ” by pluralising it: “the body of Christ, namely, [the body] of those who have tasted death or are about to die...” The phrasing might be “maladroit,” de Lubac admitted, but the essential meaning should be clear: Amalar intended to affirm the unity of the whole Church, living and dead, with the historical body of Christ risen and now dwelling in glory, while at the same time ensuring the necessary distinction, on the one hand, between Christ himself and the Church and, on the other, between the church of the living and the church of those “sleeping” in tombs.6

We might note, too, that Amalar shows a fundamental awareness of the relation between christology, ecclesiology and eschatology. He makes the historical body of Christ the first designation of the *corpus triforme*. But he then goes on to say that the *immixtio* represents not just the historical body, but the historical body as risen and glorified. For Amalar, the real body of Christ (*corpus Christi uerum*) is the body which has “passed over,” the historical body which now has its integrity and fullness as the glorified and “spiritual” body. At this point, we ourselves might note that De Lubac saw particular significance in Amalar’s concern to emphasise the membership of the dead in the body of Christ. Amalar’s concluding remark – that a portion of the *corpus Christi* remains on the altar until the end of Mass “because the bodies of the saints rest in tombs until the end of the age” – meant that “the communions made in this mortal life are a pledge not only of immortality for the soul, but also of resurrection for the body”.7 In other words, Amalar truly saw the eucharistic mystery as for the salvation of the whole human, flesh as well as spirit, body as well as soul. This, in turn, guarantees the unity of the two subsequent designations

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7 Ibid., p. 307.
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of the *corpus Christi* with the one body born of the Virgin and risen from the dead, which is proper to Jesus Christ himself.

None of this is to deny that Amalar framed and phrased his notion of the *corpus triforme* with a blatant indifference to the theological shading it needed and deserved. Like so much else in the *Liber officialis*, it is almost as if he pulled the rabbit of this particular allegory out of his mitre and then, without further thought, went on to his next allegorical trick. If such a judgement seems harsh, it might be noted that Amalar himself did not think that his assertion of *corpus Christi triforme* was worth fighting for. He did not contest Florus’s interpretation, nor did he attend the synod of Quierzy, and he never sought to prolong the controversy for the sake of vindicating himself. As eucharistic controversies go, therefore, the dispute over Amalar’s allegory of the *corpus triforme* was very small potatoes, hardly a controversy at all.

2. Pascasius Radbert

Just before Florus began sharpening his pen for the purpose of skewering Amalar, another deacon named Pascasius Radbert completed a treatise *De corpore et sanguine Domini*, “On the Body and blood of the Lord”. It was the first systematic treatment of the eucharistic mystery in its own right. It was also a testimony to the important role of Pascasius’s abbey, Corbie, in the Carolingian renaissance.

Corbie was one of the great monastic houses of the Frankish empire. Founded in 664 by the widow of King Chlothar II, it lay near the confluence of the Somme and the Ancre in the region of northwestern France known as Picardy. The abbey’s chief fame came to be its scriptorium, which assiduously copied manuscripts of ancient literature, both pagan and Christian, and ensured their dissemination; and its copyists utilized a number of those beautiful scripts –

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8 It was in this region that British forces (including the Royal Newfoundland Regiment) fought the Somme offensive in 1916, Canadian forces fought (and won) Vimy Ridge in 1917, and British forces barely held the great German offensive of March 1918.
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for instance, the Caroline minuscule – which are among the glories of the Carolingian renaissance. But at the end of the eighth century it was more generally known for a succession of abbots who were major players in the political intrigues surrounding Charlemagne and his immediate successors.

Radbert entered Corbie around 813. Born some twenty-three years earlier, his parents had given him to the abbey of Soissons as a child. This practice was not unusual in mediaeval Europe; the parents won the monastery’s protection (and often some economic advantages) in this life and the perpetual prayers of its monks for their salvation in the life to come, while the child received an education, a community, and the not inconsiderable prestige of a monk. At some point in his youth, however, Radbert abandoned Soissons and monastic life in order to serve in the entourage of Wala, a warrior grandee who stood in the inner circle of Charlemagne’s advisors. Radbert became one of his patron’s most trusted servants; when Wala and other nobles attempted a coup (the first of several) against Louis the Pious, Radbert acted as Wala’s “confidential agent”. The coup failed, and as punishment Wala was forced to become a monk at the abbey of Corbie, of which his older step-brother Adalhard was abbot. Radbert had re-entered monastic life at the very same abbey just before Wala’s final disgrace. It was probably about this time that he acquired (or took) the name “Pascasius,” after a disciple of St Benedict of Nursia.

For the next twenty years Pascasius’s life was absorbed in the routines ordained by the Rule of St Benedict. Not that his life – or the abbey’s – was uneventful. Adalhard had been caught in the undertow of his step-brother’s disgrace and had been sent into exile, where he remained until 821. In the meantime Wala virtually took over the community and was the moving force when the abbey sent a contingent to open a missionary house in recently conquered and still unpacified Saxony. Adalhard, on his return from exile, re-established this house at Korvey (Corbeia nova, “New Corbie”), in Westphalia. Five years later Adalhard died, and the community immediately elected Wala as their new abbot. But before very long he again got into trouble with the emperor Louis and was exiled to a monastery on the shores of Lake Geneva. At some point Pascasius journeyed to see his old master, apparently at the behest of and with a message from
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Louis. While there, he took it upon himself to admonish Wala for pursuing worldly intrigues contrary to his vows as a monk. Nevertheless, after Wala’s death, Pascasius wrote a memoir of his erstwhile master which, even as it gave a clear-eyed assessment of the old boy’s failings, hinted at the charismatic attractiveness that a man of few words, limited sympathies, fierce pride, and an unyielding code of honour can exercise in a warrior society.

It was about the same time as his visit to the exiled Wala – 832 or 833 – that Pascasius composed his treatise *On the Body and Blood of the Lord*. He dedicated it to Placidius Warin, a monk of Corbie who had served his noviciate under Radbert’s direction. Warin was eventually sent to the daughter-house at Korvey and had become its novice-director. He appealed to Pascasius for some help in teaching his German novices about the eucharist; and Pascasius responded by writing his treatise. It was the first full-scale treatment of eucharistic theology ever to have been written in the Christian tradition. It is useful to remember, however, that Pascasius probably did not set out to do “systematic theology” as such. The occasion of the treatise was Warin’s need to catechise a flight of German novices – and more, to acculturate those same monks to the Mediterranean mentalité of the Christian church.

A decade after writing his treatise Pascasius, though still a deacon (he never became a priest), was elected abbot of Corbie. In the meantime the emperor Louis had died, and his three sons had gone to the brink of civil war before they settled on a division of the empire. Corbie fell within the domain of Louis’s youngest son, Charles the Bald, now titled king of West Franks. It was customary for new abbots – especially those whose abbeys were of royal foundation and under royal patronage, such as Corbie – to send the king some token of homage and fealty. Pascasius chose to send Charles, as just such a token of homage, a revised edition of his treatise *On the Body and Blood of the Lord*. He attached a new dedicatory song, recast the prologue, cleaned up the prose, and added some new material. It was sent to the king either for Christmas, 843, or for Easter, 844.

“The man who wanders into the twelfth century is lost,” Henry Adams wrote in 1905, “unless he grow prematurely
young.”9 The same might be said, only more so, of those who pick up Pascasius’s treatise and find that they have wandered into the ninth century. The work itself may be “systematic,” but it doesn’t play the systematic game according to our rules. Indeed, it sometimes seems as if Pascasius doesn’t even think as we do. And that, quite apart from the particular difficulties his treatise certainly presents, may be the greatest difficulty of all. Pascasius’s On the Body and Blood of the Lord requires the modern reader to “grow prematurely young,” to play the game according to a ninth-century style of thinking. Modern people can do it, however, even as an adult can learn humility and play with children on their terms— not because they are cute, but because they understand something which we in our very adulthood “have not considered at all, or not closely enough, about reality.”10

It may help to start with some broad comparisons. Where modern discourse tends to analyse, Pascasius tends to associate and combine. The shape of his argumentation is governed by certain affinities between scriptural and patristic texts; and these affinities form and dissolve and then reform again as if in a kaleidoscope. Again, where modern thinking tends to seek a dialectical line through a series of propositions, Pascasius tends to work harmonically within a cluster of motifs, modulating from one motif to another and back again without any clear systemic progression.

Pascasius’s arguments, in short, rarely seem to “go anywhere”. If anything, they resemble what Douglas Hofstadter has called “strange loops,” in which, “by moving upwards (or downwards) through the levels of some hierarchical system, we unexpectedly find ourselves right back where we started.”11 Hofstadter used J. S. Bach’s music, M. C. Escher’s art and Kurt Gödel’s mathematics to elaborate this motif. As it happens, his description applies equally well to the kind of thinking which the Saxon monks of New

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Corbie and the Frankish monks of the mother house would have had in common – the kind of thinking known as *lectio divina*, whose heart was a Christ-centred rumination upon the Scriptures (especially the Psalms), under the guidance of the Fathers. In his treatise, then, Pascasius applied *lectio divina* and its associative-meditative form of reflection not only to texts, but also to the eucharistic mystery itself.

In his treatise, Pascasius had no desire to be original. Instead, he sought to steep Warin and his novices in the authoritative teachings of the great Fathers. He felt, with far greater confidence than modern critical scholarship has allowed itself to feel, that their discussions of (and allusions to) the eucharistic mystery could be harmonised – or rather, that they all contained the same doctrine. It was simply unthinkable to Pascasius and his contemporaries that Ambrose and Augustine, for example, might have represented distinct, much less opposed, understandings of the Eucharistic sacrament. But still, Pascasius did recognise that the Fathers’ teachings had to be sifted – or, as he put it, “strained like the milk of tenderness” – before a new and recently pagan generation of Saxon monks could appropriate the eucharistic faith and practice of the Catholic tradition.

In this sifting and straining, Pascasius adopted the teaching contained in Ambrose’s *On the Sacraments* and *On the Mysteries* as his basic screen and sieve. This is most evident in his identification of the eucharistic body of Christ with Christ’s historical body:

No one, then, should be troubled about this body and blood of Christ, that in a mystery it is real flesh and real blood, since the One who created so willed.... And because he willed that it is lawful for the figure of bread and of wine so to be these things, they must be believed to be, after consecration, nothing other than the flesh and blood of Christ.... To speak still more wonderfully, [this flesh] is none other than [the flesh] which was born of Mary, which suffered on the cross, and which was raised from the tomb.12

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Pascasius based this identification, so Ambrosian in origin, on the same foundation that Ambrose (and, to a lesser extent, Augustine) had set forth – namely, the power of the Creator. The God who “made-be” all things from nothing can also, by a sheer act of power, make one already existent reality become something else altogether. Each created thing may have a nature proper to itself, but this proper nature is always subject to “this one qualification, that it should always comply with the commands of him from whom it has being.”\(^{13}\) Because the Creator has willed the bread and wine to be the real flesh and blood of Christ, it is so – just like that. The conversion of the elements, then, is primarily an act of God’s creative power.

This approach addresses the **HOW** question of the sacrament, the question which concerns its mechanics. Later on, in chapter 15 of his treatise, Pascasius further specified the **HOW** of the sacrament by referring to the *sermo Christi*, the actual word spoken by Christ when he instituted the sacrament “on the night that he was betrayed”. This appeal to the *sermo Christi* did not add anything really new to the argument. Much as Ambrose had done, Pascasius merely transposed the appeal to the Creator’s omnipotent will into another key, into an appeal to the creative omnipotence of the divine Word. Thus, the words of institution were not a wholly unique fiat, without precedent in the history of God’s work. The *sermo Christi*, delivered at the Last Supper, was itself the same as the Word by which God in the beginning made, and even yet continues to make, all things to be just as they are.

Nevertheless, the Catholic doctrine of creation itself constrained Pascasius to qualify this fideism and to ask a question which addresses human understanding as well as the divine requirement of faith. Even if “knowledge is not rightly defended without faith,” Pascasius remarked, it nevertheless remains that “faith is not rightly defended without knowledge.”\(^{14}\) This conviction led Pascasius to move beyond the **HOW** question, which concerns the mechanics of the mystery, to address the question which concerns God’s purpose in ordaining the sacrament, the **WHY** of the mystery.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.; CCCM 16, p. 13.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 2; CCCM 16, p. 20.
In so doing, Pascasius began to make statements which we should label “soteriological” (having to do with the doctrine of salvation). He did this, however, without ever relinquishing the protological foundation of his argument, his concern to base the eucharist on the doctrine of creation. The law of “strange loops” operates here more than anywhere else in Pascasius’s thinking. As in one of M. C. Escher’s prints, we may start on the “creation” stairway coming down, when all of a sudden we find ourselves (we know not how) on the “salvation” stairway going up – and then, by an equally hidden twist, back again on the “creation” stairway.

Pascasius was responding to several exigencies, all of which intersected in the mystery of the Incarnation: the Word-made-flesh himself became the canon or rule by which statements about the created order and statements about this order’s supernatural destiny were to be interpreted. Because this canon of the Incarnation incorporated both the theme of creation and that of salvation, it allowed Pascasius to expound eucharistic themes no less comprehensively. The eucharist, in his view, was not just a mystery of salvation: it was a mystery of the Word-made-flesh himself.

Following and intensifying Ambrose’s doctrine, Pascasius expounded the conversion of the eucharistic elements according to the production of the Word’s flesh and blood in the womb of the Virgin Mary. He insisted that the conversion is effected by the same Holy Spirit who generated the flesh of the Word in the womb of the Blessed Virgin – only, this time, the Spirit created the very same flesh in bread rather than in the womb of the Virgin.

One of the more interesting features of Pascasius’s incarnational perspective is, that it led him to give the Holy Spirit a role co-equal with that of the sermo Christi in the eucharistic consecration. “For the mystery is not effected by the merit of the human consecrator,” he wrote,

but by the word of the Creator and the power of the Holy Spirit, so that nothing other than that which was created from the Holy Spirit may be believed with a true faith and tasted with a spiritual understanding. For if consecration were by the merit of the human priest, it would not belong to Christ. But now, just as it is Christ himself who baptises, so it is Christ himself who, through the Holy Spirit, makes his
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own flesh and decants his own blood. For who else [but the Spirit] could create in the womb, so that the Word became flesh? So it must be believed that by the same power of the Holy Spirit, through the word of Christ, Christ’s flesh and blood are made to be in this mystery by an invisible operation.\textsuperscript{15}

Since the economy of the Incarnation was the norm and canon to which all else conforms, the Spirit had to act in the eucharist as the Spirit acted when the Word became flesh in the Virgin’s womb. Pascasius thus established an “economic” concordance between the eucharistic mystery and the mystery of the Incarnation – a concordance which then serves

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 12; CCCM 16, p. 76. This paragraph was one of two lengthy selections from Pascasius’s treatise incorporated into the twelfth-century reference-work for canon lawyers, \textit{Decretum Magistri Gratiani} (“Gratian’s Compendium of Official Decrees,” III [De consecratione], Distinctio 2, Caput 72.2). Gratian attributed Pascasius’s words to Augustine, and under that attribution his selection from chapter 12 of Pascasius’s treatise eventually became one of the readings appointed in the Office for the feast of Corpus Christi in the breviaries of a number of western Uses. One such breviary was that of the Sarum Use in England – the version of the Roman rite used at Salisbury cathedral. There, Gratian’s selection from Pascasius served as the fourth lesson at Matins on Sunday in the Octave of Corpus Christi. It was through the Sarum Breviary that Pascasius’s Chapter 12 entered the Anglican lex orandi. Thomas Cranmer ransacked the Sarum texts when he turned his hand to drafting a Protestant liturgy for the reformed Church of England. In the first (1549) Prayer Book, “The supper of the Lord and holy Communion, commonly called the Masse” contained a eucharistic prayer with the following epiclesis immediately before the institution narrative: “Hear us, O merciful Father, we beseech thee: and with thy Holy Spirit and Word, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify these thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine, that they may be unto us the body and blood of thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ.” We may compare this epiclesis with Pascasius’s words, “by the word of the Creator and the power of the Holy Spirit,” in the first paragraph of Chapter 12. Its resonance with Pascasius is almost palpable.
as an argument for the identity of the eucharistic body with the historical body of the Word-made-flesh.

In light of all this, Pascasius may be said to have regarded the eucharist as indeed “an extension of the Incarnation.” We might think that the dogma of the Incarnation is, by definition, a soteriological matter, a dogma concerned with Christ as Saviour (sōtēr). Pascasius, however, associates the production of Christ’s flesh and blood in the eucharist, as in the Virgin’s womb, with the creation-motif. So the eucharistic conversion is an act of “making be”: each and every time the eucharistic consecration is performed, the flesh and blood of the Word are created anew from the already-existing natures of the bread and wine. In Pascasius’s view, the creation of something from something else belongs to the protological order of creation ex nihilo, for the conversion of one existent reality into another is still a demonstration of the Creator’s almighty power to “make be”.

But again, Pascasius was unwilling to leave the matter at that. In chapter 15, for example, he modulated his references into a soteriological key, by comparing the eucharist with baptism:

For it is not just the same old thing that is created from something, but the new creature of salvation, the flesh and blood of Christ, just as in baptism humans are made new creatures and the body of Christ.16

This reorientation of perspective first appeared, in fact, toward the end of chapter 1, where Pascasius quoted Hilary of Poitiers’s embolism on John 1:14. The Word became flesh, Hilary remarked, “so that through God the Word made flesh, flesh might grow into God the Word.”17 The convictions which informed Pascasius’s use of this passage might be phrased as follows: – God is known and loved in the history...

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16 Ibid., 15; CCCM 16, p. 92. Cf. Ambrose, On the Sacraments IV.4.16 [see Readings II.2, above p. 60]: “Before consecration [the bread] was not the body of Christ, but after consecration, I tell you, now it is the body of Christ.... You yourself already had existence, but you were an old creature; after you were consecrated [in baptism] you began to be a new creature.”

17 Ibid., 1; CCCM 16, p. 19; Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity (ca. 360) I.11.
of Jesus of Nazareth; the flesh and blood mediate the divinity. Since the Incarnation of the Word was indeed a true communication of the divine life to humanity, the economy which it enacted must endure. As Christ’s flesh and human nature mediated his divinity when he walked the earth, so must “the flesh of the Word” continue to mediate the Word’s divinity even now. That is why the historical flesh of Christ must be truly and actually present in the sacrament: “The flesh of Christ is not rightly received without the divinity, nor is the divinity made available [to us] without the flesh.”¹⁸ Christ’s flesh is present and may be received in the sacrament for the sake of partaking Christ’s divinity; and the divinity of the incarnate Word is received for the sake of partaking the Word’s consubstantial union with the Father.

Pascasius’s use of Hilary also allowed him to speak of the eucharistic mystery as the nourishment which sustains pilgrim-humanity during its transitus, its passover, from this world to the transcendent reality of God’s eternal life. This passover-theme prompted Pascasius to make associations both with eschatological pilgrimage and with the sustaining gift of manna or “bread from heaven”. Specified by these associations, the passover-theme became a major thread in the fabric of the treatise. It signified for Pascasius the greatest change of all. This was, or rather would be, the conversion of mortal human creatures into immortal beings. In Pascasius’s thought, what the later tradition learned to call “metabolic realism” – the changing of one thing’s essence into the essence of something else – referred primarily to the fulfilment which God in Christ has ordained for human beings. Human salvation is the norm which makes it both possible and necessary to speak of “metabolism” in discourse about the eucharistic mystery. If this metabolic motif is followed through, arguments for the substantial conversion of the eucharistic elements do not proceed simply or exclusively from an appeal to the Creator’s omnipotent will. They become arguments derived from soteriology. The bread and wine are changed into the flesh and blood of the incarnate Word because such a conversion fits in with, or suits, the larger purpose of God, a purpose which directly concerns human destiny, the transmutation of mortal human creatures.

¹⁸ Ibid., 17; CCCM 16, p. 98.
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...into immortal beings through union with the divine Word who, for their salvation, himself became human.

Such a perspective on the eucharist as the sacrament of salvation led Pascasius to take one more step. Certain texts had a special resonance for him, and he repeated them over and over again. Three bore the burden and heat of the Pascasian day: the Johannine prologue (John 1.1-18); the “bread of life” discourse (John 6.25-67), especially John 6.51 (“I am the living bread which came down from heaven”); and, perhaps surprisingly, the three prayers of the Roman Canon which immediately follow its institution-narrative, Unde et memores — Supra quæ — Supplices te. The last of these three prayers is, in fact, quoted more often, and expounded far more extensively, than any other liturgical text. Given Pascasius’s affinity for John 6.51, it is perhaps not so surprising, after all, that he should have found the Supplices te so attractive:

We humbly beseech you, almighty God: Bid these offerings be borne by the hands of your angel to your altar on high, in the sight of your divine majesty; so that as many of us as shall have received, from this participation of the altar, the most holy body and blood of your Son, may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace; through Christ our Lord.

Pascasius made use of this prayer at three points.

1. In chapter 8, as he began to discuss the peril of an unworthy approach to the sacrament, Pascasius used the Supplices te to show that “the flesh of Christ is never rightly received except from the Lord’s hand and from the altar on high where Christ stands as high priest of the good things to come, making intercession for all.” Later on in the same chapter the Supplices te informed Pascasius’s extended meditation on the prophet’s vision in Ezekiel 8-9. This allowed him to pick up the angelic motif in the Supplices te itself: the “six men” mentioned in the vision become guardian angels under Christ’s direction. Ezekiel’s vision also allowed Pascasius to expand upon the typology of the two altars: the bronze altar in the forecourt of the temple corresponds to the church’s altars on earth, where the eucharistic mystery is produced; while the golden altar in the Holy of Holies “points to that spiritual altar” in heaven “where the prayers

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19 Ibid., 8; CCCM 16, p. 41.
of all and the private offerings of each are offered by the great high priest, Christ the Lord.”

2. In chapter 12 Pascasius returned to the text of the Supplices te, while discussing whether the moral condition of the human priest can help or hinder the production of Christ’s flesh and blood in the mystery:

   And so the priest says: Bid these gifts be borne by the hands of your angel to your altar on high, before the face of your divine majesty. Why does he request that these things be borne to that altar unless it were understood that these same things have come to be by Christ’s priesthood?... What is his own, therefore, is not received from another, but from the great high priest himself.

Christ’s flesh and blood remain Christ’s alone; they are where he is, and he is now high priest at “the altar on high, before the face of [his] Father”.

3. Finally, in chapter 21, Pascasius appealed to the Supplices te while dealing with the problematic saying, “I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26.29). Pascasius argued that, as the eucharistic cup “signifies the Lord’s passion,” so “it is necessary that each person first die to this world” and then that “he rise again and walk in newness of life.” Thus, “If we wish to receive these mysteries with Christ, let us ascend on high into the upper chamber of life.... For this cup of the new testament is received nowhere else but on high.” Pascasius then proceeded to the typology of the covenant sprinkling (Exodus 24.6-8), and taught that the blood of the covenant “has a mystical aspect and a moral aspect”. The mystical aspect referred to that half of the blood which Moses cast against the altar “for the taking away of sins”. Just so, Pascasius argued, the Church offers in the eucharistic cup “the price of our redemption”. But what about the moral aspect? Pascasius remarked:

   This wine is that moral understanding by which faithful souls are inebriated. It is that which is poured out at the altar

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20 Ibid.: CCCM 16, p. 47.

21 Ibid., 21; CCCM 16, p. 110.

22 Ibid.: CCCM 16, p. 111.
when it is said: Bid these gifts be borne by the hands of your
angel to your altar on high, in the sight of your divine
majesty.\textsuperscript{23}

Pascasius was, in fact, making a “transitive” point, that is, a
point about the fullness of the pascha. It was not enough to
drink the eucharistic cup for the remission of sins only; the
faithful had to do more – even be more. Pascasius said:

Thus it happens that the blood of Christ is again drunk as the
price of redemption for the taking away of our daily sins;
and through this mystery our inner being is more fully
renewed and united to Christ, not only in moral behaviour,
but also (through his sharing in our body and our sharing in
his body) even in unity of nature, so that we may be found
in his form. For this blood is not received in its fullness
unless it both inebriates our minds morally and, for the sake
of our renewal, floods us spiritually from the altar of the
body of Christ, where Christ has desired to be “both our
banquet-guest and our banquet”.\textsuperscript{24}

Having stated that the communion of the cup grants the
faithful “unity of nature” with Christ, Pascasius was now in a
position to resolve the problem of Matthew 26.29:

Since we are [Christ’s] body and he reigns in us as our Head,
we may be rightly called the kingdom of the Father, in which
Christ now drinks new wine – so far as the faithful, in
submission to the Church, worthily receive it. For just as he
suffers and hungers and thirsts and is clothed and is lifted up
in those who are his own, so also does he drink this new
wine in the kingdom of his Father, that is in the Church, so
long as we who are his own eat and drink him worthily.\textsuperscript{25}

Thus, by means of the eucharistic mystery, Christians already
share in the transcendent, eschatological reality to which
Christ referred when he spoke about not drinking wine again

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.; CCCM 16, p. 112.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. The concluding quotation is from Jerome, \textit{Epistula} 120, § 2:
“Nor did Moses give us the true bread, but the Lord Jesus, himself
the banquet-guest and the banquet, himself the feaster and the feast
who is eaten \textit{ipse conuiua et conuiuium, ipse comedens et qui
comeditur}.”

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
until the kingdom of his Father had been fulfilled. So far as Pascasius was concerned, however, the identification of Church and kingdom depended on the ascent of the faithful to “the altar on high,” on their anticipatory passing-over through the mystery to the reality of the kingdom itself. The Church was not the kingdom simply and without remainder; it could be identified with the kingdom only so far as it participated in the passover of him who had already passed over into the fullness of glory.

The use of the *Supplices te* in these contexts suggests that, in Pascasius’s view, the “definitive” Christ is less the historical Christ than the heavenly Christ, the high priest who stands before the Father. Indeed, *sacerdos* and *pontifex*, derived from the Letter to the Hebrews and its typology of Melchizedek, were among Pascasius’s favourite titles for Christ; and perhaps the *Supplices te*, with its allusion to “the altar on high” is the reason why. For this *sublime altare* is the true altar, of which the Church’s altars on earth are, in one sense, mere “types and shadows”. There Christ’s oblation of his own flesh and blood is fulfilled in reality; it is from thence that the flesh and blood are made present at altars here on earth; and it is from thence – and only, in reality, from thence – that the faithful have participation in Christ’s oblation and sacrifice.

Here we may begin to understand why John 6.51 (“I am the living bread which came down from heaven”) was such an important scriptural text for Pascasius: the economy of the Word-made-flesh continues; the living bread even yet comes down, as it once came down, from heaven. We may also begin to appreciate the importance that Pascasius gave to the *Supplices te* itself. He considered it “a request for consecration”.\(^{26}\)

were, again comes down from heaven – to the earthly altars. This is how the faithful are made partakers of his sacrificial reality – that is to say, partakers of the fulfilled oblation whereby the risen flesh and blood of the Word now share the glory of the Father and the Spirit and enact at “the altar on high” the *adimpletio*, the fulfilment, of humanity itself.

Pascasius’s concern, then, was to understand the eucharist in terms of the whole economy of the Word-made-flesh; and he never forgot that this economy did not have its terminus in the historical “enhominization” of the Word. Here, as elsewhere, the Hilarian motif governed Pascasius’s approach: the Word became flesh, “so that through God the Word made flesh, flesh might grow into God the Word.” The descent of the living Bread is ordered to the transformative ascent of pilgrim-humanity: the economy of the Word made flesh has its terminus in the heavenly priesthood of the Word’s risen and glorified humanity. And here again the “strange loop” comes into play. It may be true that the flesh of the Word continues to mediate the divinity of Jesus. But, by the same token, the faithful who eat that flesh receive it “from the fullness of [Christ’s] divinity.” For “unless you first receive from the fullness of his divinity, you cannot attain to even a little of the flesh.”27 The apparent order of salvation is inverted: the flesh of the Word can mediate the divinity of Jesus only if, and so far as, the human communicant is already participating the divine nature. The transcendent reality of Christ, the Word made flesh, forms the context in which, and for which, the human and historical reality of the self-same Lord is given in the eucharistic mystery.

3.
Ratramn

Sometime between late December, 842, and early February, 843, the newly crowned Charles the Bald paid a visit to the abbey of Corbie. He came to pray for his father’s soul, for his consort Irmentrude, and for the peace of his kingdom. Later that same year, or early in 844, Pascasius sent the king a revised edition of his treatise *On the Body and Blood of the*

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27 Ibid., 17; CCCM 16, p. 98.
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Lord. According to the scenario still most widely received among scholars, Charles read Pascasius’s treatise at some point during the next decade. It prompted two questions in his mind, and he wrote to Corbie asking for clarifications. Only, he did not write to Pascasius himself. He wrote instead to another monk of Corbie named Ratramn, who responded with a tract entitled (like his abbot’s) On the Body and Blood of the Lord.

If we know relatively little about Pascasius’s life, we know almost nothing about Ratramn himself; even the date of his entry into Corbie is conjectural. His name did not appear on a list of the monks drawn up in 825; he probably entered Corbie shortly after that date. In any event, by the time Pascasius became abbot in 843, it seems that Ratramn had already emerged as something like the abbey’s theologian-in-residence; he may even have succeeded Pascasius as novice-master.

Given the prominence of Pascasius and Ratramn within their community, it would be unusual if there were not moments of tension between the two, little bursts of irritation which come and go quickly and ought not to be taken too seriously. The question is, did this tension between Pascasius and Ratramn go deeper and become the basis of their relationship itself? This is where Charles the Bald’s two questions to Ratramn become crucial. Ratramn paraphrased them in his tract as follows:

Your majesty asks whether what is eaten in the Church by the mouth of the faithful becomes the body and blood of Christ in a mystery or in actuality [in veritate]. That is to say: whether this mystery contains anything hidden which is accessible to the eyes of faith alone, or whether the form of Christ's body may be outwardly beheld without any veil of mystery, so that the whole of what is effected becomes objectively evident. And [you also ask] whether it is that same body which was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, died and was buried, and which rose again and, ascending into heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father.28

28 Ratramn, De corpore et sanguine Domini, 5; Ratramnus: De CORPORE ET SANGUINE DOMINI. Texte original et Notice bibliographique, ed. J. N. Bakhuisen van den Brink, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Co., 1974) [henceforth BvdB 1974], p. 44.
These questions do indeed have a certain Pascasian ring. But we may wonder: What would have prompted Charles to ask Ratramn, not Pascasius, questions which were so Pascasian in flavour, if it were not Pascasius’s treatise itself? The French scholar Jean-Paul Bouhot has responded by pointing to the only eucharistic controversy that we know to have actually taken place in the ninth-century Frankish church – that between Amalar of Metz and Florus of Lyons. In 843 this controversy would have been a recent and, for Charles the Bald, a sour memory.

Remember that Charles was the youngest son of the emperor Louis the Pious. It was, in fact, the special favour that Louis showed to the family of his second wife (and Charles’s mother) Judith which led disgruntled grandees to plot the coup of 833. In that affair Amalar had remained loyal to Louis, and for his loyalty Louis rewarded him with the right to administer Lyons, the see of the fugitive conspirator Agobard. The cathedral staff at Lyons – among them, the deacon Florus – continued to be Agobard’s men; and Florus, on their behalf, made Amalar pay for being Louis’s interloper by getting him condemned for his theory of corpus Christi triforme. It was said of the Bourbon kings of France, “They have learned nothing, and forgotten nothing.” Charles was not a Bourbon; he wished to learn because he had forgotten nothing of what his father and his father’s loyalists had endured. Thus Bouhot writes:

The recent memory of this political and theological quarrel [the Amalarian controversy] could easily intrigue and disturb the young king Charles and give him the desire to inform himself further about the mystery of the body of Christ. Does this not explain the immediate origin of the question which the king posed to Ratramn..., whether the truth of the one body of Christ, victoriously defended by Florus, excluded the mysteries, the symbolic explanations, of Amalar?29

In Charles’s eyes, the condemnation of Amalar may have besmirched the honour of his hard-pressed father, shaming him by shaming someone under his royal protection; and the

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young king may have sought assurance that his father’s
loyalty to Amalar had not been misplaced. The questions he
put to Ratramn really concerned (a) the validity of Amalar’s
basic method, with its search for hidden meanings, and (b)
the possibility that talk about “the body of Christ” might
have several different levels of meaning all at once. Ratramn,
in his response to Charles, essentially affirmed both the
validity of the quest for hidden meanings in the sacrament
and the polyvalent reference of talk about “the body of
Christ”.

Ratramn organised his treatise in two parts: chapters 6-49
discussed the issues posed in the king’s first question (“whether what is eaten in the Church by the mouth of the
faithful becomes the body and blood of Christ in a mystery
or in actuality”); chapters 50-101 discussed the concern
broached in the king’s second question (“whether it is that
same body which was born of the Virgin Mary,” &c). In
effect, Ratramn was distinguishing the HOW of Christ’s
presence from the WHAT of that presence.

1. What prompted the first question was a recognition that
Charles the Bald’s subjects seemed to hold divergent ideas
about the eucharist:

Certain persons... say of the mystery of Christ’s body and
blood which daily is celebrated in the Church, that nothing
happens symbolically or under a covering, but that that it is
effectuated with a plain manifestation of Christ as he really is.
But others confess that Christ's body and blood are contained
under the figure of a mystery – that one thing appears to the
physical sense, and that faith beholds something else. No
small difference separates these two opinions.30

Ratramn opened his discussion of the first question with a
definition of terms, “so that, having something sure in view,
we shall know what line of reasoning we ought to pursue.”31
He had started out with the distinction between in misterio
(“in a mystery”) and in veritate (“in actuality”). The terms he
actually defined, however, were not veritas and misterium,
but veritas and figura.

30 Ratramn, De corp. et sang. Dom. 2; BvdB 1974, p. 43.
31 Ibid., 2; BvdB 1974, p. 44.
Ratramn defined a *figura* as “something opaque, which manifests its purpose by means of certain veils.” He cited John 6.51 (“I am the living bread which came down from heaven”) and John 15.5 (“I am the true vine, you are the branches”) as examples. These sayings were “figures,” he remarked, because they “express one thing and suggest something else.” So far, a *figura* seems to be a metaphor, that is, a linguistic transaction “whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of something else.” Ratramn, however, soon made it clear that figures also operated outside the realm of language. In the eucharistic context, for instance, wine becomes a figure of Christ’s blood, so that it “exhibits one thing on the surface and contains something else on the inside.” In a figurative transaction, then, it was not simply a matter of one word doing duty for another word; it was also a matter of one thing doing duty for another thing.

By contrast, *veritas* designates “a thing that is manifest, a thing which is not veiled by any shadows of images but made known by the clear, unmistakable, and (to put it more plainly) natural meanings of the words.” Thus, “when Christ is said to have been born of the virgin, to have been crucified, to have died and been buried..., it is not possible for anything else to be understood but what is said.” But again, Ratramn did not think that *veritas* was only a linguistic construct by which the intellect, abstracting from sense-perceptions, named a phenomenon; it was also the thing itself. He seems to have had no notion of the intellect as mediating (by way of abstraction) between what the senses receive and what the rational soul knows: objects perceptible by the physical senses formed images more or less directly in the rational soul, which was “purely passive” in relation to the agency of the senses. Where *veritas* is at stake, therefore, the reality in question does duty for itself; it does not need

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32 Ibid., 7; BvdB 1974, p. 44.
34 Ratramn, *De corp. et sang. Dom.* 9, 10; BvdB 1974, p. 45.
35 Ibid., 8; BvdB 1974, p. 44.
another thing, much less a linguistic device like metaphor, to express what it is.

Ratramn himself did not take time to unpack what these two definitions implied about epistemology and anthropology. Nor did he have to: they served his immediate purpose as they stood; and it quickly became clear – if it had ever been in doubt – that this purpose was polemical.

If, as some people say, nothing here [in the eucharist] is received figuratively, but the whole is beheld as it really is, faith has no work to do here. For [if what these people say is true,] nothing spiritual is effected, but whatever it is, the whole of it is received according to the corporeal order. And since (as the Apostle says) faith is the assurance of invisible realities [Heb. 11.1]..., we will receive here nothing according to faith, since whatever exists here we discern according to the senses of the body. And nothing is sillier than to think that bread is flesh and wine is blood. For that is no mystery, in which nothing secret, nothing concealed, is contained.36

Certain people, then, were saying that the flesh and blood of Christ became so truly present in the eucharist, that one had no need for faith – one had only to open one’s eyes and see them in veritate, “as they really are”. But who were the people saying this? The question, it would seem, can only be answered negatively, by way of exclusion: Pascasius was certainly not one of them. Though he admitted the possibility of eucharistic miracles, where Christ’s flesh or blood was manifested to the senses, yet he regarded such events as exceptional and, generally speaking, as a sign of God’s wrath designed to “tame unbelievers to faith.” This position led Pascasius to make a statement which bears quoting in this context:

If the whole [of Christ as he is] became visible, there would be no mystery or secret in it, no faith, no spiritual power, nothing other than what might be comprehensible to the eyes and to physical taste. But now the divine power works in a very different way, for we walk by faith and not by sight [2 Cor. 5.7]. For faith has the reward of its merits, so that

36 Ibid., 11; BvdB 1974, p. 45.
whatever you savour by means of faith, this is what the mystery inwardly furnishes in its entirety.37

This passage from Pascasius’s treatise makes the very same point as the one which we have been considering from Ratramn’s treatise. If we want further confirmation, we need only compare the last sentence of Pascasius’s argument with Ratramn’s statement, made slightly earlier in his treatise, that “Christ’s body... is not beheld or received or eaten with the senses of the body, but with the perception of the faithful soul.”38 Pascasius and Ratramn, therefore, were in substantial agreement on the “mysterious” nature of Christ’s presence and on the manner of discerning and receiving that presence. For both monks of Corbie, it was by the spiritual quality of faith, not by the physical senses.

At this point, however, Ratramn’s stricter definitions of figura and veritas truly came into play. “How may that be called Christ’s body and blood,” he asked, “in which no alteration [permutatio] is recognised as having taken place?” At first sight, Ratramn appears to deny that any change, of any sort, takes place. He sketched three possible kinds of alteration: “(1) from that-which-is-not into that-which-is, or (2) from that-which-is into that-which-is-not, or (3) from that-which-is into that-which-is.”39 None of these three kinds of alteration, he argued, could be seen to happen when bread and wine were consecrated in the eucharist. He felt, however, that the third kind of alteration (“from that-which-is into that-which-is,” from one reality into another reality) required special attention:

... the sort of alteration which occurs from that-which-is into that-which-is – an alteration observable in things which undergo variation in their attributes, for instance, when something which before was black is turned into something white – is not perceived as taking place in this case. For nothing here is apprehended as being changed in texture or colour or taste. Therefore, if nothing here is altered

37 Pascasius Radbert, De corp. et sang. Dom., 8; CCCM 16, p. 41.


39 Ibid., 12; BvdB 1974, p. 45.
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[according to the visible attributes], it is no different from what it was before.

But, Ratramn immediately added,

But it is different. For the bread is made to be Christ’s body, and the wine is made to be Christ’s blood. Christ himself says so: Take and eat, this is my body. Likewise, speaking about the cup, he says: Take and drink, this is the blood of the new testament which will be shed for you.40

Ratramn, then, did not deny some sort of permutatio, some sort of conversion; he simply denied that the conversion happened after a physical manner. It now appears that the three kinds of alteration which Ratramn rejected all belonged to the physical order. Since it was obvious that the bread and wine underwent no change secundum veritatem, according to their agency with respect to the physical senses, those who maintained a conversion of the elements placed themselves in an untenable position. They could not deny that the physical reality of the bread and wine endured after consecration without, at the same time, denying that any change whatever took place. But this meant that, on their own terms, they would be “compelled to deny that the eucharist is the body and blood of Christ – which,” Ratramn insisted, “is sinful not only to say but even to think.” Hence, they had to admit that “the bread and wine are changed according to some other order than the physical order.”41

This was, in fact, the very thing that Ratramn wished to assert – a permutatio according to an altogether different order, an alteration “accomplished spiritually, not physically.” Since the targets of Ratramn’s polemic could not deny that this was the only kind of permutatio possible, “it is now necessary to say that [the alteration] happens figuratively, because the spiritual body of Christ and his spiritual blood exist under the veil of the physical bread and the physical wine.” Ratramn then added an important qualification, one which revealed a bit more of his epistemology and, indeed, of its foundations:

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40 Ibid., 13; BvdB 1974, p. 46.

41 Ibid., 15; BvdB 1974, p. 46.
Not that the two things – namely, body and spirit – have existence apart from one another. Rather, one and the same thing, from one perspective, endures as the elements of bread and wine, while from the other perspective it is the body and blood of Christ. For according as each may be physically touched, the elements are bodily creatures; but according to power, as they are spiritually made, they are mysteries of the body and blood of Christ.\(^{42}\)

The phrase here translated as “from one... from another perspective” should be taken in a strong sense. That is to say, Ratramn did not regard the difference between the physical and the spiritual perspectives as “all in the believer’s head”. On the contrary, the trait we noted in his definition of *veritas* worked here too: just as words used *secundum veritatem* corresponded directly to the things so designated, without the intervention of abstract concepts, so each “perspective” corresponded to its proper *veritas*, physical or spiritual. In either case, something was “really there” to be perceived.

It now becomes a bit clearer that Ratramn considered the spiritual order to be a truly distinct order of *veritas*. It acted on the human soul much as physical phenomena acted on the human senses. Moreover, just as physical realities impressed themselves on the senses, so this spiritual order impressed itself on the soul according to the human mode of perception proper to it, namely, by faith. There was, of course, one major difference: the spiritual *veritas* presented itself to faith-perception *sub figura*, “under a figure,” not directly. Nevertheless, it is hard to see what agency the *figura* had as such. It only hid the spiritual *veritas*, it did not communicate it; the communication took place only when faith-perception, independently of sense-perception, recognised that something else, “something far different,” was to be known on the inside.

Such a teaching certainly poses some important problems, but so far it is clear that Ratramn did not deny the Real Presence. On the contrary, he believed it criminal even to think that the eucharist was not the body and blood of Christ. Moreover, if he criticised a metabolic theory akin to that of Ambrose and Pascasius (“from that-which-is into that-

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 16; BvdB 1974, p. 47.
which-is”), it was for the sake of establishing what he considered a truer (or at least more defensible) form of metabolism, namely, a conversion that was wholly spiritual.

But what about the other point that Charles posed for Ratramn in the first question, namely, the relation between the transcendent reality (veritas) and its physical representation or foreshadowing (figura)? Here the teachings of Pascasius and Ratramn are not at all so sharply opposed as might be imagined. Pascasius certainly argued that the historical body of Christ was present “in reality” and not just “in figure” alone. But Pascasius maintained that the reality was concealed under the figure – and that the economy of salvation itself made the concealment necessary. This was Ratramn’s contention, too. Indeed, the more closely one compares the language of Ratramn’s opening questions with the language of Pascasius’s treatise, the less likely does it seem that Ratramn was addressing the doctrine which Pascasius actually set forth. We may still think so, but we should have to argue either that Ratramn deliberately misrepresented his abbot’s teaching or that he completely misunderstood it.

Having defined his terms and stated his basic response to Charles the Bald’s first question, Ratramn devoted the next twenty-two chapters (17-49) of his treatise to securing his argument by appeal to a variety of authoritative “proofs” – namely, the baptismal sacrament, Paul, Augustine and Isidore. In the process, he shed light on the consequences of his position. The most important of these consequences were christological and therefore soteriological in nature. While commenting on a short quotation from Isidore of Seville, Ratramn remarked:

> Bread and wine are ... compared to the body and blood of the Lord because, just as the substance of this visible bread and wine nourishes and inebriates the outward man, so the Word of God, who is the living bread by virtue of [our] participation in his life, restores the minds of the faithful.43

This statement is in chapter 40; Ratramn repeated it, word for word, in chapter 43. He offered a variation upon it in the very next chapter: “The Word of God, which is the invisible bread invisibly existing in this sacrament, invisibly nourishes

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43 Ibid., 40; BvdB 1974, p. 54 (underscoring added).
[the faithful] by quickening their minds through [their] participation in his life.” Finally, in his conclusion to the whole first section of his treatise, he gave another variant of the same thought. The mouths of the faithful receive “figures [of Christ’s body and blood] according to the visible form,” he remarked. “But in regard to the invisible substance – that is, in regard to the power of the divine Word – they are truly the body and blood of Christ.”  

Ratramn was a theologian, not a philosopher – and a “theologian” in the strict sense, a confessor of the divinity of the Word. In a eucharistic context, however, such a stance looks to be curioser and curioser. “The Word of God,” without any further qualification, names only the divinity of the Word. It does not name the full personhood of Jesus Christ, who was from the moment of his conception, is now, and ever shall be the Word made flesh. And yet Ratramn asserted – repeatedly asserted – that “the Word of God” was the spiritual “something else,” the wholly spiritual “living bread,” which inwardly nourishes the faithful. It is true that Ratramn identified “the invisible substance” of the eucharist, “the power of the divine Word,” as “the body and blood of Christ”; and it is possible to interpret this as meaning the body and blood possessed by the Word-made-flesh. But Ratramn’s bipartite anthropology, taken in conjunction with his bipartite epistemology, will not support such an interpretation, even if he himself had intended it.

We may remember that Ratramn had no notion of intellectus (understanding) as a conceptualizing medium between sense-perceptions and what he called “the mind”. Such an absence now comes to have christological consequences. Augustine and Pascasius had considered revealed anthropology to be tripartite, on the model of the Incarnation. Christ, the Word made flesh, possessed a human body in true ordination to a fully human soul, which was, in its turn, in true and direct ordination to the spiritual nature of his divinity. “Spirit” and “spiritual” designated the divine nature, or participation in the divine nature, as distinct from the (created) rational soul. Indeed, even if we managed to subject our bodies totally to our souls, our humanity would still remain imperfect until it partook of the spiritual life of

44 Ibid., 44, 49; BvdB 1974, pp. 54, 55 (underscoring added).
the Godhead. In other words, the human composite of body and soul required translation into a third, a transcendent mode “according to the spirit,” in order to possess the truth and necessary fulfilment of its own created being. Now, Ratramn nowhere mentioned the human soul of Christ, and he tended to conflate “soul” and “spirit”. The result – whether he intended it or not – was that nothing mediated between the flesh assumed by the Word and the wholly spiritual nature of the Word. He left himself with only two “perspectives” on Christ – the physical veritas of the body born of the Virgin and the spiritual veritas of God the eternal Word. Hence, he had to say that the inward reality of the eucharist – the power which nourished the soul just as the outward reality of the bread and wine nourished the body – was the divine Word alone. In other words, he leaped from the veritas of Christ’s flesh immediately to the spiritual reality of Christ’s divinity.

Ratramn never fully allayed these suspicions about the christological consequences of his dualistic assumptions. Indeed, towards the very close of his treatise, he made a point which, if it did not confirm the suspicions once for all, certainly deepened them. Ratramn there spoke of the Saviour’s own risen and glorified body in which “no figure or symbolic representation is known,” the vision of which, in its unveiled veritas, is the desire of believers:

And when it has been seen, our desire will be satisfied. Since he and the Father are one, our desire will be satisfied not according to the body which the Saviour has, but according to the fullness of the divinity which dwells in the human Christ.\textsuperscript{45}

It appears that the risen body of the Word-made-flesh will have no real function in mediating the participation of that divine glory which is to be the fulfilment of all salvation. Catholic theology, however, had always insisted that the Word assumed a human body because it was the most appropriate means for conveying salvation to human creatures; and we may wonder whether this economy can cease even in the “fulfilled reality” of heaven without Christ ceasing, in some very fundamental sense, to be himself.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 97; BvdB 1974, p. 68.
Augustine, arguing against Apollinarian christology, once admonished his hearers to “receive the whole Christ – Word, rational soul, and flesh.” Ratramn could not bring himself to affirm these dynamics in an unambiguous fashion. Indeed, he does not seem even to have noticed how important they were for a fully Catholic understanding of the salvific economy. To this extent we may wonder whether the field of Ratramn’s eucharistic theology was not sown, perhaps inadvertently, with the tares of Apollinarianism.

2. When he broached Charles the Bald’s first question in chapter 2, and as he discussed it throughout the first section of his treatise, Ratramn invoked the polemical presence of “certain people who say....” Those “certain people” disappeared when, at chapter 50, he began his inquiry into “the point raised in the second question”:

[namely.] whether the body which was born of the Virgin Mary and suffered and died and was buried, and which sits at the right hand of the Father, is that which is daily received in the Church by the mouth of the faithful, through the mystery of the sacraments. 

How did this second question arise for Charles the Bald and Ratramn? Where did the doctrine which occasioned it come from? It certainly sounds like Pascasius; and we know of no one else among Ratramn’s contemporaries who made such a point of identifying sacrament with the veritas. In short, all the telltale footprints lead back to Pascasius’s cell, but Ratramn will not say that he found Pascasius himself sitting there with the incriminating quill in his hand.

There is another curious piece to the puzzle, and that is Ratramn’s understanding of the issue which this second question posed. For Pascasius, as for Ambrose, the order of identification had been of sacramenta with the veritas, so that the signifying things (bread and wine) were subsumed in the greater thing signified (the flesh and blood of Christ). Ratramn was aware of this order, but insisted on pulling it

46 Augustine, Discourses on the Gospel of John 23, § 6 [CCL 36, p. 236].
inside out. Having quoted Ambrose’s statement that “Christ is in that sacrament,” Ratramn commented:

He does not say that the bread or the wine is Christ. If he had said that, he would have been preaching that Christ is corruptible and subject to mortality – which God forbid! For whatever is physically discerned or tasted in that food is liable to corruptibility.48

Whereas Ambrose (and Pascasius) understood an identification of sacramenta with veritas to mean that the lesser physical reality of the sign must be taken up into the greater “spiritual” reality which it signified, Ratramn understood such an identification to mean that the greater “spiritual” reality must be reduced to the lesser physical reality which signified it. Given his narrow definitions and his strictly bipartite epistemology, Ratramn probably could not help but reverse the order of identification. Nevertheless, such a reversal still involved at best a misunderstanding, at worst a down-right misrepresentation, of Ambrose’s (and Pascasius’s) intentions.

Ratramn set about refuting his version of the issue in a characteristically Carolingian way. He did not presume to argue in his own voice. Instead, he sought to prove that Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, the Roman rite, and Fulgentius all rejected what he himself wanted to reject – namely, the reduction of the spiritual veritas of Christ to the physical veritas of the bread and wine. But of course those authorities rejected such a notion, and Ratramn’s appeal them on this issue was as easy a “proof” as dogmatic theology affords. At the same time, though, the authorities cited by Ratramn bore the implications of the Incarnation in mind. The Word who is God and therefore “is spirit” became flesh – but was not thereby reduced to flesh or “mere” human nature. On the contrary, these same teachers of the faith maintained that the union of the divine Word with human nature happened for the sake of “divinising” humanity, not for the sake of humanising divinity. The Word humbled himself to share our humanity in order that “mere” creatures might “become

48 Ibid., 59; BvdB 1974, p. 58. Ratramn was quoting Ambrose, On the Mysteries 9, 58: “Christ is in that sacrament because it is the body of Christ. Therefore it is not physical (corporalis) but spiritual food.”
participants of the divine nature.” 49 And the economy of the Incarnation provided the model for conceiving the eucharistic presence of Christ: the real flesh and blood of Jesus were present, not by reduction, but by saving power. This was precisely the point that Ratramn missed – that the eucharistic mystery is not a self-contained phenomenon, to be analysed as such, but a manifestation of the economy of the Incarnation, to be pondered in continuity with the person of Jesus Christ, who was as truly and fully human as he was truly and fully divine.

4. Ego Berengarius

Pascasius, as abbot of Corbie, attended the council of Paris in 847; two years later he attended the council which condemned another Frankish churchman named Godescalc (Gottschalk) for teaching double predestination. Then, sometime between 849 and 853, Pascasius resigned the abbacy. It seems that a group of younger monks disrupted the community; the ring-leader, Ivo, fled Corbie rather than do the penance which Abbot Pascasius required of him. Worse, he went to Charles the Bald with his case. A well-connected friend intervened on Pascasius’s behalf and succeeded in obtaining the king’s support for his handling of the affair. Ivo returned to Corbie and did his appointed penance. But the affair seems to have shaken Pascasius badly; for he decided to resign the abbacy in favour of a younger man. He retired to the abbey of Saint Riquier. We do not know how long he stayed there. He eventually returned to Corbie as a simple monk.

During these years Pascasius at last found the time and opportunity to fulfil his avocation as a writer. He produced his great Commentary on Matthew, and he composed a cluster of tracts and homilies on the Blessed Virgin Mary which (attributed to various ancient Fathers) were to enjoy considerable popularity throughout the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, Pascasius’s last years were troubled, if not embittered, by criticism of his eucharistic doctrine. While at

49 2 Peter 1.4.
Saint Riquier he received a letter from Fredugard, a monk of Corbie who appears to have served his noviciate under Pascasius’s direction. Talk about Pascasius’s doctrine around Corbie, and some independent reading, had caused Fredugard new scruples about his eucharistic faith. In his response, the *Epistola ad Fredugardem*, Pascasius did not mention Ratramn by name, but his allusions to what “certain persons” were teaching about the eucharist do indeed sound very Ratramnian. Then there is the evidence of the tract *De partu virginis* (“On the child-bearing of the Virgin”), which Pascasius probably wrote after his return to Corbie. This tract has also been taken to be directed against Ratramn, for Pascasius sought to defend a teaching which Ratramn denied, that the Blessed Virgin Mary retained all the physical properties of virginity even after Jesus came out of her womb. In the course of his argument, Pascasius referred to “the temerity of certain brothers” who had criticised his treatise *On the Body and Blood of the Lord.*50 These remarks, made in a treatise written to combat views on a mariological issue which were similar to Ratramn’s, might suggest that Pascasius included Ratramn among the “certain brothers” who made no effort to conceal their dislike, perhaps even their contempt, for Pascasius’s teaching on the eucharist. Ratramn may even have been at the centre of this faction. It is possible that this group’s disdain for Pascasius was linked to his association with Adalhard and Wala – and so with a time which many at Corbie would have preferred to forget. Political loyalty to the emperor Louis had played a large part in the troubles of Amalar of Metz; and Pascasius’s loyalty to Louis’s opponents may have played as large a role in the “temerity” with which “certain brothers” treated his own eucharistic doctrine. In any case, Pascasius seems to have ended his days feeling somewhat alienated in his own community.

His eleventh-century biographer tells us that, “old and full of days,” Pascasius “fell asleep in the Lord” on April 26, feast-

day of the St Riquier “whom he loved greatly.” The biographer unfortunately neglected to specify the year. It was probably between 856 and 861.

Two centuries later, on 12 July 1058, Pascasius’s remains were solemnly translated from one of the abbey’s lesser churches, that of St. John the Evangelist, to its principal church, that of St. Peter and St. Paul. A tablet affixed to the tomb made special mention of his contribution to the orthodox doctrine of the eucharist: “This is Radbert Pascasius, disciple and successor of St. Adalhard. He published an admirable treatise on the sacraments of the Lord’s body.” This “canonisation” of Pascasius took place at the very height of the eucharistic controversy surrounding Berengar of Tours. It may have been Corbie’s little way of showing that it was on the side of the angels, not Berengar’s. Beyond that, Pascasius’s remains rested quietly in their new tomb, manifesting none of those miraculous powers which would have proved that he was a special friend of God in heaven. Pascasius himself never seems to have been the object of a real and continuing cultus, either before or after 1058.

By that point Ratramn had been almost totally forgotten, and the few writings of his which survived had entered a kind of limbo. This was especially the case with his treatise On the Body and Blood of the Lord. Copies continued to be made, but spottily and under false attribution to his more enduringly famous contemporary, Duns Scotus Erigena. It was with that attribution that Ratramn’s treatise resurfaced during the Berengarian controversy in the eleventh century. It did not resurface again until the Reformation, five centuries later; it was first printed in 1532 and almost immediately

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52 The abbey of Corbie was forcibly dissolved at the time of the French Revolution, and its buildings were looted, then demolished. The community was never re-established; the abbey-church of St Peter and St Paul became the parish-church of Corbie. Pascasius’s tomb was demolished, and his remains scattered, when the abbey was spoliated in 1792.
became required reading for Protestant divines – for which reason the Vatican labelled it “unsound,” and eventually (in 1864) included it on the Index of Prohibited Books. A debate about the treatise’s orthodoxy has bubbled and simmered in Roman Catholic circles ever since.

As for Ratramn himself, his later history is just as conjectural as his earlier history. Towards the end of his life he was invited to join other Frankish churchmen in answering the Byzantine exceptions to distinctively Latin teachings; the result was a work in four books, *Against the Contentions of the Greeks*, by far the longest and most sustained of all Ratramn’s writings. He may have written it around 870, when he must have been past sixty. In any event, there is nothing to suggest that Ratramn was active after that year.

During the next two centuries the peoples of western Europe breathed an atmosphere of dread which had less to do with the approaching millennium than with the more immediate fear of Viking raiders from Scandinavia, Muslim armies and fleets from Spain and North Africa, and the gradual disintegration of the Frankish empire from within. Controversy about the eucharist was once again a luxury that western Christendom could not afford. It had time and energy only for maintaining its consensus; and judging by the number of copies of Pascasius’s treatise made between 900 and 1100, that consensus was “Pascasian”.

By the year 1000, the prevailing dread had begun to dissipate; the Viking and Muslim threats had all but passed; the feudal system took hold; and cities resumed much of the economic and cultural importance they had held in the ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome. With the revival of urban life came the building of the first great “Gothic” cathedrals; and with the cathedrals and the civic pride which produced them came a sea-change in the theological life of the western Church. Hitherto, theology had been done almost exclusively by monks; now, in the eleventh century, it moved out of the monasteries, to be done as well in schools attached to the cathedrals of Paris, Laôn, Chartres, Tours, and elsewhere. Cathedral chapters (the community of clergy who

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Ratramn was so unknown to divines of the sixteenth century that his treatise was attributed to “Bertram”.
staffed these churches) vied with one another in attracting teachers whose fame would heighten the prestige of the cathedral itself and of the city or town around it. These schools soon took on a life – and a curriculum – of their own. Though still based in religious communities and beholden to the Church, they were less bound by the exigencies of monastic life and spirituality. These cathedral schools not only taught the traditional “seven liberal arts”\(^{54}\) Their teachers they also began to explore these arts through the prism of Aristotle whose writings, long lost to the West for the better part of a thousand years, were being recovered piecemeal by way of contacts with Muslim Spain. The result was a new sophistication in the analysis of concepts, and dialectics, channelled through the traditional “art” of grammar, became the cutting edge of philosophical and theological discourse.

One of the biggest stars in the firmament of the cathedral schools was a grammarian named Berengar. Brilliant in mind, charismatic in personality, and arrogant as all get-out, Berengar made the cathedral school of Tours “the place to be” in the middle decades of the eleventh century. The Pascasian doctrine of the eucharist may have given him the grammatical-dialectical equivalent of the heartburn; but if so, he did not let on – or may not have been able to pinpoint just what bothered him – until sometime in the 1040s. He came across Ratramn’s treatise (attributed to Erigena) and was energised. Always better at attacking another’s position than at constructing and defending a positive position of his own, Berengar poured a steady stream of vitriol, scorn, and ridicule on what he saw as the dialectical shortcomings, logical mistakes, and outright blasphemies of prevailing eucharistic consensus.

Berengar argued that a sign (*sacramentum*) could not be identical with the reality it signified: consecration may add a new significance to the bread and wine, in the sense that the faithful now saw them as referring to Christ’s spiritual presence, but it could not change their nature – they were still bread and wine after consecration as much as before. Underlying this position was an assumption that the modern world has tended to share but went against the grain of early

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\(^{54}\) These were: arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy, and grammar, dialectic (logic), and rhetoric. The first four subjects constituted the *quadrivium*, the last three constituted the *trivium*.
mediæval thinking. Both Ratramn and Pascasius had taken it for granted that physical realities and spiritual realities were distinct but inseparable aspects of an essentially unified reality. By contrast, Berengar saw physical things and spiritual things as dichotomies, as opposite kinds of realities. To Berengar’s way of thinking, physical realities were sensible, things you could touch and see and smell and taste, things that had bulk and took up space. Spiritual things were quite different. They were real and certainly existed, but they were not sensible, and the two realms remained distinct and unconfused.55

Hence, to assert that Christ was really – i.e. physically – present in the consecrated bread and wine was, in Berengar’s view, a rank category mistake. Such a doctrine, Berengar thought, could only mean that portiuncula Christi – bit-sized bits of Christ’s flesh – accumulated day by day on the altars of Christendom, until there was a mountain of Christ’s body on each altar. Worse, the doctrine entailed blasphemy, for if it were true (Berengar maintained) communion would be cannibalism, and the flesh of Christ would suffer the gross desecrations of digestion and discharge in feces and urine, of rot and nibbling mice.

Precisely because Pascasian doctrine was the consensus of the western Church, Berengar’s attacks on it were (to say the least) not appreciated, and in some circles caused near-apoplectic outrage. Pope Leo IX censured Berengar in 1050 and, for good measure, had a copy of Ratramn’s treatise burned as well; and later the same year Leo presided over a synod at Vercelli which again condemned Berengar’s teachings. Four years later, at a synod in Tours itself, the papal legate accepted a compromise statement drafted by Berengar; but this was subsequently disavowed at Rome. Berengar was summoned to Rome in 1059 and there compelled to sign a creed drawn up by Humbert, cardinal of Silva Candida. This creed is known as the Ego Berengarius.

I, Berengar..., acknowledging the true catholic and apostolic faith, anathematize every heresy, especially that heresy for

which I have hitherto been infamous. This heresy attempts to affirm that the bread and wine which are placed on the altar are, after consecration, merely a sacrament and not the real body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that these [i.e. the real body and blood of Christ] cannot be held or broken by the hands of the priests or crushed by the teeth of the faithful with the senses but only by way of sacrament. And I assent to the holy Roman see, and with mouth and heart I profess concerning the sacrament of the Lord’s table..., that the bread and wine which are placed on the altar are, after consecration, not only a sacrament but also the real body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that with the senses – not simply by way of sacrament but in reality – these are held and broken by the hands of the priests and are crushed by the teeth of the faithful.  

This creed has been called “one of the most unfortunate and theologically inept statements ever put forward by the church on the subject of the eucharist.” Humbert seems to have thought that, since Berengar had been declared a heretic, all the Church had to do was pull his teaching inside-out and affirm what he denied. This kind of theological incompetence was only to be expected from a cardinal who, five years


57 Macy, The Banquet’s Wisdom, p. 77. It should be noted, however, that the Roman Catholic Church has never retracted the Ego Berengarius, and it remains an official statement of the Roman Communion.
earlier, had excommunicated the entire Byzantine Church because it used leavened instead of unleavened bread in the eucharist.\textsuperscript{58}

The \textit{Ego Berengarius} of 1059 looked like a decisive victory for Pascasian eucharistology; but responsible divines of impeccable Pascasian credentials were embarrassed, even appalled, by the crass materialism of the statement. Berengar, on his return to Tours, felt justified in repudiating the creed because, by the Church’s own law, vows taken under coercion were null and void. He suffered no sanctions for that; but Berengar was not one to make like Br’er Rabbit and lay low. He immediately began to reassert his former teaching, his challenges to Pascasian divines becoming ever more vituperative. It was at this time that Lanfranc, prior of the abbey of Bec in Normandy, entered the lists against him.\textsuperscript{59} Lanfranc was one of the few monastic theologians versed in the grammar of logical analysis and thus equipped to deal with Berengar on his own terms. In particular, Lanfranc saw a \textit{via media}, a “middle way,” between Humbert’s gross materialism and Berengar’s rigid dichotomy of physical and spiritual, a way which did an end-run around the problematic physicality of the \textit{Ego Berengarius} even as it affirmed Christ’s real presence. Lanfranc found this \textit{via media} in the category of \textit{essentia}, “essence”. “Essence” was the underlying, invisible reality of a thing which makes it \textit{be} this and not that. The essence may be further specified by certain variable attributes, such as height, weight, colouring, and so forth, which Aristotle designated as “accidents”; but the

\textsuperscript{58} This was the dénouement of the so-called Azymite controversy. The western Church used unleavened bread (\textit{το αζυμα}, \textit{to azyma}), while the Byzantine Church used leavened bread. This diversity of usage probably extended back to the earliest days of the Church, but Latin Christians came to regard unleavened bread as the only kind sanctioned by Christ and the “true” tradition. This led to some fancy footwork on both sides, with the Byzantines arguing that the leavening (yeast) represented the Holy Spirit and thus made the bread a symbol of the Trinity as a whole. Humbert replied that the sacrament was not a symbol of anything but \textit{was} the real body and blood of Christ. Some scholars have argued that when he drafted the \textit{Ego Berengarius}, Humbert was seeking to slam the Byzantines while humiliating Berengar.

\textsuperscript{59} In 1070 Lanfranc became the first Norman archbishop of Canterbury under William the Conqueror.
“essence” of a thing is prior to its “accidents,” and sustains them. With this conceptual distinction, Lanfranc could argue that it was the essence of Christ’s flesh that became present in the sacrament; and since essence is invisible, it is also, by definition, spiritual. Thus did Lanfranc turn Berengar’s flank: Christ’s flesh was really present in its essence – which made it, precisely as flesh, a spiritual presence.

Berengar, needless to say, thought there was something fishy about this solution; but though he pinpointed and exploited a number of dialectical faux pas in Lanfranc’s argument, he was not able to damage, much less overturn, Lanfranc’s basic insight. The controversy continued for another decade and beyond, with Berengar recycling his polemics while his opponents developed Lanfranc’s breakthrough. The end came in 1079, when Berengar was summoned before another synod at Rome.60 There he was handed another creed to read out before the assembly. It also began Ego Berengarius:

I, Berengar, believe with my heart and confess with my mouth that the bread and wine which are set on the altar are, by the mystery of the holy prayer and the words of our Redeemer, substantially [that is, in Lanfranc’s terms, essentially] converted into the real and true and life-giving flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; and are, after the consecration, the real body of Christ which was born of the Virgin, and which was offered and hung on the cross for the salvation of the world, and which sits on the right hand of the Father, and the real blood of Christ which was shed from his side – not only by way of sign and sacramental power but also in particularity of nature and reality of substance [essence].61

60 Pope Gregory VII presided over this synod. Gregory, under his baptismal name Hildebrand, had been the cardinal legate who accepted Berengar’s compromise creed at Tours in 1054.

61 “Ego Berengarius corde credo et ore confiteor, panem et vinum quæ ponuntur in altari, per mysterium sacræ orationis et verba nostri Redemptoris, substantialiter converti in veram at proprium ac vivificaticarem carnem et sanguinem Iesu Christi Domini nostri; et post consecrationem esse verum Christi corpus quod natum est de virgine et quod pro salute mundi oblatum in cruce peependit et quod sedet ad dexteram Patris, et verum sanguinem Christi qui de latere eius effusus est – non tantum per signum et virtutem sacramenti sed in proprietate et veritate substantiæ.” Denzinger-Schönmetzer,
Berengar tried to negotiate some alterations in this statement, mainly in the way of providing himself with loopholes; but Gregory VII and his advisers held fast. Berengar signed the creed. It was a victory for the Pascasian consensus – but also, and more particularly, for Lanfranc. The *Ego Berengarius II* enshrined his insight by insisting that the bread and wine were “substantially converted” and that the flesh and blood of Christ were present “in nature and substance”.

Where Lanfranc had used the term *essence*, the western Church had already decided that the more “correct” Aristotelian term for the defining spiritual reality of a thing should be *substance*, that is, that which lies under any given thing and defines it as *that* sort of thing and *not* some other sort of thing.

Berengar lived another nine years, reconciled with the Church but enduringly bitter about his defeat. Since the Reformation, and more especially since the Enlightenment, he has been cast as a Son of Light fighting the dark forces of ecclesiastical obscurantism. This is twaddle. The authorities may have been maladroit, harsh, and, especially in the case of Humbert of Silva Candida, inept. But Berengar himself was hardly an innocent victim. He did not seek an open discussion about the eucharistic faith of the Church; he wanted to prove that he alone had the right doctrine and everybody else had the wrong one. Who needs heroes like that?

Nevertheless, by one of those piquant little ironies of history, Berengar did have a kind of revenge on the Catholic tradition. It may have refused to think his thoughts, but it talked his talk. For some of Berengar’s basic terminology became standard vocabulary in the Catholic tradition’s discourse about sacraments. It was Berengar who defined a sacrament as *invisibilis gratiæ visibilis forma* ("the visible form of an invisible grace") – a definition which would eventually find its way not only into mediæval textbooks but also into the Catechism of the Anglican Prayer Book.62 Moreover, his

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62 "Catechist. What do you mean by this word Sacrament? Answer. I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.”

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framing of the distinction between *sacramentum* and *res* (“thing,” “reality”) would be taken over and developed by the very consensus which had rejected his teaching.

In the aftermath of the Berengarian controversy divines set to work sifting, cataloguing, and refining the developments brought about by the controversy itself, thereby developing the consensus further. The twelfth century alone saw three major advances in the discussion of the eucharistic mystery: –

1. Hugh of St Victor (d. 1142) produced a grand systematic treatise called *De sacramentis christianae fidei* (“On the Sacraments [or Signs] of the Christian Faith”). This work was not only about the rites we call “sacraments” but also about the whole economy of salvation as mediated through signs and wonders. In this same treatise Hugh also exploited Berengar’s terminological distinctions and established a formula which became classical: *sacramentum tantum* – *sacramentum et res* – *res tanta*, “the sign in itself” – “the sign and the reality it contains” – “the reality in itself”. In relation to the eucharist, this formula referred not only to the structure of the sacrament but also to its dynamics. The communicant was supposed to move from the “outward and visible sign” (*sacramentum tantum*) to “the inward and spiritual grace” of Christ’s real presence (*sacramentum et res*), and from the *sacramentum et res* to the mystical body of Christ in glory (*res tanta*).

2. The twelfth century also saw the publication of the most enduring textbook of all western history, the *libri quatuor Sententiarum* (“Four Books of Sentences”) by Peter the Lombard, an Italian teacher who spent most of his career in Paris. In this work, Lombard schematised the topics of theological discourse which had become standard “talking points” in the schools, and under each topic laid out relevant *sententiae* (“authoritative statements”) drawn from conciliar decrees and the writings of ancient teachers of the faith. *The Sentences* became the standard theological manual early in the next century, and in most study-houses and universities of Europe every student of *sacra doctrina* had to produce a

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*The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments ... according to the Use of the Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1962), p. 550. This definition of the word “sacrament” was added to the Prayer Book Catechism in 1604.
detailed commentary on Lombard in order to certified as a *magister sententiarum* ("master of the Sentences") and accredited as a teacher of theology. The fourth book of *The Sentences* dealt with the sacraments; its handling of the eucharist in particular was dominated by the agenda of the Berengarian controversy, though the *sententiae* cited came largely from ancient writers like Ambrose and Augustine. In other words, through Peter Lombard’s textbook the western Church talked the patristic talk while continuing to walk the anti-Berengarian walk.

3. Finally, the twelfth century saw the coining of the term *transsubstantio*, “transsubstantiation”. So far as can be determined, it first appeared in a treatise by Rolando Bandinelli (later Pope Alexander III) published ca. 1140. Bandinelli used this term as a shorthand for the change by which (as the *Ego Berengarius* of 1079 had put it) “the bread and wine are … substantially converted into the real and true and life-giving flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

Later in the twelfth century, and on into the thirteenth, the western Church was forced to deal with a new threat, the so-called Cathar movement. The Cathars, centred in southern France and northern Italy, were basically a recrudescence of ancient Gnosticism, dualists who split reality between matter and spirit, with matter as the principle of thorough-going evil and spirit as the sole principle of good. In such a world-view, the sacraments in general and the eucharistic sacrament in particular appeared to reinforce what was wrong with the Church, simply because they mediated spirit through matter. The Cathars adopted Berengar as a fellow-traveller, which only made them – and Berengar – worse in the eyes of the ecclesiastical authorities.

One response to the Cathar movement, semi-official in nature, came from a Spanish clergyman named Dominic Guzman, who launched a grassroots preaching campaign in areas where the Cathars dominated; out of this campaign emerged the *Ordo Prædicatorum*, the Order of Preachers, commonly known as the Dominicans.

Dominic’s response was to use persuasion; the official response was a resort to force of arms. In 1208 Pope Innocent III proclaimed a crusade against the Cathars in the

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63 The term “Cathar” comes from the Greek word for “perfect”.

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region of southern France then known as the Albi, now as Languedoc. The Catholic army made the Albigensian crusade (1209-1218) an act of ethnic cleansing as much as a war of religion, and committed atrocities and crimes against humanity on system. It was not the Church’s best moment.

Another official response to Catharism appeared in the decree of the fourth Lateran Council of 1215. The first chapter of this document included the following definition against the Albigensian Cathars:

There is one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which no one at all is saved, and in which Jesus Christ himself is both priest and sacrifice, whose body and blood are really contained in the sacrament of the altar under the visible forms of bread and wine – the bread being transsubstantiated into the body, and the wine into the blood, by the divine power; so that, for the sake of fulfilling the mystery of unity, we ourselves may receive from what is his, that which he himself has received from what is ours.

This decree did not define what “transubstantiation” meant, much less fix any one explanation of the term as a doctrine necessary for salvation. It employed the term (in the verb’s participial form) simply to affirm the reality of Christ’s presence in the eucharistic sacrament. For another generation, a variety of theologians floated a variety of ex-planations; and so long as they affirmed the real presence of the substance of Christ’s flesh and blood, nobody seriously questioned the orthodoxy of any. By the mid-thirteenth century, however, this had changed; “transubstantiation” had

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64 The Lateran Palace, in the city of Rome, was the official residence of the Pope from the fourth century until 1309. The Roman Catholic Church regards Lateran Council IV as a full-fledged ecumenical council, whose doctrinal decrees are binding on all the faithful. Neither the Orthodox Communion nor the Anglican Communion accepts Lateran IV as anything more than a local synod.

65 “Una vero est fidelium ecclesia, extra quam nullus omnino salvetur, in qua idem ipse sacerdos et sacrificium Iesus Christus, cuius corpus et sanguis in sacramento altaris sub speciebus panis et vini veraciter continentur – transsubstantiatis pane in corpus, et vino in sanguinem, potestate divina; ut ad perficiendum mysterium unitatis accipiamus ipsi de suo, quod accepit ipse de nostro.” Denzinger-Schönmetzer, Enchiridion, No. 802, p. 260.
become the only permissible term for what happened when the eucharistic sacrament was consecrated. And the search was on to define and explain just what the term meant.

Enter Thomas Aquinas.

5. Aquinas

Thomas of Aquino (ca. 1223-1274) has become the very model of a medieval scholastic theologian. A Dominican friar and priest, he spent most of his vocation teaching *sacra pagina* ("the sacred page," i.e. biblical studies), *sacra doctrina* (Church doctrine), or philosophy in the universities and Dominican study-houses at Paris, Rome and Viterbo, and Naples. His output reflected the range of his academic commitments – commentaries on the Gospels, the Pauline Letters, and several other books of the Bible; commentaries on the philosophical works of Aristotle; and commentaries on several standard theological textbooks of his day. But Thomas is chiefly known for the *Summa theologiae* ("Summary of Theology"). He designed this work to be an introduction to theology for first-year divinity students. It stands as one of the very few absolute masterpieces of systematic theology in the Christian tradition – the sort of work that absorbs the intellectual energies of mature theologians, let alone beginners.

The *Summa theologiae* consists of three parts. (The Second Part is divided into two distinct sections, so there are in fact four parts to the whole.) The First Part deals with the mystery of God and concludes with extended treatment of creation and grace. The Second Part deals with the human response to (and responsibilities under) the action of divine grace – in short, with moral theology. The Third Part deals with the mystery of Christ and, as a consequence, the sacraments of Christ. It is Questions 73-83 of this Third Part that constitute the *Summa’s* treatise *de sacramento eucharistiae* ("on the sacrament [or mystery] of the eucharist"). Thomas went on to complete the treatise on the sacrament of penance (QQ. 84-90), but there he abandoned all further work. On 6 December 1273 something happened to Thomas while celebrating Mass, something so extreme that he broke his iron-clad routine that day and from then on ceased writing.
altogether and basically “mailed in” (as the modern phrase goes) his classroom appearances. His confessor, recognising that something had overwhelmed Thomas, urged him to pull himself together and get on with his work. “Reginald, I cannot,” Thomas replied, “because all that I have written seems like straw to me.” Thomas himself never gave an account of what had happened to him on that December morning; his early hagiographers assumed that he had had some sort of mystical experience, but his most recent scholarly biographer argues that Thomas more probably suffered a complete mental and physical breakdown due to overwork and stress, though the breakdown was probably accompanied by a mystical moment of some sort. As this biographer notes, “the experience of December 6 was not entirely mystical; [for] he was physically ill after it.”66 Three months later, on 7 March 1274, Thomas died en route to the second council of Lyons.

Nevertheless, whether or not the Summa is “straw” in the light of eternity, its treatise on the eucharistic mystery has stood the test of the Catholic tradition’s time and is accounted the classic exposition of the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Thomas’s method of discussion may seem strange or even peculiar to you. Each Part is subdivided into Questions, and each Question is subdivided into Articles. Such a layout was, in fact, modelled on the methods used in the medieval classroom.

In the thirteenth century, students entered university between the ages of twelve and fourteen. They could spend up to seven years studying “the liberal arts”; at the end of this course they were certified as magistri artium (“masters” – or (as we would say) “professors” – “of the arts”). The age of twenty-one was considered the upper limit for qualification as a magister artium. If they were going on to study theology, they had to spend another three to five years studying the Bible to become qualified as magistri sacæ paginæ. Then,

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and only then, could they enter the course of sacra doctrina. Once enrolled in sacra doctrina, the student had to “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” the Sententiae of Peter Lombard. The magister artium who had become a magister sacrae paginæ now reached the highest level of theological education in the Middle Ages as a magister sententiarum. In any case, the students enrolled in Thomas’s first-year theology class were therefore “beginners” only in a relative sense. Since they had already made it that far, he could assume that they should have a fair degree of intellectual – and theological – sophistication.

The classroom in a medieval faculty was more pro-active than the conventional North American university classroom. To be sure, there were lectures, when a magister was a “talking head” and the students were silent note-takers. But the normal mode of instruction was the disputatio, “disputation,” or classroom debate. The magister would set a quæstio, a topic for discussion, and assign a certain section of Lombard’s Sententiae as the basis for the disputatio on the topic. The students were responsible for presenting arguments on either side of the assigned question; debate would follow in the classroom. Once the arguments had been presented, the magister would weigh in with his own summation and analysis of the question. This was the Respondeo dicendum (“I reply that it must be said”). He would then proceed to deal in detail with each one of the various arguments presented earlier.

We will be reading Summa theologiae 3a, Questions 75 and 76, in which Thomas gives his understanding of the doctrine of transubstantiation.
Introduction

Further Reading


Thomas Aquinas

SUMMA THEOLOGIAE
Third Part,
Questions 75 and 76
Thomas Aquinas

*Summa theologiae 3a*

**QUESTION 75**

The next topic of discussion must be about the conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. And with respect to this topic we need to investigate eight points:

1. Whether the substance of the bread and wine remains after consecration;
2. Whether the substance is annihilated;
3. Whether it is converted into the body and blood of Christ;
4. Whether the accidents remain there after consecration;
5. Whether the substantial form remains there;
6. Whether this conversion happens instantaneously;
7. Whether this conversion is more miraculous than any other change;
8. By what words it can be appropriately expressed.

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1 *eight points:* As it happens, the headings that Thomas lists here are different from the actual headings of the articles which follow. It is the only case of such a mismatch in the whole of the *Summa theologiae.* This first set of headings parallels the scheme of Thomas’s earlier commentary on the relevant sections of the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. Thomas later changed his plan of Question 75, but forgot to revise the original set of headings.
Article 1.

Whether the body of Christ is truly in this sacrament as a reality, or merely after the manner of a figure or as in a sign. 2

We may now proceed to the first article.

Argument 1. It seems that the body of Christ is not really and truly present in this sacrament, but only after the manner of a figure or as in a symbol. For it is written in John 6 that when the Lord said, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, &c., on hearing this many of his disciples said, “This is a hard saying”. He answered them, It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh is of no avail.3 According to Augustine’s interpretation of Psalm 4, it is as if the Lord were saying: “Understand what I have said in a spiritual manner. You will not be eating this body which you see, nor drinking the blood which those who crucify me will shed. I have commended a kind of sacrament to you. Understood in a

2 truly... as a reality, or only after the manner of a figure or as in a sign: Thomas’s concern in this article is not with the fact of Christ’s presence, but with the manner of Christ’s presence: – (1) Is it secundum veritatem? Here veritas means “truth” in the sense of verifiable reality as opposed to illusion. So is Christ present “according to reality,” i.e., is he actually and verifiably there?

Or (2) Is Christ present only as the (otherwise absent) object to which the material elements of bread and wine refer? Thomas seeks to cover the bases of this option by proposing two distinct manners of presence – secundum figuram and in signo.

a) In the first case (secundum figuram), the elements might be said to act merely as “figures,” or icons, of his body and blood, without actually containing those realities.

b) In the second case (in signo), Thomas is assuming Augustine’s definition of a “sign” as “something which conveys something else to the mind, besides the visible form (speciem) which it impresses on the senses” (On Christian Doctrine 2.1). The link between a sign and the reality that it represents is in the intellect of the sign’s beholder rather than in the sign itself. Nevertheless, in the tradition to which Augustine and Thomas belonged, this intellectual link makes the connection stronger and more real than is the case with a “figure”. For a figure’s meaning or reference was tied to apprehension by the physical senses, whereas the tradition assumed that the more purely intellectual (and therefore spiritual) something was, the more secundum veritatem it must be.

3 John 6.54, 61. 64.
Thomas Aquinas on Transubstantiation

...spiritual way, it will give you life; but the flesh is of no avail.”

Argument 2. Furthermore, the Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: *Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.* Augustine explains this saying: “Until the world is ended, the Lord is on high, but the truth of the Lord is still here with us. For the body in which he rose again can be in only one place, while his truth is spread everywhere.” Therefore, the body of Christ is not really and truly in this sacrament but only as in a sign.

Argument 3. Furthermore, a body cannot be in several places at the same time. This is impossible even for an angel, since if it could be in several places at the same time, it could be everywhere at the same time. But the body of Christ is a real body, and it is in heaven. Therefore it would appear that the body of Christ is not in this sacrament in actual fact but only as in a sign.

Argument 4. Furthermore, the sacraments of the Church are intended for the benefit of the faithful. But as Gregory says in one of his homilies, the official was criticized because “he tried to get the bodily presence of Christ.” The apostles were also hindered from receiving the Holy Spirit because they clung to the bodily presence of Christ – as Augustine says on John 16.7, *If I do not go away, the Paraclete will not come to you.* Therefore Christ is not in the sacrament of the altar by way of bodily presence.

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5 Matthew 28.20.
6 Augustine, *Discourse 30 on the Gospel of John*.

7 **This is impossible even for an angel:** An angel, though an immortal being of pure intellect, is still a creature and, as a creature, subject to the limitations proper to its own way of being. Therefore its power – and field – of operation must likewise be limited or finite: it can act only in one place at a time. God alone is able to be everywhere – and everywhere at the same time – because God alone is infinite.

9 Augustine, *Discourses on the Gospel of John* 94.
On the other hand, Hilary says: “No room for doubt is left concerning the reality of the body and blood of Christ. According to the express teaching of the Lord himself, and according to our faith, his flesh really is food and his blood really is our drink.” And Ambrose says: “Just as the Lord Jesus Christ is the real Son of God, so the real flesh of Christ is what we receive, and his blood really is our drink.”

I answer that it must be said that the real flesh and blood cannot be perceived to be in this sacrament by means of physical sense but only by means of faith which rests on divine authority. That is why Cyril, while commenting on Luke 22.19 (This is my body which is given for you), says: “Do not question whether this is true, but rather accept the Saviour’s words in faith. Because he is the Truth, he does not lie.”

First and foremost, this is in keeping with the perfection of the New Law. For the sacrifices of the Old Law contained the true sacrifice, which was Christ’s passion, only in a figurative manner – as it says in Hebrews 10.1, The Law [of Moses] has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities. And so it was right that the sacrifice of the New Law which Christ instituted should have something more – namely, that it should contain the very one who suffered, not only by way of a sign or a figure but also in actual reality. And so, as Dionysius says, this sacrament, which really contains Christ himself, “perfects all other sacraments” in which the power of Christ is shared.

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10 Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity 8, 15.
11 Ambrose, On the Sacraments 6, 1.
13 Pseudo-Dionysius, The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 3, 1. Dionysius the Areopagite is mentioned in Acts 17.34 as one of the few people that Paul converted during his visit to Athens. A sixth-century Greek Christian writer composed several treatises of mystical theology under Dionysius’s name; the author’s real name has never been discovered, but his (or her) writings had enormous circulation and influence throughout the Middle Ages, and have recently come back into vogue. By the way, it is from (Pseudo-)Dionysius that the French name Denis, and the English name Dennis, are derived.
Secondly, the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the sacrament accords with the love of Christ which led him to take a real body with human nature for our salvation. And because the most characteristic quality of friendship is for “friends to live together,” as the Philosopher says, Christ promises us his bodily presence as a reward [in the age to come] – Matthew 24.28, Where the body is, there the eagles will gather together. But in the meantime he has not left us destitute of his bodily presence during this pilgrimage of ours, but through the reality of his body and blood in this sacrament he joins us to himself. For this reason he himself says, Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood, dwell in me and I in them. That is how this sacrament is the sign of supreme love and the mainstay of our hope, because it unites Christ so intimately to us.

Thirdly, the real presence suits the perfection of faith, which has to do with the humanity of Christ just as it has to do with his divinity – as he said, You believe in God, believe also in me. And because faith concerns things unseen, just as Christ invisibly presents his divinity to us, so also in this sacrament he presents his flesh to us in an invisible manner.

Some people have not attended to these point and have stated that the body and blood of Christ are not in this sacrament except as in a sign. But such a position must be rejected as heretical, inasmuch as it is contrary to the words of Christ. That is why Berengar, who was the first author of this error, was afterwards forced to retract his error and confess a truth of the faith.

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14 Sacraments, by definition, allow humans to “share in the power of Christ”. Not only is this participation in Christ’s power to be found in the other Christian sacraments (baptism, confirmation, penance, matrimony, holy orders, and unction). It was also to be found (though incompletely) in the “sacraments” (sacrfices) of the Old Testament. The eucharistic sacrament perfects those “figurative” sacraments, even as it perfects the other Christian sacraments.

15 Aristotle, Ethics 9.12.1171b32. For mediæval scholastics, Aristotle was the philosopher par excellence, so they referred to him as “the Philosopher,” without any further qualification.

16 John 6.57.

Hence: –

In reply to Argument 1, it must be said that the aforesaid heretics have taken occasion for error from this very authority, by misinterpreting Augustine’s words. For when Augustine says, “You will not be eating this body which you see,” he does not mean to exclude the reality of the body of Christ. Instead, he means that Christ’s body would not be eaten in the same visible form in which it was then being seen by the disciples. When he adds, “I have commended a kind of sacrament to you. Understood in a spiritual way, it will give you life,” he does not mean that the body of Christ is in this sacrament only in the way of being mystically symbolized thereby. Instead, it is said to be there spiritually, that is, invisibly and by the power of the Spirit. Hence, while expounding John 6.64, The flesh is of no avail, Augustine says: “[Flesh is of no avail] in the way they understood. They thought that eating flesh meant the sort of flesh which is sliced from a carcass and sold in a meat market, rather than flesh as it is enlivened by the Spirit. Let the Spirit come to flesh, and it avails very much; for if the flesh were never of any avail, the Word would not have become flesh in order to dwell among us.”

In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that the words of Augustine quoted in this argument, and all others of like import, should be understood to refer to the body of Christ as it is seen in its actual form; this is what the Lord himself meant when he said, You will not always have me. But wherever this sacrament is celebrated, Christ is present in an invisible manner under the sacrament’s visible elements.

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that the body of Christ is not in the sacrament in the same way as a body is in a place. For the dimensions of a body in a place are commensurate with the dimensions of the place it is in. But Christ’s body is in the sacrament in a special way which is proper to this sacrament. That is why we say that the body of Christ is on different altars, not as in different places but as in the sacrament. By this we do not understand Christ to be there only as in a sign, although the sacrament belongs to the category of a sign. Rather, we understand the body of Christ

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18 Augustine, Discourses on the Gospel of John 27, 5.

19 Matthew 26.11.
to be here, as we have said, in a manner that is proper to this sacrament.

In reply to Argument 4, it must be said that this argument regards the presence of Christ’s body as if it is present in the way of any body, that is, as if it is visible in its natural form and appearance. The argument does not take into account a spiritual presence, that is, a presence which is invisible, in the manner and by the power of the Spirit. For this reason Augustine says, “If you have understood [Christ’s words concerning his flesh] in a spiritual manner, they are spirit and life for you; if you have understood them in a fleshly manner, they are still spirit and life – but not for you.”

ARTICLE 2.

WHETHER THE SUBSTANCE OF THE BREAD AND WINE REMAIN IN THIS SACRAMENT AFTER CONSECRATION.

We may now proceed to the second article.

Argument 1. It seems that the substance of the bread and wine does remain in this sacrament after consecration. For John Damascene says, Because it is customary for humans to eat bread and drink wine, God joined his divine nature to them and made them his body and blood. And further on he says, The bread received at the communion is not ordinary bread, but bread united to the divine nature. But the union is of realities which actually exist. Therefore the bread and the wine are in this sacrament together with the body and blood of Christ.

20 Augustine, Discourses on the Gospel of John 27, 5.

21 On the Orthodox Faith IV, 13. John Damascene (John of Damascus), c. 675 – c. 749, was a Greek priest and divine. Though often considered the greatest of Byzantine theologians, he actually spent all of his life outside the Byzantine empire, as a Christian subject of the Muslim caliph. On the Orthodox Faith, his finest and most influential work, is one of the earliest examples of a truly systematic theology.

22 This argument sketches the position which would later be called “consubstantiation,” meaning that, after consecration, the substance of bread and wine co-exists with the substance of Christ’s body and blood. This doctrine came to be identified with Lutheranism, but
Argument 2. Furthermore, there ought to be conformity among the sacraments of the Church. But in the other sacraments the substance of the material elements remains—as in baptism the substance of water, and in confirmation the substance of the chrism. Therefore the substance of the bread and wine remains in this sacrament as well.

Argument 3. Furthermore, bread and wine are employed in this sacrament inasmuch as they represent the unity of the Church, since (as Augustine says in his book On the Creed) “one loaf of bread is made from many grains of wheat and one wine from many clusters of grapes”\(^{23}\). But this pertains to the very substance of the bread and wine. Therefore the substance of the bread and wine remain in this sacrament.\(^{24}\)

On the other hand, Ambrose says in his book On the Sacraments: “Although the visible form [figura] of bread and wine is seen, yet after consecration it must be believed to be nothing other than the flesh and blood of Christ.”\(^{25}\)

I ANSWER THAT some have argued that the substance of bread and wine remain in this sacrament after consecration. But this position cannot stand. In the first place, this position abrogates the reality of this sacrament, which requires that Christ’s real body exist in this sacrament. Now, his body is not there before consecration. But something cannot be where it was not before, unless it changes places or the thing already in that place is converted into it—just as in a household a fire is started either because it is brought in from outside or because it is struck anew inside the house. It is clear versions of the position were already in circulation well before Thomas’s day.

\(^{23}\) Augustine, Discourses on the Gospel of John 26; cf. Augustine, Sermon 227.

\(^{24}\) This argument works from a strict understanding of a sacrament as a sign. A sign loses its power to do its job—to signify a given reality (in this case, the unity of the Church)—if the substance of the symbolizing elements (bread and wine) has ceased to exist. The Church of England’s Articles of Religion (1571) make the same point in Article XXVIII, where it is said that “Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord... overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament” (CanBCP 1962, p. 710).

\(^{25}\) Ambrose, On the Sacraments IV, 5.
that the body of Christ does not begin to be in this sacrament by way of moving from one place to another. First, because it would thereby cease to be in heaven, seeing that whatever is moved from one place begins to reach another place only if it leaves the former place. Secondly, because every body which is moved from one place to another passes through all the places in between – and this cannot be said to happen in the present case. Thirdly, because it is impossible for the movement of a body from place to place to end up in several places at the same time; but the body of Christ under this sacrament begins to be in many places at one and the same time. For this reason it remains that the body of Christ cannot begin to be in this sacrament in any other way except through the conversion of the substance of the bread and wine into that very body. Now, what is converted into something else is no longer there, once the conversion has happened. Hence we conclude that, without violating the integrity of this sacrament, the substance of the bread cannot remain after consecration.

Secondly, this position [that the substance of bread and wine remain after consecration] cannot stand because it contradicts the form of this sacrament, 26 in which it is said, This is my body. This would not be true if the substance of the bread remained there; for the substance of bread is never the body of Christ. We would have to say instead, Here is my body.

Thirdly, it would contradict the veneration of this sacrament if some other substance were there which cannot be worshipped and adored.27

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26 the form of the sacrament: In Aristotelian metaphysics, every existing thing is composed of matter and form. Roughly speaking, matter designates the raw “stuff,” the basic building material, of the thing, while form designates the principle which determines the matter and gives it definite “shape”. In scholastic theologies of the eucharist, the bread and wine were regarded as the matter of the sacrament, and Christ’s words of institution were regarded as the form of the sacrament – as the principle or power which determined the matter and made it a sacrament.

27 aliqua substantia... quae non posset adorari adoratione latriæ – literally, “some other substance... which cannot be adored with the adoration of latria”. Catholic theology makes a distinction between latria and dulia. Dulia is a matter of holding someone in veneration, of giving someone the honour and respect due to a
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Fourthly, it would be contrary to the custom of the Church which does not permit us to receive the body of Christ after we have eaten bodily food, but does allow us to receive one consecrated host after another. Therefore, this position must be avoided as heretical.

Hence:

In reply to Argument 1, it must be said that God joined his divinity – that is, the power of divinity – to the bread and wine, not in order that they might remain in the sacrament, but in order that he might make his body and blood from them.

In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that in the other sacraments Christ himself is not really there, as he is in this sacrament. So in the other sacraments the substance of the material element remains, but not in this sacrament.

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that the outward appearances which remain in this sacrament are (as will be stated below) sufficient to indicate what the sacrament signifies. For the nature of a substance is discerned through its accidents.

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superior; this is the sort of veneration that a saint may receive from the faithful. Latria is also a matter of veneration, but in the highest degree: it involves the sort of worship which should be given to none but God alone. If the substance of bread remains after consecration, Thomas is arguing, veneration of the sacrament would be a form of idolatry, since the faithful would be offering latria to something that is not God. But because Christ, God the Word made flesh, is indeed really present in the sacrament, venerating the sacrament with latria is not only “meet and right,” but also “our bounden duty”.

host (hostiam): literally, “sacrificial victim”. This term for the eucharistic bread (which, by Thomas’s time in the mid-thirteenth century, was normally a wafer) is derived from the Roman Canon, where it appears for the first time in the section Unde et memores, immediately following the institution narrative. The implication is that the bread and wine have now become Christ, both priest (offerer of sacrifice) and victim (the sacrifice offered). We continue this tradition when we refer to the large wafer as “the priest’s host” – meaning (even if we don’t realise it) that the wafer in question, once consecrated, is the one sacrificial victim, Christ himself.

Summa theologiae 3a.75.5.
THOMAS AQUINAS ON TRANSSUBSTANTIATION

ARTICLE 3.
WHETHER THE SUBSTANCE OF THE BREAD IS ANNIHILATED AFTER THE CONSECRATION OF THIS SACRAMENT, OR REDUCED TO A MORE BASIC KIND OF MATTER?

We may now proceed to the third article.

Argument 1. It seems that the substance of the bread, after the consecration of this sacrament, is annihilated, or is reduced to a more basic kind of matter. For something with a body must be somewhere. But the substance of bread, which is something with a body, does not remain in this sacrament, as has just been stated; neither does it have anywhere to go. Therefore, it is not anything after consecration. So either it is annihilated, or it is reduced to a more basic kind of matter.

Argument 2. Furthermore, the starting-point of any change does not endure, except perhaps as a latent potential of the matter which has changed. For example, when fire is made from air, the form of air does not remain except as a latent potential of the matter; and likewise when something black is made from something white.30 But in this sacrament the substance of the bread and wine exist as the starting-point, while the body or blood of Christ exist as the end-point. For Ambrose says: “Before consecration it is called another kind of thing, after the consecration it is designated the body.”31 When the consecration has happened, the substance of the bread and wine do not remain, except perhaps as it has been reduced to its own matter.32

30 Thomas is once again exploiting the terminology of Aristotelian metaphysics. Aristotle distinguished between dunamis (“power”) and energeia (“energy”): the scholastics translated these terms as potentia (“potentiality”) and actus (“act”). Whatever power or capacity is latent and unrealized in a thing is said to be in potentia; when that power or capacity is realized and becomes express, it is said to be in actu. All matter, before it receives its form, is in potentia; it is the form that actualizes the potentia.

31 Ambrose, On the Mysteries 9.54.

32 *except perhaps as it has been reduced to its own matter:* In Aristotelian (and scholastic) metaphysics, a thing cannot be said to exist unless it has both matter and form. If something’s form is annihilated or converted, that something ceases to exist as such.
Argument 3. Furthermore, if two statements are contradictory, one or the other must be true. It is false to say: “Once the consecration has happened, the substance of the bread or the wine is something.” Therefore, this statement is true: “The substance of the bread or the wine is nothing.”

On the other hand, Augustine says: “God does not cause anything to tend towards non-being.” But this sacrament is brought about by divine power. Therefore, the substance of the bread or the wine is not annihilated in this sacrament.

I answer that the substance of the bread and wine does not remain in this sacrament. For this reason some writers have considered it impossible for the substance of the bread and wine to be changed into Christ’s flesh and blood. As a result they have maintained that at the consecration the substance of the bread and wine either is resolved into its original matter or is annihilated.

Now the four elements constitute the original matter into which mixed bodies can be resolved. For a resolution into primal matter, such that a subject exists without a form, cannot happen – because matter cannot exist without a form. But since after the consecration nothing remains under the sacramental species except the body and the

33 Augustine, Eighty-three Questions: A Response to Simplician 21.

34 Mixed bodies (corpora mixta): things whose physical reality is itself composite – as, for instance, bread is composed by mixing flour, water, and yeast.

35 Now the four elements … without a form: Thomas is being deeply Aristotelian here. “Primal matter” is an abstract concept which refers to a condition of utter potentiality, where matter is absolutely without “form” (in the Aristotelian sense) and thus has not yet become “substance”. The concept is abstract because, as Thomas notes, “matter cannot exist without a form” – at least, not since God spoke the creative word which constitutes the primordial “form” of all matter. Hence, if something is resolved or dissolved, it must be into the “four elements” of earth, water, air, and fire, which, precisely as the building blocks of everything else, are themselves “formed” matter.
blood of Christ, it will be necessary to say that the elements into which the substance of the bread and wine is resolved, depart by movement from one place to another place. But our senses would have perceived such a movement. Again, [it might be said that] the substance of the bread or wine remains until the last instant of the consecration. But in the last instant of the consecration the substance of the body or blood of Christ is already there, just as in the last instant of generation the form is already present. Hence we cannot designate any instant in which the original matter is there. For it cannot be said that the substance of the bread or wine is gradually resolved into the original matter, or that it gradually quits the species. If this began to happen in the last instant of the host’s consecration, then at one and the same time, under a part of the host, the body of Christ would be together with the substance of bread – which is contrary to what has been said above. By contrast, if this began to happen before the consecration, then there would be a moment when, under one part of the host, there will be neither the substance of bread nor the body of Christ – which simply will not do.

The writers we are talking about seem to have taken this into account. That is why they proposed an alternative – namely, that [the substance of the bread and wine] is annihilated. But even this will not work. For there is no other way for Christ’s true body to begin to be in this sacrament, except by the conversion of the substance of bread into it. This conversion is excluded the moment we admit either annihilation of [the substance of] the bread, or its reduction to the original matter. Likewise no cause can be assigned for such a reduction or annihilation, since the effect of a sacrament ought to be signified by the sacrament’s form – and neither reduction nor annihilation is signified by the words of the form, *This is my body.*

Thus it is clear that the aforesaid opinion is false.37

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36 **species**: “the outward and visible sign” as known by sense-perception – in this case, the appearance of the consecrated bread and wine, including their respective shape, consistency, taste, etc.

37 **the aforesaid opinion is false**: Thomas means that the position is logically untenable – he does not mean that it is doctrinally heretical.
Hence: –

**In reply to Argument 1,** it must be said that, after the consecration, the substance of the bread or wine is neither under the sacramental species, nor anywhere else. Yet it does not follow that it is annihilated, for it is changed into the body of Christ – just as, if the air from which fire is generated is no longer there or anywhere else, it does not follow that it is annihilated.

**In reply to Argument 2,** it must be said that the form, which is the starting-point (*terminus a quo*), is not changed into another form. Rather, one form succeeds another in the subject; and therefore the first form remains only in the potentiality of matter. But here the substance of the bread is changed into the body of Christ, as stated above. Hence the conclusion does not follow.

**In reply to Argument 3,** it must be said that, although after the consecration it is false to claim, “The substance of the bread is something real,” yet that into which the substance of the bread has been converted, is something real. And so the substance of the bread is not annihilated.

**ARTICLE 4.**

**WHETHER BREAD CAN BE CONVERTED INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST?**

We may now proceed to the fourth article.

**Argument 1.** It seems that bread cannot be converted into the body of Christ. For conversion is a kind of change. But in every change there must be some subject which before was in potentiality and now is an actuality. because as the Philosopher says: “Change is the actualising of a thing existing in potentiality.” 38 But no subject can be said to underlie the substance of the bread and the substance of the body of Christ, because it is of the very nature of substance “not to be in a subject,” as the Philosopher says. 39 Therefore it is not possible for the whole substance of the bread to be converted into the body of Christ.

**Argument 2.** Furthermore, the form of the thing into which another is converted, begins to exist anew in the


39 Aristotle, *Categories* 3.2a13, 3a7.
matter of the thing converted into it. Just as when air is changed into fire which did not already exist, the form of fire begins anew to be in the matter of the air. And likewise, when food is converted into an already existing human, the form of the human begins to exist anew in the matter of the food. Therefore, if bread is converted into the body of Christ, the form of Christ’s body must necessarily begin to exist in the matter of the bread. But this is false. Consequently, the bread is not converted into the substance of Christ’s body.

Argument 3. Furthermore, when two things are essentially opposed, one never becomes the other, as whiteness never becomes blackness – although the subject of whiteness may become the subject of blackness, as the Philosopher states. But just as two contrary forms are essentially opposed, as being the sources of formal difference, so also two individuated matters are essentially opposed, as being the sources of material distinction. Therefore, it is impossible for this matter of bread to become the matter by which the body of Christ is individuated, and so it is impossible for the substance of this bread to be converted into the substance of Christ’s body.

On the other hand, Eusebius of Emesa says: “It should not be surprising or impossible to you that earthly and perishable things are converted into the substance of Christ.”

I answer that, as stated above, since the real body of Christ is in this sacrament, and since it does not begin to be there by local motion, and since it is not there as in a place (as is clear from what was stated earlier), it must be said that it begins to be there by conversion of the substance of bread into itself.

Yet this change is not like changes in the natural order, but is entirely supernatural, and is brought about by God’s power alone. Hence Ambrose says: “It is obvious that the virgin

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40 Aristotle, *De Physica* V.3.188a.31.

41 Eusebius, bishop of Emesa (modern Homs) in Syria, 339-359. His sermons were widely circulated in his own day, but his association with the Arian cause meant that they survived under the names of others. The passage that Thomas cites here has been attributed to Pseudo-Isidore of Seville, *Sermones* 4.

42 3a.75, art. 1, resp. to 3; above, pp. 36-37.
conceived above and beyond the order of nature. And this body which we produce on the altar is the body born of the Virgin. Why do you seek the order of nature here in the body of Christ, when the Lord Jesus himself was born of the Virgin above and beyond nature?”

And commenting on John 6:64, The words which I have spoken to you concerning this sacrament are spirit and life, Chrysostom says: “[these words] are spiritual, having nothing carnal or according to the laws of nature; but they are exempt from all necessity which exists upon earth, and from the laws of nature here established.”

For it is clear that every agent acts insofar as it is in act. But every created agent is limited in its actuality, since every created agent has the limitations of the genus and species to which it belongs. And so, the action of every created agent has limited range in which it can act. Now the principle which limits every thing in its actual existence is its form. As a result, no natural or created agent can act except by changing a form. That is why every change made according to laws of nature is a change of form. But God is infinite act, as stated in the First Part.

Hence God’s action extends to the whole nature of each thing’s being. Therefore God can bring about not only the conversion of a form, so that diverse forms succeed each other in the same subject; but also the conversion of the whole being of a thing, so that the whole substance of one thing is converted into the whole substance of another. And this is done by divine power in this sacrament. For the whole substance of the bread is changed

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43 Ambrose, On the Mysteries 9.53.

44 John Chrysostom, Homily 47 on the Gospel of John.

45 *every agent acts insofar as it is in act*: Thomas here does a riff on the scholastic axiom, *Agere sequitur esse*, “Action follows (or, is dependent upon) being.” Behind this axiom lies the idea of a hierarchy of being. The higher a reality is on the ladder of existence, the more fully actualized is its being; and the more fully actualized its being (and the less latent in potentiality), the greater is its power to act, to realize its own will. Ultimately, in the highest being, in being perfectly and wholly actualized, there is no gap whatever between desire for something good and the actual enjoyment of it. But this is true only of God, who (Thomas argued) is pure act.

46 *Summa theologiae* 1a.7.1; 1a.25.2.
into the whole substance of Christ’s body, and the whole substance of the wine into the whole substance of Christ’s blood. Hence this is not a formal but a substantial conversion; nor is it a kind of change that occurs in the natural order; and it can be called by a name of its own, “transsubstantiation”.

Hence: –

In reply to Argument 1, it must be said that this objection holds good with respect to a change of form, because it belongs to a form to be in matter or in a subject; but it does not hold good with respect to a change of the entire substance. Since this substantial conversion implies a certain order of substances, one of which is changed into the other, it is in both substances as in a subject, just as are order and number.

In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that this argument also is true of formal conversion or change, because, as stated above, a form must be in some matter or subject. But this is not so in a conversion of the entire substance: for in this case no subject is possible.

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that form cannot be changed into form, nor matter into matter, by the power of any finite agent. Such a conversion, however, can be made by the power of an infinite agent, which acts on the whole being of a thing. For being is common to both forms and to both matters; and whatever there is of being in the one, the author of being can convert into whatever there is of being in the other, by taking away that by which the one was distinguished from the other.
**ARTICLE 5.**

**WHETHER THE ACCIDENTS OF THE BREAD AND WINE REMAIN IN THIS SACRAMENT?**

We may now proceed to the fifth article.

**Argument 1.** It seems that the accidents of the bread and wine do not remain in this sacrament. For when that which comes first is removed, that which follows is also taken away. But substance is naturally before accident, as the Philosopher shows. 47 Therefore, since, once the consecration is complete, the substance of the bread does not remain in this sacrament, it seems that its accidents cannot remain.

**Argument 2.** Furthermore, there should not be any deception in a sacrament of truth. But we discern the substance by the accidents. It seems, then, that human judgement is deceived if the substance of the bread departs while the accidents remain. Consequently this is unbecoming to this sacrament.

**Argument 3.** Furthermore, although our faith is not subject to reason, still it is not contrary to reason, but above it, as was said in the beginning of this work. 48 But our reason starts from sense-perceptions. Therefore our faith ought not to be contrary to the senses, as it is when sense judges that to be bread which faith believes to be the substance of Christ’s body. Therefore it is not fitting in this sacrament for the accidents of bread to remain the object of our senses when the substance of the bread is no longer there.

**Argument 4.** Furthermore, what remains after the conversion has taken place would seem to be the subject of the change. If therefore the accidents of the bread remain after the conversion has happened, it seems that the accidents are the subject of the conversion. But this is impossible, because “an accident cannot be the subject of an accident.” Therefore the accidents of the bread and wine should not remain in this sacrament.

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47 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VI.1.1028a32. According to Aristotle *substantia* is the underlying (sub-stantia, “standing-under) foundation of thing which makes it be *what it is*. *Accidents* are the individuating qualities or characteristics by which a substance is further distinguished in its surrounding environment.

48 *Summa theologiae* 1a.1.6, in reply 2: 1a.8.
On the other hand, Augustine says in Prosper’s *Book of Sentences*: “Under the appearances of bread and wine which we see, we honour invisible things, that is, the flesh and blood.”

I answer that it is evident to sense that all the accidents of the bread and wine remain after the consecration. Divine providence did this for a reason.

First of all, because it is not customary, but revolting, for humans to eat human flesh and to drink blood, Christ’s flesh and blood are set before us to be taken under the species of those things which humans more commonly use, namely, bread and wine.

Secondly, [Christ’s flesh and blood are set forth and taken under the species of bread and wine] lest this sacrament be an object of contempt for unbelievers, if we were to eat our Lord under His own species.

Thirdly, [Christ’s flesh and blood are set forth and taken under the species of bread and wine] so that while we receive our Lord’s body and blood invisibly, the merit of our faith may increase.

Hence: –

In reply to Argument 1, it must be said that, as the book *On Causes* notes, an effect depends more on the first cause than on the second. And so by God’s power, which is the first cause of all things, it is possible for that which follows on something else to remain, when that which is prior to it is taken away.

In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that there is no deception in this sacrament; for the accidents which are

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49 Prosper of Aquitaine (d. c. 463), a Gallican lay-theologian and ardent disciple of Augustine – the first of many western theologians who have been more “Augustinian” than Augustine himself. Thomas here refers to Prosper’s *Epigrams from the Opinions of St Augustine* (c. 455), but the quote is actually derived from Lanfranc, *On the Body and Blood of the Lord* (c.1070), 13, by way of Gratian, *Decretum* III.2.41.

50 Aristotle, *De causis*, Proposition 1.

51 The accidents of the bread and wine follow (and depend) on the substance of the bread and wine. But both the accidents and the substance have their being and existence from God, the first cause of all causes.
discerned by the senses are truly present. But the intellect, whose proper object is substance (as is said in On the Soul⁵²), is preserved from deception by faith.

And this serves to answer the third argument, because faith is not contrary to the senses but concerns things to which our senses do not reach.

In reply to Argument 4, it must be said that, strictly speaking, this conversion does not have a subject, as was stated above. Nevertheless, the accidents which remain do have some resemblance to a subject.

**ARTICLE 6.**
Whether the substantial form of the bread⁵³ remains in this sacrament after the consecration?

We may now proceed to the sixth article.

**Argument 1.** It seems that the substantial form of the bread remains in this sacrament after the consecration. For it has been said that the accidents remain after the consecration. But since bread is something made by humans, its form is an accident.⁵⁴ Therefore it remains after the consecration.

**Argument 2.** Furthermore, the form of Christ’s body is his soul – as it is said in On the Soul, the soul “is that which actualizes the potentiality of a physical body and makes it have life.”⁵⁵ But it cannot be said that the substantial form of

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⁵³ the substantial form of the bread: Substance is composed of matter and form. Thomas has established that the matters of the bread and the wine have been converted and are no longer there; but can it be said that their forms, which stamp the bread with “breadness” and the wine with “wineness,” perhaps survive?

⁵⁴ since bread is something made by humans, its form is an accident: Bread does not exist unless and until a human takes other things (which have their own proper substances) and makes it from them. So, according to this argument, bread cannot have a substantial form in itself; it has only accidental form, that is, the form of a quality or characteristic which affects the more basic substantial forms of its ingredients.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *De Anima* II.1.5.412a27.
the bread is converted into a soul. Therefore it appears that it remains after the consecration.

**Argument 3.** Furthermore, the proper operation of a thing follows its substantial form. But whatever it is that remains in this sacrament, nourishes and performs every operation which bread would do if it were present. Therefore the substantial form of the bread remains in this sacrament after the consecration.

On the other hand, the substantial form of the bread is part of the substance of the bread. But the substance of the bread is changed into the body of Christ, as stated above. Therefore the substantial form of the bread does not remain.

**I answer that** some have contended that after the consecration not only the accidents of the bread remain but also its substantial form. But this cannot be.

First of all, because if the substantial form of the bread were to remain, nothing of the bread would be converted into the body of Christ except its matter. And so it would follow that the substantial form of the bread would be converted, not into the whole body of Christ, but into the matter [of Christ’s body]. But this disagrees with the form of the sacrament which says, *This is my body.*

Secondly, because if the substantial form of the bread were to remain, it would remain either in matter, or separated from matter. The first cannot be, for if it were to remain in the matter of the bread, then the whole substance of the bread would remain – which is contrary to what was said above. Nor could it remain in any other matter, because the proper form exists only in its proper matter. But if it were to remain separate from matter, it would then be an actualized intelligible form, and even an intelligence, because all forms separated from matter are such.

Thirdly, it would ill befit this sacrament. For the accidents of the bread remain in this sacrament, in order that the body

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56 See 3a.75.2-4.

57 See 3a.75.2.

58 **intelligible form**: A form capable of being apprehended by human understanding (*intellectus*). All forms, of course, are intelligible in this sense.
of Christ may be seen under them, and not under its proper species, as stated above.\(^59\)

And so it must be said that the substantial form of the bread does not remain.

Hence: –

**In reply to Argument 1,** it must be said that there is nothing to prevent art from making a thing whose form is not an accident, but a substantial form – as frogs and serpents can be produced by art.\(^60\) For art produces such forms not by its own power, but by exploiting the powers of nature. And in this way it produces the substantial forms of bread, by the power of fire baking the matter made up of flour and water.

**In reply to Argument 2,** it must be said that the soul is the form of the body, giving it the whole order of perfect being – that is, its being, its being a body, its being alive, and so on. Therefore the form of the bread is changed into the form of Christ’s body insofar as the form of Christ’s body constitutes the principle of its being a body, but not insofar as it constitutes the principle of its being alive in the way that it is.

**In reply to Argument 3,** it must be said that some of things that bread does – such as, the impression it makes on the senses – it does by reason of its accidents. Such operations are found in the species of the bread after the consecration, on account of the accidents which remain.

But the bread does some other things, either by reason of the matter, as when it is converted into something else, or else by reason of the substantial form, as when it acts according to the function of its species – for example, that it strengthens the human heart.\(^61\) Such operations are found in this sacrament, not on account of the form or matter remaining, but because they are bestowed miraculously upon the accidents themselves....

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\(^{59}\) See 3a.75.5.

\(^{60}\) Thomas is alluding to Exodus 7.11-12, where the sorcerers and magicians of Pharaoh conjured snakes and frogs in response to the same wonder performed by Aaron.

\(^{61}\) Psalm 104:15.
Thomas Aquinas on Transubstantiation

ARTICLE 7.
WHETHER THIS CONVERSION IS BROUGHT ABOUT INSTANTANEOUSLY?

We may now proceed to the seventh article.

Argument 1. It seems that this conversion is not brought about instantaneously, but successively. For in this conversion there is first the substance of bread, and then the substance of Christ’s body. One does not have both in the same instant, but in two distinct instants. But there is an interval between every two instants. Therefore this conversion must take place during the succession of time between the last instant in which the bread is there, and the first instant in which the body of Christ is present.

Argument 2. Furthermore, in every conversion there is the becoming and the having come to be. But these two things do not exist at the same time. For what is in the process of becoming does not yet exist, whereas what has become, already exists. As a result, there is a before and an after in this conversion. And so the conversion cannot be instantaneous, but must be successive.

Argument 3. Furthermore, Ambrose says that this sacrament “is produced by the words of Christ”. But the words of Christ are uttered successively, one after the other. Therefore this conversion takes place successively.

On the other hand, this conversion is accomplished by an infinite power, which produces its effects instantaneously.

I ANSWER THAT a particular change may be instantaneous on three grounds.

First, the form which is the terminus of the change may require that the change be instantaneous. If it is a form which admits of degrees – such as health – it is acquired by its subject successively. But because a substantial form does not admit of degrees, it follows that its introduction into matter is instantaneous.

Secondly, a subject is sometimes prepared gradually to receive a form – as water is heated gradually. But when a subject is finally ready to receive a form, it receives it instantaneously – as a transparent body is instantaneously filled with light.

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Thomas Aquinas on Transubstantiation

Thirdly it may be that the agent possesses infinite power and is thus able to make the matter ready to receive the form in a single instant. Thus it is written in Mark that when Christ had said, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened,” immediately his ears were opened, and his tongue was released.⁶³

For these three reasons this conversion is instantaneous. First, because the substance of Christ’s body which is the term of this conversion, does not admit of degrees. Secondly, because in this conversion there is no subject to be gradually prepared [to receive the form]. Thirdly, because it is brought about by God’s infinite power.

Hence: –

**In reply to Argument 1,** it must be said that some⁶⁴ simply do not concede that there must be an interval between every two instants. They say that this is true if two instants refer to the same process of change, but not if they refer to different changes. Hence between the instant that marks the end of a thing’s being at rest, and the instant which marks the beginning of its being in movement, there is no interval. But they are mistaken in this opinion. For the unity of time and of instant, or even their plurality, is not derived from this or that process of change in particular. On the contrary, it is derived from the first movement of the heavens, which is the measure of all change and rest.

For this reason others grant [that there is an interval between every two instants] insofar as the time which measures change depends on the movement of the heavens. But there are some changes which do not depend on the movement of the heavens and are not measured by it, as was said in the First Part concerning the movements of the angels.⁶⁵ Hence between two instants corresponding to such changes there is no interval. But all this is irrelevant in the present case. Although the conversion in question has no relation of itself to the movement of the heavens, it is still

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⁶³ Mark 7.34.

⁶⁴ E.g. Albert the Great, *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard IV*, 11; Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard IV*, 11.

⁶⁵ *Summa theologiae* 1a.53.3.
connected with the pronouncing of words – and the pronouncing of words must necessarily be measured by the movement of the heavens. So there must be an interval between any two designated instants connected with the eucharistic conversion.

Some would therefore say that the instant in which the bread last existed, and the instant in which the body of Christ first existed, are really one instant with respect to the time which measures them – but two instants with respect to the things which are being measured. It is as when two lines touch: there are two points on the part of the two lines, but one point on the part of the place containing them. But the analogy does not work in this case, because instant and time are not the measure intrinsic to particular movements, as line and point are the intrinsic measure of a body; but instant and time are only the extrinsic measure, as place is the extrinsic measure to bodies.

That is why others say that it is the same instant in fact, but two instants according to reason. But according to this view it would follow that things which are opposite in fact would exist together; for a mental distinction does not change a thing objectively.

And so it must be said that this conversion, as stated above, is brought about by the words of Christ which are spoken by the priest, so that the last instant of pronouncing the words is the first instant in which Christ’s body is in the sacrament – and that the substance of the bread is there during the whole preceding time. One should not think that this time is ended by an instant immediately preceding the last instant [of pronouncing Christ’s words], because time is not made up of instants one after the other, as is proved in Physics. Hence one can point to a first instant when the body of Christ is present; but one cannot designate a last instant when the substance of bread is there, though one can designate a last time. And the same holds good in natural changes, as the Philosopher makes clear.

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66 See 3a.75.3.

67 Aristotle, Physics VII.1.231b9.

68 Ibid., VIII.8.263b9.
In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that in instantaneous changes becoming and having come to be coincide; just as becoming illuminated and being illuminated are simultaneous events. For in such changes, when we think of a thing as it now is, we speak of its having become; but when we think of it before that, we speak of its becoming.

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that, as stated above, this change comes about in the last instant of the pronouncing of the words. For then the significance of the words is fully complete, and in the forms of the sacraments that is what is effective. And so it does not follow that this conversion must be a successive one.

ARTICLE 8.
WHETHER THIS PROPOSITION IS FALSE:
“THE BODY OF CHRIST IS MADE OUT OF BREAD”?

We may now proceed to the eighth article.

 Argument 1. It seems that this proposition is false: “The body of Christ is made out of bread.” For everything out of which something else is made, is that which become the other something; but the opposite is not true. We say that a black thing is made out of a white thing, and that a white thing become a black thing. But though we may say that a man becomes black, we do not say that a black thing is made out of a man, as is shown in the Physics. If it is true, then, that Christ’s body is made out of bread, it will be true to say that bread is made the body of Christ. But this seems to be false, because the bread is not the subject of the making, but rather a term of the change. Therefore, it is not true to say that Christ’s body is made out of bread.

 Argument 2. Furthermore, becoming terminates in being, or in having been made. But it is never true to say: “The bread is the body of Christ,” or “The bread is made the body of Christ,” or again, “The bread will be the body of Christ.” Therefore it would seem that not even this is true: “The body of Christ is made out of bread.”

69 See In reply Arg. 1 of the present article.

70 Aristotle, De Physica 1.5.188a35.
Argument 3. Furthermore, everything out of which another is made is converted into that which is made from it. But this proposition seems to be false: “The bread is converted into the body of Christ” – because such a conversion seems to be even more miraculous than the creation of the world, in which we do not say that non-being is converted into being. Therefore it would seem that this proposition likewise is false: “The body of Christ is made out of bread.”

Argument 4. Furthermore, a thing out of which something else is made can be that something else. But this proposition is false: “Bread can be the body of Christ.” Therefore this is likewise false: “The body of Christ is made out of bread.”

On the other hand, Ambrose says: “When the consecration takes place, the body of Christ is made out of the bread.”

I answer that this conversion of bread into the body of Christ has something in common both with creation and with natural change, and in some respects it differs from both. These three have the order of the terms in common – namely, after one thing there is another. In creation there is being after non-being; in this sacrament, Christ’s body after the substance of bread; in natural change, white after black or fire after air. The three changes in question also have this in common, that the aforesaid terms do not co-exist.

Now the conversion of which we are speaking, has this in common with creation, that in neither one nor the other is there any common subject belonging to either of the extreme terms. The opposite of this appears in every natural change.

Again, this conversion [of bread into the body of Christ] has something in common with natural change in two respects, though not in the same fashion. First of all, in both kinds of change one of the extremes passes into the other, as bread into Christ’s body and air into fire; whereas [in creation] non-being is not converted into being. But this happens in a different fashion in each case. In this sacrament, the whole substance of the bread passes into the whole body of Christ; whereas in natural changes the matter of one thing receives the form of the other thing, the previous form being laid aside. Secondly, they have this in common, that on both sides something remains the same; whereas this does not

71 On the Sacraments IV.4.14.
happen in creation. But the survival of what remains is different in each case. In natural changes the same matter or subject remains; whereas in this sacrament the same accidents are what remain.

From these observations we can gather the various ways of speaking in such matters. Because in none of the three cases under consideration do the extremes coexist, in none of them can one extreme be predicated of the other by the substantive verb of the present tense. For we do not say, “Non-being is being,” or “Bread is the body of Christ,” or “Air is fire,” or “White is black.” Yet because of the relationship of the extremes in all of them we can use the preposition ex [out of], which denotes order. For we can truly and properly say, “Being is made out of non-being,” and “Out of bread is made the body of Christ,” and “Out of air, fire is made,” and “Out of white is made black.”

But because in creation one of the extremes does not pass into the other, we cannot use the word conversion when speaking of creation, so as to say that “non-being is converted into being”. We can, however, use this word when speaking of this sacrament, just as when we are speaking of natural changes. But since in this sacrament whole substance is converted into whole substance, this conversion has the proper name of transubstantiation.

Again, since there is no subject of this conversion, the things which can be affirmed in natural conversion by reason of the subject, are ruled out in this conversion. In the first place, it is clear that the potential of a thing to become its opposite depends on there being a subject. It is for this reason that we say, “Something white can be black,” or “Air can be fire” – even though the latter statement is not quite as correct as the former statement. (For the subject of the whiteness, in which there is a potential to receive the form of blackness, is the whole substance of the white thing; since whiteness is not a part of this substance. But the subject which receives the form of air is part of the substance; so when we say, “Air can be fire,” it is true by synecdoche,72 because of that part of the air. But in this eucharistic conversion, and likewise in creation, there is no underlying subject of change. Therefore we do not

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72 synecdoche: A figure of speech in which a specific part of something is made to serve for the whole, or the whole of something is made to serve for one of its parts.
say that one extreme can be the other – as, for example, “Non-being can be being,” or “Bread can be the body of Christ”. For the same reason it cannot be correct to say that “being is made from [de] non-being,” or that “the body of Christ is made from bread,” because this preposition from [de] denotes a cause which is common to the substance of both extremes. In natural changes this substantial element common to both extremes is the underlying subject which they share. And for the same reason it is not acceptable to say that “the bread will be the body of Christ,” or that “it becomes the body of Christ,” just as it is not acceptable to say of creation that “non-being will be being,” or that “non-being becomes being”. This manner of speaking is quite acceptable when we are talking about natural changes because there a subject is present – as when we say, “Something white becomes black,” or “Something white will be black”.

Nevertheless, in this sacrament, after the conversion has taken place, something remains the same, namely, the accidents of the bread, as stated above. Therefore, some of these expressions may be allowed by way of similitude. It is allowable to say that “bread is the body of Christ,” or “bread will be the body of Christ,” or “the body of Christ is made from [de] bread” – provided that we do not understand the word bread to refer to the substance of bread, but in a general way to “that which is contained under the appearances [species] of bread,” under which there is contained first the substance of bread and afterwards the body of Christ.

Hence: –

In reply to Argument 1, it must be said that [when we talk about] “that out of which something else is made,” we sometimes mean the subject together with one of the extremes of the change, as when we say that “a black thing is made out of a white one”. But at other times it means only the opposite or the extreme, as when we say, “Out of the morning comes the day”. In this case we do not grant that the latter becomes the former, that is, “The morning becomes the day”. So likewise in the case of this sacrament: although it may be correct to say that “the body of Christ is made out of bread,” yet it is not correct to say that “bread becomes the body of Christ,” except (as we have seen) by analogy.
In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that “that out of which something else is made” will sometimes be that other thing because it is a change which has a subject. Since there is no subject in this eucharistic conversion, the argument therefore does not hold.

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that in this conversion there are many more difficulties than in creation, in which there is just one difficulty, that something is made out of nothing. Yet this belongs to the mode of production that is proper to the first cause, which needs absolutely nothing to start with. But in this eucharistic conversion, not only is it a difficulty that this whole thing is converted into that whole thing, so that absolutely nothing of the first thing may remains – which not the normal way that any cause operates. The eucharistic conversion also presents this difficulty, that the accidents remain while the substance disappears. There are many other difficulties which we shall discuss later on. Nevertheless the word *conversion* is permissible in the context of this sacrament, but not in the context of creation, as stated above in the body of this article.

In reply to Argument 4, it must be said that, as was also observed in the body of this article, the potential to be this or that belongs to the subject, whereas there is no subject in this conversion. We therefore do not grant that the bread can be the body of Christ. For this conversion does not come about by means of the passive potential in the creature to become this or that, but solely by the active power of the Creator.

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73 In 3a.77, which is not included in this reading.
Question 76

Next, we must consider how Christ exists in this sacrament. And with respect to this topic we need to investigate eight points:

1) Whether the whole Christ is contained under this sacrament?
2) Whether the whole Christ is contained under each species of this sacrament?
3) Whether the whole Christ is under every single part of the species of the bread and wine?
4) Whether the full dimensions of Christ’s body are in this sacrament?
5) Whether Christ’s body is in this sacrament as in a place?
6) Whether Christ’s body is moved when the host or the cup is moved after consecration?
7) Whether the body of Christ under this sacrament can be seen by any eye?
8) Whether the real body of Christ remains in this sacrament when it miraculously appears under the likeness of a child or of flesh?

Article 1. Whether the whole Christ is contained under this sacrament?

We may now proceed to the first article.

Argument 1. It seems that the whole Christ is not contained under this sacrament, because Christ begins to be in this sacrament by the conversion of the bread and wine. But it is evident that the bread and wine cannot be changed either into Christ’s divine nature or into his soul. Since Christ exists in three substances, namely, the Godhead, soul, and body..., it seems that the whole Christ is not under this sacrament.

Argument 2. Furthermore, Christ is in this sacrament for the nourishment of the faithful, which consists in food and drink. But our Lord said: My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.⁷⁴ Therefore, only the flesh and blood of Christ

⁷⁴ John 6:55.
are contained in this sacrament. But there are many other parts of Christ’s body, for instance, the nerves, bones, and so forth. Therefore the whole Christ is not contained under this sacrament.

**Argument 3.** Furthermore, a body of larger size cannot be completely contained under the dimensions of a smaller body. But the dimensions of the bread and wine are much smaller than the dimensions of Christ’s body. Therefore it is impossible that the whole Christ is contained under this sacrament.

**On the other hand,** Ambrose says in *The Duties of Ministers:* “Christ is in this sacrament.”

I **ANSWER THAT** it is absolutely necessary, according to Catholic faith, to confess that the whole Christ is in this sacrament. But note that there are two ways in which a part of Christ can be in this sacrament. First, by the power of the sacramental sign; secondly, by natural concomitance. By the power of the sacrament, there is under the sacramental species that into which the pre-existing substance of the bread and wine is directly converted, as expressed by the words of the form, *This is my body* and *This is my blood,* which are just as effective here as the form of the other sacraments are effective. And by natural concomitance there is also in this sacrament whatever is really united with the term of the conversion. For if any two things are really united, wherever the one is, the other must also be there, since things really joined together are only distinguished by a mental act on our part.

Hence: –

**In reply to Argument 1,** it must be said that the conversion of the bread and wine does not terminate either at Christ’s divine nature or at his soul. It follows that neither the divine nature nor the soul of Christ is in this sacrament by the power of the sacrament, but by natural concomitance. For since the divine nature never set aside the body taken up in the

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75 **a part of Christ:** As distinct from the whole of Christ.

76 **natural concomitance:** The principle (based on the doctrine of the hypostatic union proclaimed at Chalcedon) that you cannot have one of Christ’s two natures without the other. If the human nature of Christ is present, the divine nature will be present, too – and vice versa.
hypostatic union, wherever the body of Christ is, there must the Godhead be also – and therefore the Godhead is necessarily concomitant with His body in this sacrament. Hence we read in the profession of faith at the council of Ephesus: “We are made partakers of the body and blood of Christ, not as taking common flesh, nor as of a holy human united to the Word in dignity, but the truly life-giving flesh of the Word’s very self.”

On the other hand, Christ’s soul was really separated from his body....

Therefore if this sacrament had been celebrated during those three days when he was dead, the soul of Christ would not have been there, neither by the power of the sacrament, nor by the concomitance of natures. But since Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again, his soul is always really united with his body. So then, the body of Christ is present in this sacrament as a result of the sacramental sign, and his soul is present by natural concomitance.

In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that by the power of the sacrament we have under this sacrament – under the species of the bread – not only the flesh but the whole body of Christ, that is, the bones, the nerves, and everything else. And this is clear from the form of this sacrament, which does not say, This is my FLESH, but This is my BODY. Accordingly, when our Lord said, My flesh is true food, the word flesh stands for the whole body, because according to human custom it seems to be more suitable for eating, seeing that people normally eat the flesh of animals, not their bones or the like.

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that, as we have already seen, after the consecration of the bread into the body of Christ, or of the wine into his blood, the accidents of both remain. From which it is evident that the dimensions of the bread or wine are not converted into the dimensions of the body of Christ, but substance into substance. And so the

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78 I.e. from his death on the cross until his resurrection.

79 Romans 6.9.

80 3a.75.5.
Thomas Aquinas on Transubstantiation

sub-stance of Christ’s body or blood is under this sacrament by the power of the sacrament, but not the dimensions of Christ’s body or blood. Hence it is clear that the body of Christ is in this sacrament by way of substance, and not by way of quantity. But the whole specific nature of a substance is as truly contained in a small as large dimensions – just as the whole nature of air is contained in a great or small amount of air, and the whole nature of a human being is contained in a big or small individual. Thus, after the consecration, the whole substance of Christ’s body and blood is contained in this sacrament, just as the whole substance of the bread and wine was contained there before the consecration.

ARTICLE 2.
WHETHER THE WHOLE CHRIST IS CONTAINED UNDER EACH SPECIES OF THIS SACRAMENT?

We may now proceed to the second article.

**Argument 1.** It seems that the whole Christ is not contained under both species of this sacrament. For this sacrament is ordained for the salvation of the faithful, not by the power of the species, but by the power of what is contained under the species. Because the species were there before the consecration, and it is from the consecration that this sacrament has its power. If, then, nothing is contained under one species which is not contained under the other, and if the whole Christ is contained under both, it seems that one of them is superfluous in this sacrament.

**Argument 2.** Furthermore, it was stated above81 that all the other parts of the body, such as the bones, nerves, and so forth, are comprised under the name of flesh. But the blood is one of the parts of the human body, as Aristotle makes clear.82 If, then, Christ’s blood is contained under the species of bread, just as the other parts of the body are contained there, the blood should not be consecrated separately, just as no other part of the body is consecrated separately.

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81 3a.76.1, in reply to Argument 1.

82 Historia animalium I.4.489a30; De partibus animalium II. 2.647b12.
Argument 3. Furthermore, what has already come into being cannot again go through the process of becoming. But Christ’s body has already come to be in this sacrament by the consecration of the bread. Therefore, it cannot again begin to be there by the consecration of the wine. So Christ’s body will not be contained under the species of the wine – and as a consequence, neither will the entire Christ be contained under the species of the wine. Therefore the whole Christ is not contained under each species.

On the other hand, the gloss on 1 Corinthians 11.25, commenting on this cup, says that “under each species,” namely, of the bread and of the wine, “the same is received.”

I answer that, after what we have said above, it must be held most certainly that the whole Christ is under each sacramental species – yet not in the same way in each. For the body of Christ is indeed present under the species of bread by means of the sacramental sign, while the blood is there by way of natural concomitance, as stated above in regard to the soul and Godhead of Christ. Under the species of wine the blood is present by reason of the sacramental sign, and his body by way of natural concomitance, just as is his soul and Godhead, because now the blood of Christ is not separated from his body, as it was at the time of his passion and death. Hence if this sacrament had been celebrated then, the body of Christ would have been under the species of the bread, but without the blood; and under the species of the wine, the blood would have been present without the body, as it was then in fact.

Hence: –

In reply to Argument 1, it must be said that although the whole Christ is under each species, yet the use of two species is not pointless. In the first place this serves to represent Christ’s passion, in which the blood was separated from the

83 the gloss: A verse-by-verse commentary on the Scriptures using extracts from the writings of the Fathers; it was compiled by a variety of masters during the twelfth century. 1 Corinthians 11.25: “In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘THIS CUP is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’”
body. Hence in the form of the consecration of the blood mention is made of its being poured out.84

Secondly, it is in keeping with the use of this sacrament that the body of Christ be shown separately to the faithful as food, and his blood as drink.

Thirdly, it is in keeping with the effect [of the eucharist]. As we stated above, “the body is offered for the salvation of the body, and the blood for the salvation of the soul.”85

In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that in Christ’s passion, of which this sacrament is the memorial, the other parts of the body were not separated from one another, as the blood was. The body remained unbroken, in accordance with what we read in Exodus 12, You shall not break a bone of it.86 That is why in this sacrament the blood is consecrated separately from the body, but no other part is consecrated separately from the rest.

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that, as stated above, the body of Christ is not under the species of wine by reason of the sacramental sign, but by way natural concomitance. And so the consecration of the wine does not make the body of Christ to be there of itself; it is there as a concomitant of the effect of consecrating the wine.

84 Cf. Canon Romanus IX (Simil modo): “In the same way, after supper, taking also this glorious cup into his holy and venerable hands, and again giving thanks to you, he blessed and gave to his disciples, saying: Take and drink of this, all of you, for this is the cup of my blood of the new and eternal testament, the mystery of faith, WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins; as often as you do this, do it for the remembrance of me.”

85 3a.74.1 (not included in this reading).

86 Exodus 12:46. This passage is part of the directions concerning the Passover and, in particular, the preparation of the lamb.
We may now proceed to the third article.

**Argument 1.** It seems that the whole Christ is not under every single part of the species of bread and wine. Because those species can be divided into infinity. If therefore the whole Christ is under every part of these species, it would follow that he is in this sacrament an infinite number of times. But this is unreasonable, because [in the present case] infinity violates not only the order of nature but also the order of grace.

**Argument 2.** Furthermore, since Christ’s body is an organic whole, it has parts at a definite distance from one another. For such is the very nature of an organic body – as for example, one eye is at a definite distance from the other eye, or the eye is at a definite distance from the ear. But this could not be so, if Christ were entire under every part of the species. Then every part would have to be under every other part, and so where one part would be, there another part would be. It cannot be, therefore, that the entire Christ is under every part of the host or of the wine contained in the chalice.

**Argument 3.** Furthermore, Christ’s body always retains the true nature of a body, nor is it ever changed into a spirit. Now it is the nature of a body for it to be “quantity having position”. But it belongs to the nature of this quantity that the various parts exist in different parts of place. Therefore, it is impossible, it seems, for the whole Christ to be under every part of the species.

**On the other hand,** Augustine says in a sermon: “Each receives Christ the Lord, who is whole under each and every

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87 This question had a long history in the tradition, and arose from the fact that the consecrated species of bread was broken up into smaller pieces for communion. We first encountered this question (posed in a slightly different way) in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Great Catechetical Oration* 37; but it became a basic point of inquiry in the scholastic tradition after Berengar made it a basic objection to the presence of Christ’s real body in the sacrament.

88 Aristotle, *Categories* IV.7.5a23.
Thomas Aquinas on Transubstantiation

morsel, nor is he lessened through being divided into portions, but bestows himself entire in each one.”

I ANSWER THAT, as was observed above, the substance of Christ’s body is in this sacrament by reason of the sacramental sign while its quantitative dimensions are there only as a result of natural concomitance. As a consequence, the body of Christ is in this sacrament in the manner of a substance – that is, in the way in which substance is under its dimensions, but not in the manner of dimensions. Which means, not in the way in which the dimensive quantity of a body is under the dimensive quantity of the place which contains that body.

Now it is clear that the whole nature of a substance is under every part of the dimensions which contain it. For example, the whole nature of air is under every part of air, and the whole nature of bread under every part of bread; and this is equally true whether the dimensions are actually divided into parts (as when the air is divided or the bread is cut into pieces), or whether they are actually undivided, but potentially divisible. And so it is obvious that the whole Christ is under every part of the species of the bread, even when the host remains unbroken. Some say that this is the case only when the bread is broken, and give the example of an image which appears in a mirror – when the mirror is...

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89 Thomas apparently derived this quote from Gratian, *Decretum* III.2.77 *Singuli*, where it is indeed attributed to Augustine. It actually comes from *Sacramentarium Gregorianum*, Preface for 5th Sunday after the Epiphany.

90 3a.76.1, in reply Argument 3.

91 The point here is based on the distinction between a body and underlying reality which makes it be a body, i.e. its substance. Thomas has already argued (3a.75.4) that it was not Christ’s body as such that became present but the substance of Christ’s body, the underlying reality which makes it be his body. Thomas here argues that quantity (in this case, the dimensions of a body) contains substance before it extends substance. A substance can be contained by quantity (dimensions), without its integrity being entirely subsumed in the dimensions; therefore, the substance can exist equally under any part of the dimensive quantity, prior to (and independently of) its extension to the spatial dimensions of the body.
unbroken, the image that appears is a single whole, whereas when the mirror is broken, there is an image in each part of the separate segments. But the comparison is not valid, because the multiplication of such images happens in the broken mirror on account of the different reflections in the different segments of the mirror. But here the body of Christ is here in this sacrament solely on account of the one consecration.

Hence: –

In reply to Argument 1, it must be said that number follows on division.92 Thus, so long as the quantity of a thing remains actually undivided, the substance of that thing does not lie under its proper dimensions a number of times. Neither does the body of Christ lie under the dimensions of the bread a number of times. As a consequence, it is not present an infinite number of times, but only as many times as the number of pieces into which it is broken.

In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that the fact that the parts in an organic body are at a definite distance from one another is based upon its being extended in dimensions. But the nature of any substance precedes is prior even to its being extended. And since the conversion of the substance of the bread has its terminus in the substance of the body of Christ, – and since the body of Christ is properly and directly in this sacrament according to the manner of a substance, – such distance of part from part is indeed in Christ’s true body. But Christ’s body is not present in this sacrament in the manner of such distance, but simply in the manner of its substance, as stated above.93

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that this argument is based on the nature of a body insofar as it is conditioned by its quantitative extension. But as we have just stated, the body of Christ is present in this sacrament not by reason of its quantitative extension, but by reason of its substance.

ARTICLE 4.

92 That is to say, number is not an absolute quality but a quality contingent on division or diversity. You can’t start counting before you have more than one thing to count.

93 In the body of this article, and in 3a.76.1 in reply Arg. 3.
We may now proceed to the fourth article.

**Argument 1.** It seems that the full dimensions of Christ’s body are not in this sacrament. For we just stated that the whole body of Christ is contained under each and every part of the consecrated host. But the entire quantitative dimensions of a thing cannot be contained in any whole, and in each and every part of it. Therefore it is impossible for the entire quantitative dimensions of Christ’s body to be contained in this sacrament.

**Argument 2.** Furthermore, it is impossible for two sets of dimensions to be together, even though one might be thought of as separate from its subject and the other as in a natural body -- as the Philosopher makes clear. But the quantitative dimensions of the bread remain in this sacrament, as is obvious to our senses. It follows, therefore, that Consequently, the quantitative dimensions of Christ’s body are not there.

**Argument 3.** Furthermore, if two unequal sets of dimensions are set side by side, the greater will overlap the lesser. But the dimensions of Christ’s body are considerably larger than the dimensions of the consecrated host in every quantitative respect. Therefore, if the dimensions of Christ’s body are in this sacrament together with the dimensions of the host, the dimensions of Christ’s body will extend beyond the dimensions of the host – which nevertheless will not be without the sub-stance of Christ’s body. Therefore, the substance of Christ’s body will be in this sacrament even outside the species of the bread – which is ridiculous, since the substance of Christ’s body is in this sacrament only by means of the consecration of the bread, as we stated above. As a result, it is impossible for the full dimensions of Christ’s body to be in this sacrament.

**On the other hand,** the existence of a body’s dimensions cannot be separated from the existence of its substance. But in this sacrament the entire substance of Christ’s body is

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95 3a.76.2.
present, as stated above.\footnote{3a.76.1 & 2.} Therefore the full dimensions of Christ’s body are in this sacrament.

I ANSWER THAT, as stated above,\footnote{3a.76.1.} any part of Christ is in this sacrament in two ways: (1) by way of the effectiveness of the sacramental sign; (2) by way of natural concomitance. The dimensions of Christ’s body is not in this sacrament by way of the effectiveness of the sacramental sign. For as a result the effectiveness of the sacramental sign we have in this sacrament precisely that thing which is the terminus of the conversion. But direct terminus of the conversion which takes place in this sacrament is solely the substance of Christ’s body, not its dimensions. This is evident from the fact that the dimensions of the bread remain after the consecration, while only the substance of the bread passes away.

Nevertheless, since the substance of Christ’s body is not really deprived of its dimensions or its other accidents, it follows that the full dimensions of Christ’s body, and all its other accidents, are in this sacrament by reason of natural concomitance.

Hence: –

In reply to Argument 1, it must be said that the manner in which a thing exists is determined by what belongs to its essence, and not by what belongs to it by way of non-essential accidents. For example, an object is present to the sight according as it is white and not according as it is sweet, although the same object may be both white and sweet. Hence sweetness may be seen after the manner of whiteness, but not as sweetness. Since, then, the substance of Christ’s body is present on the altar by the effectiveness of the sacramental sign, while its dimensions are there only by way of natural concomitance and (as it were) in the manner of accidents, therefore the dimensions of Christ’s body are not in this sacrament according to their proper manner (namely, that the whole Christ is in the whole sacrament, and the individual parts of Christ are in individual portions of the sacrament), but in the way of substance, whose nature is to be whole in the whole, and whole in every part as well.
In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that two sets of dimensions cannot naturally be in the same subject at the same time, such that each set is there in the normal way of any set of dimensions. But in this sacrament the dimensions of the bread are there in the normal way, that is, in harmony with the dimensions of the place which contains them. But the dimensions of Christ’s body are not there in the normal manner, because Christ’s body is there in the normal manner of substance, as stated above.

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that the dimensions of Christ’s body are not in this sacrament commensurately with the species, which is the normal way for dimensions to exist; in that case the greater would overlap the lesser. But the dimensions of Christ’s body are there in the way mentioned above.

ARTICLE 5.
WHETHER CHRIST’S BODY IS IN THIS SACRAMENT AS IN A PLACE?

We may now proceed to the fifth article.

Argument 1. It seems that Christ’s body is in this sacrament as in a place. To be in something, so as to be limited to it or surrounded by it, belongs to being in a place. But Christ’s body seems to be in this sacrament in a way that limits it to the sacrament, because it is wherever the species of the bread and wine are and nowhere else upon the altar. It also seems to be there in the way of being surrounded by the sacrament, because it is so contained under the species of the consecrated host, that it neither goes beyond nor falls short of the species. Therefore Christ’s body is in this sacrament as in a place.

Argument 2. Furthermore, the place of the bread and wine is not empty, because nature abhors a vacuum; neither is the substance of the bread there, as stated above, but only the body of Christ. Consequently the body of Christ fills that place. But whatever fills a place is there locally. Therefore the body of Christ is in this sacrament locally.

Argument 3. Furthermore, as stated above, the body of Christ is in this sacrament with its dimensions and with all its

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98 3a.75.2.

99 3a.76.4.
Thomas Aquinas on Transubstantiation

accidents. But to be in a place is an accident which all bodies have – hence, *where* is numbered among the nine kinds of accidents. Therefore Christ’s body is in this sacrament locally.

**On the other hand,** a place and what is placed in it must correspond to one another, as is clear from the Philosopher.\(^{100}\) But the place occupied by this sacrament is much smaller than the body of Christ. Therefore the body of Christ is not in this sacrament as in a place.

**I answer that,** as stated above,\(^{101}\) Christ’s body is in this sacrament not in the normal manner of quantitative dimensions, but rather in the manner of substance. But every body which occupies a place is in that place precisely as an extended body – that is, it corresponds to the place which contains it according to its quantitative dimensions. Hence it remains that Christ’s body is not in this sacrament as in a place, but simply in the way that substance is in a place – that is to say, in the way that substance is contained by dimensions.\(^{102}\) For the substance of Christ’s body succeeds the substance of bread in this sacrament. Hence, as the *substance* of bread was not under its dimensions in the way that an extended body is in a place, but in the way that substance is under dimensions, so the *substance* of Christ’s body is not under the dimensions of the bread in the way that an extended body is in a place.

Nevertheless, the substance of Christ’s body is not the subject of those dimensions as was the substance of the bread. The substance of the bread was localized in a place by reason of its dimensions, because it was related to that place through the medium of its own dimensions. But the substance of Christ’s body is related to that place through the medium of dimensions which are not its own; so, conversely, the proper dimensions of Christ’s body are related to that place through the medium of substance, which is contrary to the concept of a localized body.

\(^{100}\) Aristotle, *Physics* IV.4. 211a2.

\(^{101}\) 3a.76.1, in reply Arg. 3, and 3a.76.3.

\(^{102}\) The idea that substance may be *contained by* the dimensions prior to *being the subject,* is a distinction in metaphysics broached for the first time ever here in Thomas’s discussion of the real presence.
Thus Christ’s body in this sacrament is in no way localized. Hence: –

In reply to Argument 1, it must be said that Christ’s body is not in this sacrament in the sense of being limited to it, because then it would be only on the particular altar where this sacrament is performed. But it is in heaven under its own species, and on many other altars under the sacramental species. Likewise it is evident that it is not in this sacrament in the sense of being circumscribed by it, because it is not there with its dimensions corresponding to the dimensions of the bread, as stated above. But the fact that it is not outside the containing dimensions of the sacrament, nor on any other part of the altar, is due not to its being limited to, or circumscribed by, the sacrament. It is simply due to the fact that Christ’s body is there by consecration and conversion of the bread and wine, as stated above.103

In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that the place where Christ’s body is, is not empty – nor, strictly speaking, is it filled with the substance of Christ’s body, which is not there locally, as stated above. But it is filled with the sacramental species, which fill the place either because the dimensions do so naturally, or are enabled to do so miraculously, just as they miraculously subsist as if they were substance.

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that, as we saw above,104 the accidents of Christ’s body are in this sacrament by natural concomitance. Therefore, those accidents of Christ’s body which are intrinsic to it, are in this sacrament. But to be in a place is an accident in relation to the extrinsic container. So it is not necessary for Christ to be in this sacrament as in a place.105

103 3a.76.1; 3a.75.2-6.

104 3a.76.4.

105 The body of Christ, with its own proper dimensions, is really present to the dimensions of the bread – but in a “non-local” way. As Thomas has repeatedly stated, it is not simply the body of Christ as such that is present: what is present is the substance of Christ’s body. Now, by definition, substance is always contained by its dimensions in a spiritual way – that is, in manner which cannot be localized (pinned down and fixed to a particular spot) within the dimensions which contain it. Hence, as William Barden puts it, “It is only as ‘spiritually’ [and not as ‘locally’] contained that the
ARTICLE 6.
WHETHER THE BODY OF CHRIST IN THIS SACRAMENT CAN BE MOVED AROUND?

We may now proceed to the sixth article.

Argument 1. It seems that Christ’s body in this sacrament can be moved. For the Philosopher says that “when we are in movement, the things within us are also in movement.” And this is true even of the spiritual substance of the soul. “But Christ is in this sacrament,” as we have already established. Therefore Christ is moved when the sacrament is moved.

Argument 2. Furthermore, the truth ought to correspond to its figure. But, according to the commandment concerning the Passover lamb, which was a figure of this sacrament, none of it remained until the morning. Therefore, if this sacrament is reserved until morning, the body of Christ will not be there. And so it is not exempt from movement in this sacrament.

Argument 3. Furthermore, if Christ’s body were to remain under this sacrament until the morrow, for that very reason it would remain there for all time to come. For it cannot be said that it ceases to be there when the species of the bread cease to exist, because the existence of Christ’s body is not dependent on those species. But Christ does not remain in this sacrament for all time to come. It seems, then, that he ceases to be under this sacrament either immediately on the

extended body of Christ is related to the dimensions of the bread” (New Blackfriars Summa theologæ, vol. 58: The Eucharistic Presence [1965], pp. 110-111).

106 Aristotle, Topics 7, 113a29.

107 3a.74.1 (not included in this Reading).

108 figure: a symbol, i.e. a reality which represents another reality. In this argument, Thomas is thinking of those “figures” known as types, things in the Old Testament which not only represent but also in some sense anticipate Christ.

109 Exodus 12.10.
morrow or after a short time. And so it seems that Christ is in this sacrament in a movable way.

On the other hand, it is impossible for the same thing to be in motion and at rest; for then mutually exclusive conditions would be affirmed of the same subject. But Christ’s body is at rest in heaven. Therefore it is not movably in this sacrament.

I answer that when any thing is one as a subject and manifold in the modes of its being, there is nothing to hinder it from being moved in one respect and yet to remain at rest in another respect. Just as it is one thing for a body to be white, and another thing for it to be large: it can be moved with respect to its whiteness, and yet continue unmoved with respect to its size. But in Christ, being in himself and being under the sacrament are not the same thing. Because when we say that he is under this sacrament, we express a kind of relationship to this sacrament. According to this mode of his being under the sacrament, then, Christ is not moved locally in himself, but only accidentally. For Christ is not in this sacrament as in a place, as stated in the previous article. But what is not in a place, is not moved locally; it is moved only according to the motion of the subject in which it is.

Neither is Christ himself, according to the being that he has in this sacrament, set in motion by any other change whatever – as for instance, by the sort of change which would make him cease to be under this sacrament. For whatever possesses unfailing existence in itself, cannot be a principle of ceasing to be. But when something else ceases to be, then it ceases to be in it – just as God, whose existence is unfailing and immortal, ceases to be in some perishable creature because the perishable creature ceases to exist. In the same way, since Christ has unfailing and imperishable being, he does not cease to be under this sacrament because he himself ceases to be, nor yet by local movement of his own, as is clear from what has been said, but only by the fact that the sacramental species cease to exist.

Thus it is clear that, strictly speaking, Christ is not subject to any movement or change in this sacrament.

Hence: –

In reply to Argument 1, it must be said that this argument deals with accidental movement, whereby things within us are moved together with us. But the movement of things
which can be in a place, like bodies, is different from the movement of things which cannot be in a place, such as forms and spiritual substances. And in this sense we can say that Christ is moved merely by way of accidents, according to the existence which he has in this sacrament, in which he is not present as in a place.

In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that this argument seems to have convinced those who held that Christ’s body does not remain under this sacrament if it is reserved until the morrow. It is against these that Cyril says: “Some are so foolish as to say that the mystical blessing departs from the sacrament, if any of its fragments remain until the next day. For Christ’s most holy body undergoes no change, and the power of the consecration and its life-giving grace endures.”

Thus all other consecrations endure so long as the consecrated things endure – which is why the consecrations are not repeated. And although the reality may correspond to the figure, yet the figure cannot be equivalent to the reality.

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that the body of Christ remains in this sacrament not only until the morrow, but also in as far into the future as the sacramental species remain. When they cease to exist, Christ’s body ceases to be under them, not because it depends on them, but because the relationship of Christ’s body and those species has ceased, in the same way as God ceases to be the Lord of a creature which has ceased to exist.

 ARTICLE 7.
WHETHER THE BODY OF CHRIST, AS IT IS IN THIS SACRAMENT, CAN BE SEEN BY THE HUMAN EYE, OR AT LEAST BY ONE THAT IS GLORIFIED? 

We may now proceed to the seventh article.

Argument 1. It seems that the body of Christ, as it is in this sacrament, can be seen by the human eye, or at least by the

110 Cyril of Alexandria, Letter 83 to Kalosyrios.

111 [an eye] that is glorified: I.e. in the highest reaches of heaven. As Argument 1 makes clear, it is not the eye alone that is thus set in paradise; it is the whole person of the blessed individual, including his or her sight.
eyes of a human who has entered glory. For our eyes are kept from seeing the body of Christ in this sacrament by the sacramental species which veil it. But the glorified eye cannot be hindered by anything from seeing bodies just as they are. Therefore, the glorified eye can see Christ’s body, just as it is, in this sacrament.

**Argument 2.** Furthermore, the glorified bodies of the saints will be conformed to the body of Christ’s glory. But Christ’s eye beholds himself as he is in this sacrament. Therefore, for the same reason, every other glorified eye can see him.

**Argument 3.** Furthermore, in the resurrection the saints will be equal to the angels, as we read in Luke. But the angels see the body of Christ as it is in this sacrament; even the devils are found to show reverence to it and to fear it. Therefore, for like reason, the glorified eye can see Christ as he is in this sacrament.

On the other hand, as long as a thing remains unchanged, it cannot be seen simultaneously by the same eye under different appearances [species]. But the glorified eye always sees Christ as he is in his own appearance, according to Isaiah: Your eyes shall see the king in his beauty. It seems, then, that the glorified sense of sight does not see Christ as he is under the species of this sacrament.

I answer that the eye is of two kinds, namely, the bodily eye properly so called, and the intellectual eye, so called by analogy. But the body of Christ as it is in this sacrament cannot be seen by any bodily eye. First of all, because a body which is visible brings about an alteration in the medium [of air] by its accidents. Now the accidents of Christ’s body are in this sacrament by means of the substance. So the accidents of Christ’s body have no immediate relationship either to the sacramental species or to the bodies which surround them. Hence they do not alter the medium of air so as to be seen by any bodily eye. Secondly, because, as stated above, Christ’s body is present in this sacrament by way of substance.

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112 Philippians 3.21.


114 Isaiah 33.17.

115 3a.76.1, in reply Arg. 3: 3a.76.3.
But substance, as such, is not visible to the bodily eye, nor
does it come under any one of the senses, nor under the
imagination, but solely under the intellect, “whose object is
the essence of a thing”.116 Strictly speaking, therefore, Christ’s
body, according to the mode of being which it has in this
sacrament, can be perceived neither by the senses nor by the
imagination but only by the intellect, which is called “the
spiritual eye”.

But the body of Christ as it is in this sacrament is perceived
in different ways by different intellects. For since the way in
which Christ is in this sacrament is entirely supernatural, it is
visible in itself only to a supernatural (i.e. divine) intellect. As
a consequence it can be perceived by the glorified intellect of
an angel or a human which, by participating in the glory of
the divine intellect, sees all supernatural things in the vision of
the divine essence. But those who are still wayfarers cannot
see the body of Christ as it is in this sacrament except by faith,
just as they “see” other supernatural realities. Not even
angelic intellect by its own natural power is capable of
beholding it. Hence the devils cannot perceive Christ in this
sacrament by their intellect, but only faith. (Not that they
give willing assent; they are compelled to believe by the
evidence of signs, as James put it, The demons believe – and
shudder.117)

Hence: –

In reply to Argument 1, it must be said that the
sacramental species prevent our bodily eye from beholding
the body of Christ underlying them, not merely as by way of
veil (just as we are prevented from seeing what is covered
with any physical veil), but also because Christ’s body is not
related to the medium surrounding this sacrament through its
own accidents, but through the sacramental species.

In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that Christ’s own
bodily eye sees himself existing under the sacrament, yet it
cannot see the way in which it exists under the sacrament,
because that belongs to the intellect alone. But it is not the
same with any other glorified eye, because Christ’s eye is


117 James 2.19.
under this sacrament and in this no other glorified eye is conformed to it.

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that no angel, good or bad, can see anything with a bodily eye, but only with the eye of intellect. Hence the parallel set forth in the argument does not apply, as is evident from what was said above.118

ARTICLE 8.

Whether the body of Christ is really there when it miraculously appears in this sacrament under the likeness of a child or of flesh?119

We may now proceed to the eighth article.

Argument 1. It seems that Christ’s body is not truly there when flesh or a child appears miraculously in this sacrament. Because his body ceases to exist under this sacrament when the sacramental species cease to be present, as we have already seen.120 But when flesh or a child appears, the sacramental species cease to be present. Therefore, Christ’s body is not really there.

Argument 2. Furthermore, wherever Christ’s body is, it is there either under its own species or under those of the sacrament. But when such apparitions occur, it is evident that Christ is not present under his own species, because the whole Christ contained in this sacrament keeps the complete form in which he ascended to heaven. But what appears miraculously in this sacrament is sometimes seen as a small particle of flesh and at other times as a small child. Now it is evident that Christ is not there under the species of the sacrament, namely the species of bread and wine. Consequently, it seems that Christ’s body is not there in any way at all.

118 In the body of the present article.

119 Thomas is referring to a distinct genre known as “eucharistic miracles,” in which one of the faithful beholds, instead of bread, a manifestation of Christ himself (usually as an infant) or a portion of Christ (for example, a bloodied finger).

120 3a.76.6.
Argument 3. Furthermore, Christ’s body begins to be in this sacrament by consecration and conversion, as was said above. But the flesh and blood which appear by miracle are not consecrated, nor are they converted into Christ’s true body and blood. Therefore neither the body nor the blood of Christ is under those species.

On the other hand, when such apparition takes place, the same reverence is shown to it as was shown at first, which would not be done if Christ were not truly there, to whom we show reverence of latria. Therefore, when such an apparition occurs, Christ is under the sacrament.

I answer that this sort of apparition, when sometimes flesh or blood and at other times a child is seen in this sacrament, comes about in two ways. Sometimes it happens on the part of the beholders, whose eyes are so affected that it is as if they outwardly saw flesh or blood or a child, though no change actually takes place in the sacrament. And this seems to happen when to one person it is seen under the species of flesh or of a child, while to others it is seen as before under the species of bread; or when to the same individual it appears for an hour under the appearance of flesh or a child, and afterwards under the appearance of bread. Nor is there any deception in this, as occurs in the tricks of magicians, because this kind of image is divinely formed in the eye in order to represent some truth, namely, for the purpose of showing that Christ’s body is really present under this sacrament – just as Christ without deception appeared to the disciples who were going to Emmaus. For Augustine says that “when the image we form genuinely signifies something, it is not a lie but a kind of figure of the truth.” And since in this way no change is made in the sacrament itself, it is manifest that, when such apparition occurs, Christ does not cease to be under this sacrament.

But it sometimes happens that such apparition comes about not merely by a change in the beholders, but by an appearance which really exists outwardly. And this indeed is

121 3a.75.2. 3, 4.

122 See p. 171, note 27, for the distinction between latria and dulia.

123 Augustine, Questions about the Gospel I, 51.
seen to happen when it is beheld by everyone under such an appearance, and it remains so not for an hour but for a considerable time. In such a case, some think that it is the proper species of Christ’s body. Nor does it matter that sometimes Christ’s entire body is not seen there, but only a part of his flesh, or that it is not seen in its full maturity but in the semblance of a child. For it lies within the power of a glorified body to be seen by a non-glorified eye either entirely or in part, and under its own likeness or in an adopted guise, as will be said later.\textsuperscript{124}

But this opinion seems unlikely. First of all, because Christ’s body in its natural appearance can be seen only in one place, to which it is limited so long as it is there. Hence, since it is seen and adored in heaven in its natural form, it is not seen in its natural form in this sacrament. Secondly, a glorified body, which appears at will, disappears at will after the apparition. Thus it is related that our Lord vanished from the disciples’ sight.\textsuperscript{125} But that which appears under the likeness of flesh in this sacrament, continues for a long time. Indeed, one reads that is sometimes enclosed, and by order of many bishops preserved in a pyx. It would be blasphemy to treat Christ in this way if he were present in his natural form.

And so it must be said that, while the dimensions remain the same as before, there is a miraculous change wrought in the other accidents – such as shape, colour, and the rest – so that flesh or blood or a child is seen. And, as was said already, this is not deception, because it is done “to represent the truth,” namely, to show by this miraculous apparition that Christ’s body and blood are really present in this sacrament. Thus it is clear that as the dimensions remain, which are the foundation of the other accidents, as we shall see later on,\textsuperscript{126} the body of Christ truly remains in this sacrament.

Hence: –

In reply to Argument 1, it must be said that when this kind of apparition takes place, the sacramental species sometimes

\textsuperscript{124} Thomas never got as far as the treatise on the general resurrection, in which he planned to discuss this issue at greater length.

\textsuperscript{125} Luke 24.31.

\textsuperscript{126} 3a.77.2 (not included in this set of Readings).
continue in their entirety, and sometimes only the most important species remain, as was said above.

In reply to Argument 2, it must be said that, as stated above, during such apparitions Christ’s natural form is not seen, but a species miraculously formed either in the eyes of the beholders or in the sacramental dimensions themselves, as was said above.

In reply to Argument 3, it must be said that the dimensions of the consecrated bread and wine continue, while a miraculous change is wrought in the other accidents, as stated above.
V. The Metaphor of Manducation

1.

Martin Luther

_A Treatise on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass_  
(1520)

_German Mass and Order of God’s Service_  
(1526)
INTRODUCTION

FOR roughly four and a half centuries – from the close of the Berengarian controversy in 1079 until the opening of the Reformation in 1517 – the western Church dwelt in relatively peaceful possession of its eucharistic faith. The only serious threat that this faith encountered was the dualist Cathar movement in southern France and northern Italy during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Church authorities tended to view the Cathars as heretics, and thus an internal threat, for no other reason but that they arose in a part of Europe, which was supposed to be Catholicism’s home turf and exclusive preserve. But Catharism really stood outside Catholicism; it was, in fact, an alternative religion, not a variant (much less a heresy) of the Catholic religion. Pope Innocent III seems to have recognised this fact, insofar as he declared the war against the Cathars to be a crusade; for crusades could only be launched against infidels, that is, adherents of another religion. Otherwise, within the sphere of mediæval Catholicism itself, the critiques of the Church’s eucharistic faith were so rare, and so easily isolated, that they never seriously disrupted the consensus. John Wyclyf (or Wycliffe, ca. 1330-1384) is a case in point. A priest and scholar of Oxford, he energetically criticised both the institutional life of the Church and (as he saw it) the religious sterility of contemporary philosophy and theology. These critiques, though condemned by the Pope and a flock of lesser prelates, won him powerful patrons at the court of King Richard II, who deflected the ire of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Then Wyclif issued a treatise denouncing the doctrine of transubstantiation. Merely to have attacked this one doctrine, quite apart from the merits of the argument, made Wyclif’s patrons stop returning his calls. Even the most hard-boiled anti-clericalists among the English nobility thought that he had crossed one line too many, and shunned him. Wyclif died of a heart-attack two years later, an isolated exception to the western Church’s otherwise universal

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1 Roughly contemporary with Wyclif, and associated with him, was the English movement known as Lollardy. Its programme seems to have been more in the way of institutional grievances than theological protests. As it was forced underground early in the fifteenth century, Lollardy remains an opaque phenomenon; where it surfaces in the surviving evidence (mostly records of trials for heresy and examinations before magistrates), it is hard to tell the authentic voice of Lollardy from what magistrates and ecclesiastical officials supposed the Lollards thought.
commitment to metabolic realism, as embodied in the doctrine of transubstantiation.

1. The Purpose of the Mass

The doctrine of transubstantiation took its cue from the mystery of the Incarnation. In the person of Jesus Christ, the Catholic tradition confessed, God the Word united an entire human nature to his divine nature. There was a reason for this wondrous union. God the Word became a human so that humans might become sharers in his divinity. This meant that Christ's own humanity served as the intersection between God and human beings. It also meant that humans have no access to real participation in the divine life except by way of the incarnate Word's humanity; they can share in God's life only through the human life of the Word-made-flesh. That is the entry point for our communion with God, and we progress into God from the humanity that the Lord has in common with us.

The Catholic tradition assumed that the eucharist not only signifies but also communicates this very economy. That is why Catholic doctrine insisted on the real presence of the human body and blood of Christ in the eucharistic sacrament. For unless Christ's flesh and blood – Christ's human nature – were "really there" to mediate his divine nature, the eucharist would fail to be a sacrament of salvation. And this very insight supplied the motive and reason for the doctrine of transubstantiation. According to this doctrine, as soon as the words of institution were spoken, the substance of the bread – its invisible, underlying reality – was converted into the substance, the invisible underlying reality, of Christ's human flesh. The same thing was supposed to happen to the wine: its underlying reality was converted into the substance of Christ's human blood.

All this applied to consecration, to the making of the sacrament. But the integrity (not to mention the consistency) of the Catholic witness required that consecration and the real presence of Christ be seen as having an ulterior purpose – and that purpose was communion, the sharing of the whole Christ, divine and human.

Here mediæval Catholic spirituality faced a problem. Yes, we truly eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ. But Christendom, its moral reflexes conditioned by the cultural norms of Graeco-Roman civilisation as much as by religious norms of Judaism, could not countenance the notion that communion might be a Christian form of cannibalism. So the Catholic tradition, at this point, resorted to metaphor: the receiving and consuming of Christ in the
sacrament is only like the receiving and consuming of meat and drink – it is not the same as receiving and consuming meat and drink. There was, then, a hairline fracture in the eucharistic spirituality of the mediaeval Church. On the one hand, when Catholic teachers spoke of Christ’s presence, they used terms of physical life. But when they turned to the reason for this presence, which was communion, they had speak in spiritual terms – in terms which not only transcended but even (in late mediaeval outlook) negated the physical order. So, when dealing with the act of consecration, mediaeval Catholicism used the model of conversion, the conversion of the creature. When dealing with communion, it switched its mode of discourse and resorted to the metaphor of manducation, the idea that the eating (manducatio) of the eucharistic sacrament is not the same as, but only like, the eating of Christ’s flesh and blood. If this were the case, communion became primarily an intellectual transaction, a moral experience “in the head,” not a “real” experience in the sphere of the body. This had a consequence for the model of conversion rarely acknowledged by mediaeval theologians – namely, the metabolic conversion in question was confined to the elements of bread and wine, without reference to the saving conversion of human beings for whom Christ was supposed to have instituted the mystery of his body and blood.

Medieval theologians were certainly aware of this hairline fracture in eucharistic theology, but its impact was weakened by the eucharistic practices of their age. Well before the thirteenth century, the vast majority of layfolk had ceased to receive communion on a regular basis; the priest was normally the only person who received the sacrament at a celebration of Mass. The laity simply attended Mass and performed private devotions until

2 The mediaeval Church had trouble making up its mind on the importance of communion. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) – the same council which endorsed the term and concept of “transubstantiation” – took scandalised note of the fact that vast numbers of Catholics were not receiving communion from one year to the next, and ordained that every Catholic must receive at least once a year, and at least at Easter. (This was the origin of the first rubric on page 66 of CanBCP 1962.) On the other hand, when fervour led many – most of whom were women – to seek daily communion, Church officials made life difficult for them. Thomas Aquinas merely justified the prevalence of non-communicating celebrations of Mass when he said: “The perfection of [the eucharistic sacrament] is not in the communion of the faithful, but in the consecration of the matter.” Summa theologiae 3a.80.12 ad 2.
the “sacring bell” announced the greater elevation of the Host after the words of institution. At that point they were to look up and perform what was known as “spiritual communion” – a purely mental or affective act whereby the soul, discerning by faith the body of Christ in the elevated elements, appropriated the meaning of Christ’s passion. In other words, the metaphor of manducation governed the eucharistic piety of the vast majority of mediæval Catholics, long before the Reformation.

The celebration of Mass without the communion of the faithful encouraged the metastasis of another eucharistic theme – the Mass as sacrifice. This theme had been present in Catholic discourse about the eucharist since the second or third century, but few Catholic theologians had made much of an effort to unpack and explore its implications. Thomas Aquinas was fairly typical: he referred to the eucharistic sacrifice only once in his Summa theologiae, and then only in passing. But theology and (all the more so) piety abhor a vacuum. If the Mass was not for communion – and for the saving conversion of the human through communion – what was it for?

In Catholic teaching and piety, the Mass was not only a sacrament of Christ in general. It was also, in particular, a sacrament of Christ’s atoning sacrifice in particular. This meant, every time the Church celebrated Mass, it was united with the one oblation of Christ once offered upon the cross. More than that: the Church’s celebration of the eucharist co-operated with Christ’s human will in its union with his divine will. Because the Church was the body of Christ, it could offer the Mass “in Christ, and with Christ, and through Christ,” to apply the effects of his one sacrifice to particular situations on earth. Christ, the High Priest of our humanity, became present in the sacrament to offer up in himself the Church’s particular intentions – Eleanor Huswife’s plea for the safe delivery of her child; Roger Villein’s prayer for a good crop this year; Father Edward’s desire for strength to hold by his vow of abstinence; Judith Fear’s prayer for the repose of her departed mother’s soul. In the Mass, the Church joined these intentions to the flesh and blood of the Saviour and, through his humanity, in union with his divinity, offered them to the Father of glory. In other words, Mass became peculiarly objectified. Simply performing the liturgy itself came to be viewed as a sacrificial act. There was no need for communion, except in the vestigial or token communion of the presiding celebrant alone, because the purpose of the liturgy had been fulfilled when the priest “attached” the petitions of the Church to the body and blood of Christ and “offered” him, the Sacrificial Victim, to the Father.
Introduction to Luther

Mediæval divines took great care to avoid any notion that each celebration of Mass might be a new sacrifice of Christ, as if Jesus underwent actual immolation (or slaughter) again and again and again, each and every time Mass was offered. The crucifixion was not repeated, as if it had not worked the first time; rather, that one, all-availing sacrifice of Christ was re-presented – that is to say, the saving effects of Christ’s “one oblation of himself once offered” were renewed in the present, for the sake of present needs. This sacrificial economy was, of course, the will and work of God, and it was only by God’s grace that humans had any real part in its operation. Grace is not the easiest of theological concepts, and its development in Catholic teachings required high sophistication, as much in prayer as in intellect, to be understood. No wonder, then, that its nuances were weakened well before it reached ordinary folk in the tumble of their everyday needs and aspirations. What came through to them was not God’s loving will to make them partners in the divine life, but the fearful demands of God’s justice. Thus, despite the care of the theologians, the sacrifice of the Mass loomed in the lives of the faithful as a new or repeated oblation of the only Victim that could satisfy God on their behalf. It was the priest’s way of appeasing God the Father for their sins – or of placating God into granting their requests – with “the unbloody sacrifice” of the Son.

The human heart can endure fear only so long before it must seek release. That, at bottom, was the motive of the Protestant Reformation – to find a release from the perpetual round of appeasement and the fear that it sustained. But the reformers did not find their release by affirming the goodness of human nature in partnership with Christ. On the contrary, they found it by confessing humanity’s utter depravity – and by raising to the nth degree the absolute sovereignty of Almighty God.

2. Martin Luther and justification by faith.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, western Christendom appeared to be in a state of itchy equipoise, performing improvisations upon business as usual. To be sure, the most prominent figures among the intelligentsia felt a need for some sort of renewal; but they rarely got beyond satire of the way things were. Then, between 1517 and 1525, all hell broke loose. An Augustinian friar named Martin Luther, then teaching biblical theology at Wittenberg, a city in Saxony, issued a modest challenge to some standard money-raising practices of the Church. The hierarchy responded by trying to squash the challenger. It only succeeded in pushing his conscience further and further towards
open rebellion. At the same time, Luther turned out to have talents which neither he nor anyone else had suspected. As the crisis unfolded, he showed himself to be a writer of extraordinary power and versatility, who on one page could speak with the tongues of angels, and on the very next page could dip his pen in piss to make his opponents look as if they had wet their own pants. He was pithy and racy, earnest and earthy, serious and outrageous, all at once; he was also the first thinker to exploit the latent power of the printing-press as a mass medium, to take his appeal past “the world-rulers of this present age” and mobilise popular opinion on his own side. By 1521, at the age thirty-eight, Luther found himself speaking to a vast popular movement which his own writings had all but single-handedly triggered.

Born in 1483, a miner’s son who became a monk and priest of the Augustinian Friars, Luther was not a natural rebel. Most of his difficulties arose because he took the piety of his age and the obligations of his priesthood very seriously. Indeed, Luther suffered from a pathological case of scrupulosity. He went through agonies of self-examination and penance before he celebrated Mass; and even then he sometimes stopped Mass in the middle of celebrating because he had suddenly remembered an unshriven sin, or an imperfect penance; on those occasions he would call up a fellow priest to hear his confession right there at the altar. Luther knew in his heart that the fearfulness he lived with was not true to the gospel of Christ; but he was a dogged rather than a quick thinker. He did not arrive at his mature position all at once. Instead, he worried at a number of related issues, the way a dog worries at a bone, until he felt he had reached the marrow of the whole problem. Indeed, he did not experience a single conversion from faithful Catholic to Protestant Reformer; the change took place over a number of years, through a variety of experiences. The last of these conversion-experiences took place after the Protestant movement was well under way. But once the process was complete, Luther held on to its results with indeflectable energy. For he was sure that he had found the master key which unlocked his fearfulness and liberated his life. This master key was the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

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3 This is a technical term of moral theology; it denotes a conscience so infested and controlled by scruples, that one treats a minor mistake or accident as if it were the most heinous of sins. The scrupulous conscience chronically makes mountains out of molehills.

4 In Latin, *justificatio sola fide* – hence, the concept is known as “solafidianism”.

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Remember that Luther was obsessed with making himself acceptable to God. That is basically what the word *justification* means, having the righteousness which makes you acceptable to God. Luther’s breakthrough was his recognition that humans could never achieve this state by their own power. For the Word of God convicted all humans of sin – and Luther took this to mean that humans were *always* sinners, and *only* sinners; they could never be anything else but sinners. But even as the gospel announced God’s judgement against our utter sinfulness, it also announced God’s *Nevertheless!* Though there is no good in us, none whatsoever, *nevertheless* God’s only Son died for us, to free us from the consequences of God’s wrath. It was God himself who accounted us acceptable in his eyes – and he accounted us acceptable, not for our own sake, but for the alone only merits of his Son Jesus Christ.

In Luther’s view, we are not *made* acceptable, we are only *accounted* acceptable for Jesus’ sake. In ourselves we remain still and only sinners. Luther saw no hope of real conversion, such that one day we are sinners and the next we are righteous. For then (as he saw it) salvation would no longer be a pure gift; it would be a reward that we deserved for services rendered. It was in the sheer giftliness of salvation that Luther discovered liberation. The guarantee of this gift was the word of promise that God uttered in Scripture; and it is only by trusting that promise, by faith in that word alone, that we are saved.

God alone – without any entreaty or desire of the human – must first come and give the human a promise.... God must anticipate all the creature’s works and thoughts, and make a promise clearly expressed in words, which the human then takes and keeps in a good, firm faith.

When God speaks a word of promise, the Almighty creates a relationship with the sinful human creature, where no relationship existed before. It does not matter how often you have heard the word of God; there is no continuity between one hearing and the next, because you are a sinner, always a sinner, *only* a sinner. The promise of salvation has to be constantly renewed to you, over and over and over again, and you receive that promise only when, and only for as long as, you are actually hearing and receiving by faith the word of God that is being addressed to you right here, right this instant. Apart from this moment of God’s word you are merely a sinner, having no hope and without God in your world.

This was the setting for Luther’s teaching about the Mass. Indeed, when Luther connected his doctrine of justification with
the eucharist, his protest gained a focus and a bite which it had not possessed before. This suggests that Luther’s understanding of the eucharist underwent some development during the first phase of his career as a reformer. And such was the case. The development is most clearly seen in the way he handled one particular theme of eucharistic theology – what I here call “the final significance of the sacrament”. This term stands for that definitive meaning, that spiritual reality of the eucharist, which is signified by the bread and wine and effected in the faithful when, receiving those elements, they partake of Christ’s body and blood. The qualifier final should be noted, in order that the matter under discussion may be distinguished from what may be called the sacrament’s mediate significance, namely the corpus Christi verum, Christ’s true (or real) body and blood as present in, under, or with the visible elements. The sacrament’s final significance designates the reason why, the purpose or end for which, the sacrament’s mediate significance – Christ’s body and blood – is present and available to the faithful.

Students of Luther’s eucharistic teachings have concerned themselves, for the most part, with his handling of the sacrament’s mediate significance. The reasons for this are not difficult to figure out. From about 1524 onwards, Luther found himself committed to an increasingly acrimonious controversy about “the Real Presence”; and his Abendmahlsstreit (“Supper-strife”) with those whom he denounced as die Schwarmgeister (“the fanatics”) constituted a serious parting of the ways in the Reformation movement. Its climax, the so-called Marburg Colloquy of 1529, only established the dissension in such a way that each party felt free to consolidate its own confessional position.

Up to about 1525, however, Luther devoted a good deal of his theological energy to the exposition of a eucharistic doctrine which had as its centre something other than how Christ’s body and blood could be said to be present in the eucharistic sacrament. Indeed, in his first major reaction to the teachings of Huldrych Zwingli, published in 1526, he could still assert:

> For it is not sufficient that we know what the sacrament is, namely, that Christ’s body and blood are truly present, but it is also necessary to know why they are present and for what reason they are given to us to be received.

It is Luther’s explanation of the sacrament’s “why and for what reason” that is my concern here. For he changed his mind about what the eucharist “finally” signified; and the change occurred between 1519 and 1520. I shall open, therefore, with a consideration of his initial position, then go on to consider the position that he made his own from 1520 onwards.
Gemeynschafft aller heyligen

Luther produced his first major statement on the eucharist in December, 1519. *A treatise on the blessed sacrament of the holy and true body of Christ, and on the brotherhoods* completed the trilogy on the evangelical sacraments that he had begun with a tract on penance in October and continued with a tract on baptism in November. That he could deal with the sacraments in a trilogy, when traditional teaching numbered seven sacraments, was itself a polemical thrust at papal Catholicism. But the tracts themselves were not polemical either in tone or in content; Luther's aim in them was to do some catechising.

As he had done with respect to baptism and penance, Luther insisted that the eucharistic sacrament had “three parts”: the visible sign, the “significance” (*Bedeutung*), and “the faith required with each of the first two”. The mediaeval Catholic consensus had also insisted that a sacrament, properly so called, consisted of three parts:

1. *sacramentum tantum*, the *signa visibilia* (“visible signs,” i.e. bread and wine) as such, in their own right;
2. *res et sacramentum*, the thing signified and the means by which it is signified, as they exist together – i.e. the *corpus Christi verum* as signified by the *species* (“appearances”) of the visible signs of bread and the wine, and
3. *res tanta*, the “final” (ultimate, transcendent) reality as such, in its own right – usually identified as *corpus Christi mysticum quod est societas sanctorum* (“the mystical body of Christ, which is the fellowship of the saints” 5).

Luther silently dropped the middle term in the scholastic triad, the *res et sacramentum*, without replacing it by another term. Luther’s middle term, “faith,” may connect sign and significance within his triad just as *corpus verum* had connected *sacramentum* and *corpus mysticum* in the scholastic triad. “Faith,” however, does not serve the same theological purpose. It acts as a principle of extrinsic discernment, whereas *res et sacramentum* had acted as a term of intrinsic consistency. Nevertheless, Luther certainly did not intend this silence to constitute a denial of Christ’s real presence in the sacrament. What then does the silence mean?

In one of the few explicitly controversial passages that this early tract contains, Luther denied that the concept of *opus operatum* had any validity. 6 He justified this denial of this

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5 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 3a, 80, 4 resp.
principle, so firmly embedded in the tradition, on the grounds of the sacrament’s purpose – and purposefulness. The eucharist, he said,

was not instituted for its own sake, that it might please God, but for our sakes, that we might use it aright, exercise our faith by it, and through it become pleasing to God.

As the sacrament is nothing other than a divine gift, Luther seemed to be saying, so we cannot talk about its efficacy before we have actually received it. The only precondition for our enjoyment of the gift, and for our receiving of its benefit, is that should be given – and that we should receive it precisely as a gift. So the purpose of the sacrament’s institution was not that we should be sufficiently worthy to accept it, but “that the thing signified by the sacrament... may be put into practice.”

Luther was casting the eucharist in terms of a dynamic which had its beginning, rather than its end, in faithful communion. He warned his readers to “take heed” lest they stop short at mere adoration of the corpus verum:

It is more needful that you discern the spiritual than the natural body of Christ; and faith in the spiritual body is more necessary than faith in the natural body. For the natural without the spiritual profits us nothing in this sacrament; a change must occur in the communicant and be exercised through love.

Luther was to make other statements along the same lines over the next few years; and his opponents in the Protestant Abendmahlstreit would later exploit them in such a way as to make Luther regret them. It may be that his phrasing here in the 1519 tract lacks a certain theological discretion. It is none the less clear what Luther aimed at. He wanted to establish the evangelical character of the sacrament in depth. This meant the affirmation of

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6 In Catholic theology, opus operatum is opposed to opus operantis. The terms (and their opposition) were derived from Augustine of Hippo’s treatment of the efficacy of the baptismal liturgy in his controversy with the Donatists. Augustine maintained that the baptismal sacrament is valid and efficacious “by virtue of the work done” (ex opere operato), that is, by virtue of the rite’s performance according to Christ’s institution and the mind or intention of the Church – not by virtue of the moral character of the person who performs the rite (ex opere operantis).
something more than the fact that Jesus had instituted the sacrament in the gospel. It meant that, whatever the effect or significance of the sacrament might be, it had to do with the absolute needfulness of human creatures in relation to God and with their utter powerlessness in themselves.

In this light, it is clear that Luther was deliberately breaking with the tradition on the point of worthy communion. Aquinas had insisted that fides formata (“formed faith,” i.e. a mature and fully appropriated habit of true belief) and peccatum mortale (“mortal sin”) were mutually exclusive conditions; any one who received the sacrament while in mortal sin committed a falsehood by means of the sacrament.7 Bonaventure viewed preparation for Mass, and communion itself, as a matter of conforming oneself to the object of one’s love, in order that one might have sufficient likeness to the object for the object to recognise and assimilate its image.8 In both cases, the action of Christ in the sacrament tended to be seen in terms of a response proportionate to the actual disposition of the communicant. Luther reacted vehemently to this notion that divine grace might be meted out in proportion to human merit, as if humans had so much initiative with respect to God that they could deserve grace. In this 1519 tract Luther did not set forth the idea of homo simul iustus et peccator (“man at once both righteous and sinner”) which he had worked out a few years earlier,9 yet it also is clearly at the back of what he says about the sacrament and its effect. He refused to accept a distinction between what one is conscious of being and what one is. Thus he was able to assert that

... it even happens that this holy sacrament is of little or no benefit to those who have no misfortune or anxiety, or who do not sense their adversity. For it is given only to those who need strength and comfort, who have timid hearts and terrified consciences, and who are assailed by sin, or have even fallen into sin. How could it do anything for untroubled and secure spirits, who neither need nor desire it?

7 Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae 3a, 80, 4.

8 Bonaventure, In sententiarum librum IV commentarium, dist. 9, art. 1, quaes. 2 resp.

Luther here laid his finger on a central weakness in the majority report of medieval scholasticism. That report had called the eucharist “the supreme sacrament,” and had continued the ancient view that it was “the medicine of immortality”. But its supremacy was by way of content, the miracle of Christ’s real presence, rather than by way of its necessity for salvation or its specific effect. Baptism was greater in so far as it was, strictly speaking, necessary for salvation: it remitted original sin and incorporated the person into Christ. Penance was greater in so far as it remitted mortal sin committed after baptism, whereas the eucharist at best could remit only venial sin. Such a view led to some peculiar uses of “the medicine of immortality” metaphor. In Bonaventure especially, one has the impression of a theologian trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. Luther, though (again) he neither used the medicine metaphor nor called the eucharistic sacrament “supreme,” nevertheless took both seriously. The eucharist is for him “the supreme sacrament” precisely because it affects the sinfulness of human creatures.

All this sets the context in which Luther wants to state the sacrament’s final significance, its spiritual purpose and definitive “reason why”. It is, he says, gemeinschaft aller heyligen, “fellowship of all saints”. In itself, this identification was thoroughly traditional. It reflected the view, derived from Augustine, that the res sacramenti is corpus Christi mysticum, quod est societas sanctorum. Luther even employed that most ancient of eucharistic metaphors to indicate the nature of this gemeinschaft:

... out of the bodies of many grains there comes the body of one bread, in which each grain loses its form and body and takes upon itself the common body of the bread; and just as the drops of wine, in losing their own form, become the body of one common wine and drink – so it is and should be with us, if we use this sacrament properly.

There are moments in this treatise when Luther seemed to be so deeply imbued with this metaphor of “many grains, one bread, one body” that he suggests an ontological conversion of the communicant into Christ. But he almost immediately qualified the metaphor by another metaphor. For he went on to liken the unity of the communicant with Christ and the fellowship of the saints to that enjoyed by “a citizen who is taken and incorporated into the protection and freedom of the city and the entire community”. By setting these two metaphors back to back, as it were, Luther gave the impression that he thought them to be saying the same thing. But they do not say the same thing. For the metaphor of “many grains, one bread, one body” suggests a unity of being, a singleness
of life which subsumes plurality. The metaphor of citizenship, by contrast, suggests unity by association, wherein otherwise discrete agents act together for their common benefit, without losing their individuality.

It is precisely at this point that Luther’s handling of the theme of the sacrament’s final significance in *A treatise on the blessed sacrament* suffered from a crucial ambiguity. To be sure, the theme itself encourages (and even depends upon) a deliberate exploitation of certain strategic ambiguities. Augustine, for example, had not made a hard and fast distinction between the significance of the eucharist and the definitive significance of baptism or indeed the definitive reality of the Church. In his view, the eucharist, baptism, and the visible Church, taken both singly and together, were sacraments of the body of Christ. In so far as the body could not be separated from the one who possessed it, those who were members of Christ were, in spirit and truth, Christ himself. But then Augustine was always just enough of a neo-Platonist to assume that ontological reality – the singleness of being which subsumed plurality – was the necessary, compelling, and comprehensively explanatory concept. Since Christ is one, his body must be one, because the body of an individual person is somehow identical with that person’s individual existence. Having premised an ontological unity which subsumed plurality, however, Augustine could go on to speak of a willed unity, that is, a unity which completes and fulfills being because it is a being which has chosen to be what it is and possesses itself in love. Thus, the Church could not be the body of Christ unless each member of Christ loved each and every other member in him who is, by definition, one – that is, a fully, totally integrated unity. But this means that the significance of the eucharist, as of baptism and the visible Church, finally resolves itself into Christ Jesus – not into something other than or in addition to Christ, like the unity of the Church or the *societas sanctorum*, but simply into Christ Jesus himself. It may be that, by Luther’s day, the tradition was neither willing nor able to sustain meanings and references which were so porous. In that case, Luther’s own juxtaposition of the two eucharistic metaphors – “many grains, one bread, one body” and citizenship – reflects a real confusion in the tradition, not an ambiguity with positive value. He handled them as if they were complementary, when in fact they had become two very distinct and even rival options.

Luther, then, was not an agent of doctrinal decay so much as its victim. It is, historically speaking, nothing but anachronism to demand that he should have accomplished in his day a wholesale reintegration of the eucharistic tradition, when we in our own day have only begun to realise the need for such a thing. Given his *Sitz im Tradition*, the most that Luther can be expected to have done is
to have organized a statement whose own internal consistency did not defeat so much as set itself apart from the prevailing confusion. This of course entailed the pursuit of one option and the neglect of others in the explication of that phrase, in itself so traditional, *gemeynschafft aller heyligen*.

Yngve Brilioth once remarked that “the mystery of sacramental fellowship... has... rarely found nobler expression than in Luther’s *Sermon von dem hochwürdigen Sakrament*”. Brilioth himself did not substantiate this claim in any detail, but a reading of the tract itself makes the claim credible. Luther defined the fellowship which was the significance of the Mass as “a gracious exchange or blending of our sin and suffering with the righteousness of Christ and his saints”. Even as Christ in the mystery of the incarnation “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of humans,” so in the eucharistic mystery “Christ with all his saints, by his love, takes upon himself our form, fights with us against sin, death, and all evil”. Two points should be noted here. The first has to do with “the blessed interchange,” the “gracious exchange or blending”. The second has to do with the term “Christ and all his saints”.

1. Luther’s use of the word “exchange” in relation to what happens at the eucharist needs to be taken seriously. In spite of his own apparent assumptions, it is not merely a synonym for the more conventional term “incorporation”. For Luther understood our condition as sinners, as beings weak and subject to tribulation, to be constant. Indeed, he specifically linked the necessity of the eucharistic sacrament with the inevitability of post-baptismal sin:

   Here we not only need the help of the community [of saints] and of Christ in order that they might fight this sin, but it is also necessary that Christ and his saints intercede for us before God, so that this sin may not be charged to our account by God’s strict judgment. Therefore in order to strengthen and encourage us against this same sin, God gives us this sacrament, as much as to say, “Look, many kinds of sin are assailing you; take this sign by which I give you my pledge that this sin is assailing not only you but also my Son Christ and all his saints in heaven and on earth. Therefore take heart and be bold. You are not fighting alone. Great help and support are all around you.”

The force of this passage depends upon the image of a commune. The unity of which it speaks is not ontological but associative. What happens in the eucharistic sacrament is that Christ and his saints make common cause with beleaguered sinners. They do not expunge sin, but they do make it possible for afflicted souls to bear
the burden of their sinfulness with greater ease and even with a readier cheerfulness. It is for this reason that Luther could say that “whoever does injury to the believer does injury to Christ and all the saints....”

2. The truly curious element in Luther’s statement of the issue was his insistence on referring, almost invariably, to “Christ and his saints”. His identification of “the saints” was a good deal more inclusive than had been the case hitherto in the tradition. He meant all true believers – “Christ and all his saints in heaven and on earth”. But this does not resolve, it only compounds the paradox. One would have thought, by Luther’s own standards, that the righteousness of Christ alone would be all-sufficient to support afflicted souls who in their tribulations make common cause with the Saviour. Why make gesamtnschaft aller heyligen a co-ordinate principle of the sacrament’s final significance?

The only satisfying answer would seem to be that Luther had simply accepted the tradition when it asserted that the final significance of the sacrament, the res tanta, was societas sanctorum. Having accepted the tradition on this point, he was bound by its implicit logic; and in some respects his use of the term “Christ and his saints” was a faint reminiscence of Augustine’s view that the eucharist is the sacrament of the Church’s identity with Christ in being, through faith and by love. And it must be admitted that this logic allowed Luther real scope for his most fundamental and far-reaching renovation. As we have already seen, Luther adjusted the dynamics of the sacrament so that the movement was not from preparation to communion but from the bestowal of the gift by God to the appropriation of the gift by faithful communicants. Therefore, if the power of the sacrament is that Christ and his saints make common cause with the plight of sinners, the fruit of the sacrament should be that communicants will make common cause with their fellow-sinners in their plight:

... we on our part must make the evil [which happens to others] our own, if we desire Christ and his saints to make our evil their own. Then will the fellowship be complete, and justice be done to the sacrament. For the sacrament has no blessing and significance unless love grows daily and so changes a person that he is made one with all others.

This passage is beautiful in its way. But it still leaves the basic problem untouched. It does not offer any real clue why “the saints” should be a co-ordinate principle of the sacrament with Christ. Indeed, the fruit of the sacrament, whereby “loves grows daily and so changes a person that he is made one with all the others,” would seem to be extraneous to the sacrament. Such
fellowship may well be a consequence of the eucharist. But it is not what Luther’s teaching about justification would lead one to expect, that is, a response given directly to the Giver of the gift. Rather, it involves a slight turning-away from the gift, so that what is in fact appropriated is not Christ and the gospel so much as the fellowship of all believers.

This is the most serious dilemma faced by any concept of the eucharist which sees the sacrament’s final significance as ecclesial unity or fellowship. Augustine and other ancient Christian writers were able to resolve this dilemma because they understood the eucharist within what might be called a *perichoresis*, a mutual indwelling, of contexts. The eucharist “sacramented” the Church, which itself “sacramented” the one Christ, head and members together. Once this *perichoresis* of contexts broke down, it became increasingly difficult to see how the final significance of the Mass, cast in terms of *societas sanctorum* or *gemeinschaft aller heyligen*, was intrinsic to the Mass itself. Some cosmetic surgery could be performed on the dilemma, such that the dynamics of the sacrament were thrown back into the process of approaching the altar worthily. But Luther had rejected this viewpoint. He insisted that the dynamics of the eucharist took place between the God’s giving of the gift and its reception by the faithful communicant. By accepting the tradition and identifying the significance of the Mass as *gemeinschaft*, he simply duplicated the hiatus already present in the tradition – but without the safeguards which, to some extent, had neutralised its dangers.

From “fellowship” to “forgiveness”

Within eight months of publishing *A treatise on the blessed sacrament* Luther sent to the printers another tract. *A treatise on the New Testament, that is, the holy Mass* represented a first run at the position which was to be more fully set forth in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. It also stands as evidence that Luther had crossed a divide, at least with respect to the meaning of the eucharist. Once over the break, he was never to look back. From this tract onwards he consistently maintained that the sacrament signified and effected, not “the fellowship of all saints” but *Vergebung der Sünden*, “the forgiveness of sins”.

This revision of the significance-theme, virtually unilateral on Luther’s part, has been considered by many to be unfortunate. Even the most smitten of Luther’s modern-day admirers have regretted the change; and where Yngve Brilioth rushed in, Louis Bouyer did not fear to tread. “The rediscovery of the idea of communion,” Brilioth remarked, “is the greatest positive contribution of the Reformation in regard to the eucharist; it is of more value than all the criticisms of the Mass.” In Brilioth’s own
view. Luther’s shift from “fellowship” to “forgiveness” stymied true eucharistic renewal. Luther’s own understanding of “the forgiveness of sins” may have been strikingly positive and breathtakingly comprehensive. But it could not recondition the distinctly negative connotations of the term. For this reason Brilioth felt able to say:

The common use of the term in the narrower sense resulted in the serious impoverishment of the idea of the sacrament in Lutheran churches. The further result followed, that all but exclusive emphasis was laid on the individual aspect of communion; this individualism drove out of the Lutheran service the notes of thanksgiving and communion-fellowship....

The only excuse that Brilioth could offer for Luther’s reorientation of the significance-theme was that of “the exigencies of controversy” – meaning Luther’s urgent need (and bloody-minded desire) to lambaste papal Catholicism at every turn and on every point.

To be sure, there was something fundamentally passive about Luther’s way of doing theology. In one direction, this meant that he let his antagonists in controversy, or even his congregations in their pastoral needs, determine his agenda. It may be wondered, for instance, whether Luther would ever have dealt with the question of the real presence to the extent and with the vehemence that he did, if Karlstadt, Oecolampadius, and Zwingli had not thrown down the gauntlet first. And in the controversy which resulted, Luther did not present a doctrine already worked out beforehand so much as marshal certain hermeneutical principles in order to recapture the scriptural cruces interpretandi which his opponents had used against him.10

In another direction, however, Luther was consistent, even thorough enough in his passivity to let what he believed to be the gospel determine what he actually said when he addressed the agenda of others. Thus, his identification of the sacrament’s final significance with “the forgiveness of sins” was not due solely to “the exigencies of controversy” or to polemical expedience. Instead, it was a matter of discerning and proclaiming the logic of his own understanding of the gospel itself. In a sense, Luther had to make “the forgiveness of sins” the definitive reality of the sacrament because the gospel, in his view, left him no choice.

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10 *Cruces interpretandi* are biblical texts or passages which must be dealt with – interpreted in depth and at length – because their meaning for, and application to, an issue of Christian doctrine has been a matter of dispute.
A summary of the whole gospel

In “the forgiveness of sins” Luther found a theological guarantee not only for consistency between but also for the intrinsic identity of gospel and sacrament. The guarantee was itself evangelical, to his own way of thinking, simply and obviously so:

If you ask: “What is the gospel?” you can give no better answer than these words of the New Testament, namely, that Christ gave his body and poured out his blood for us for the forgiveness of sins.\footnote{De abroganda missa privata ("The Abolition of Private Mass," 1521), in Luther's Works, vol. 36, p. 183.}

The words to which Luther referred were, of course, the words of institution; and these words were for him nothing less than “a short summary of the whole gospel”. Having come to this realisation, Luther had no need to look elsewhere – for instance, to “the mystical body of Christ, which is the society of the saints” – for the significance of the Mass. Christ himself stated and proclaimed this significance at “the first Mass,” the Last Supper; and

the nearer our masses are to the first mass of Christ, the better they undoubtedly are; and the further from Christ’s mass, the more dangerous.

Saying that the sacrament signified “the forgiveness of sins” was simply a matter of hearing, heeding, and cleaving to the Saviour’s \textit{ipsissima verba}, his very own words.

Luther’s whole understanding of the eucharistic mystery – whether it was working against the sacramental system of papal Catholicism or against the spiritualism of Zwingli and company – rallied reflexively to the words of institution. In itself this was nothing new. Western theologians had long since stated their analyses of the eucharist in terms of extended commentaries on those words. Not even Luther’s exaltation of the words’ power to effect what they state was new. Long before Luther, Ambrose and Augustine had insisted that the words of institution, once uttered, made the bread and wine to be the body and blood of Christ. What was new was where Luther placed the emphasis within the words. His attention, at least at this point in his career, was not fixed on the declarative half: “This is my body,” “This is my blood”. It was fixed on the kerygmatic half: the clause, “which is given and shed for you \textit{for the forgiveness of sins}”. At this point in his career, what mattered to Luther was the meaning of the presence of Christ, rather than the presence in itself.
Behind his emphasis on the kerygmatic half of the words of institution, behind his almost exclusive concern for the meaning of the sacrament, lay the theology of the Word that Luther had been developing against scholasticism and, on a broader front, against papal Catholicism. In this campaign he not only aimed at restoring the absolute sovereignty and priority of “God’s Word written;” he also aimed at restoring its specific character as a word – and as a word which engifted those to whom it was addressed with the very thing it stated. This theology, however, was not simply behind Luther’s doctrine of the eucharist, driving it forward. His theology of the Word became his theology of the eucharist.

As was noted in our discussion of A Treatise on the Blessed Sacrament (1519), Luther had been struggling to set the significance of the Mass in direct relation to the gift bestowed in the sacrament. With his rediscovery of the words of institution, he was able to do this in a particular way. But the general question remained: “How to activate the relation?” In A Treatise on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass (1520), he found the theological impetus to lie in the utter wordliness of God’s initiative with respect to human creatures. In a passage we have already seen, Luther wrote:

God alone – without any entreaty or desire of man – must first come and give him a promise.... God must anticipate all the creature’s works and thoughts, and make a promise clearly expressed in words, which man then takes and keeps in a good, firm faith.

God’s word, once spoken, utters God’s relationship to the human creature – and that relationship immediately exists. So much the Catholic tradition at large would have allowed. What set Luther’s appreciation of the Word apart was the intensity with which he insisted that God’s Word, as a word, was not just a general principle constituting reality. It was a particular gift constituting each individual Christian:

When I preach Christ’s death, it is in a public sermon in the congregation, in which I am addressing myself to no one individually; whoever grasps it, grasps it. But when I distribute the sacrament, I designate it for the individual who is receiving it; I give him Christ’s body and blood that he may have forgiveness of sins, obtained through his death and preached in the congregation.... In the sermon one does not point out or portray any particular person, but in the sacrament it is given to you and to me in particular, so that the sermon comes to be our own.
In so far as the sacrament was constituted by the gospel, Luther seemed to be saying, it is itself identical with the gospel, the decisive word of salvation. But he was also saying more than that. God’s saving relationship with human beings – with sinners – does not happen apart from this word spoken to this sinner at this moment in this place. Such particularity of utterance, and the absolute sovereignty of that utterance in its particularity, are, to be sure, part of God’s freedom, whereby “the gospel is and must be free and bound to no particular spot” – or, for that matter, to no particular person or moment. It always comes as sheer, wholly unmerited gift, and always from without, never from within – from God to the human sinner, not from within the sinner’s own life, resources, capacities. But it is precisely the gratuitousness of the Word that makes it necessary for it to be particularly addressed. Each person requires the gift for himself or herself, if that person is to live. And this is the very necessity of the sacrament, too. By its very nature, the sacrament must address the gospel – the assurance that Christ gave himself for us for the forgiveness of sins – to individuals, to Hans and Marthe, to Sigismund and Bertha, to Philip and Maria.

This was the reason why Luther found the idea of a testamentum so useful and, during this early stage in his career, so compelling. As his discussions of the matter, first in A treatise on the new testament, that is, the holy Mass, then in The Babylonian Captivity of the Church indicate, the word itself came to his attention by its use in the institution narrative. One can almost see Luther at the altar, reciting the Canon, as his mind went click! from Hic enim calix sanguinis meis, NOVI ET AETERNI TESTAMENTI..., to the New Testament he had been studying an hour before, to the gospel message as a whole. Here, more than anywhere else, was the source of his reduction of the whole Mass to the words of institution and his consequent identification of the Mass, thus defined, with the gospel.

Liturical consequences
In all this talk about receiving Christ’s kerygmatic words of institution by faith alone, Luther never intended to deny the real presence of Christ’s flesh and blood in the sacrament. So far as he was concerned, his doctrine of the Word of God prevented such a denial. Jesus had said, “This is my Body, this is my Blood” – and his words must be accepted literally. To do anything else was to say that Christ was a liar. Luther went further. Unless the whole Christ, with his real flesh and blood, was in the sacrament, just as his own word promised, the forgiveness of sins was not bestowed. For you cannot have the gift without the real presence of the Giver.
The eucharistic presence of Christ was not an issue in Luther’s classic “Reformation writings” – the tracts, treatises, sermons, and hymns that he wrote between 1520 and 1525, which constituted his assault on papal Catholicism. Justification by faith was the issue, and he focussed on it with obsessive tenacity. As a result, his unpacking of the doctrine’s eucharistic consequences tended to be lopsided and without much in the way of nuances. He did attack the doctrine of transubstantiation, but his argument against the doctrine did not have to do with its basic point – the real presence of Christ in the sacrament – so much as with the Aristotelian and thus unscriptural terms of its formulation. In Luther’s view, the doctrine’s scholastic formulation obscured the pure, unvarnished word of Christ with a thicket of philosophical abstractions which were of human (and therefore, by definition, sinful) invention. Stick to the divine word of promise, he argued, and dump all the rest.

Luther has served for so long, and for so many Christian denominations, as an icon of the Heroic Individual, The Rebel With A Cause, that few have noticed the broad streak of passivity in the man. He may have thrown the pebbles which set in motion the avalanche of the Reformation, but he himself rode on top of this avalanche, less as its master than as its passenger; he felt and gave words to its rumble, but he did not rule its unleashed power.

This became obvious within five years of his initial protest. Luther spent 1521-1522 in protective custody at the castle of Wartburg, where he had his legendary “tower experience,” the inner struggle through which he finally became assured of his position. Meanwhile, a group in Wittenburg, led by Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, decided to take some direct action. Amazing as it may sound, Luther had done nothing to the liturgy; the parishes of Wittenburg still used the Mass of the Roman Rite in Latin. In Karlstadt’s view, the doctrine of justification by faith alone made this impossible; and he had Luther’s own fulminations against the Mass to back him up. So he gutted the Mass, abolished the Canon, vestments, and almost all of the ritual, and turned what was left into German. When Luther returned to Wittenberg from the Wartberg, Karlstadt behaved like Little Jack Horner: having stuck his thumb into the liturgy and pulled out what he thought was a plumb, he expected the master to declare what a good boy he had been. Luther did nothing of the sort; he was appalled and outraged by Karlstadt’s coup. He restored the Mass, and threw Karlstadt out of Wittenberg.

Within a year, however, Luther accepted the need to overhaul the Mass in conformity with solafidian doctrine. The resulting *Formula Missae et Communionis* (“Formula for Mass and Communion,” 1523) was something of a hybrid. Luther ordained
that the liturgy should continue to be celebrated in Latin, that vestments and most of the traditional ritual should remain, and that the first half of the Mass – everything up to the offertory – did not need to be touched at all. But at the offertory – “that utter abomination,” he called it, because it reeked of sacrifice – he began to practise a form of slice-and-dice. He removed the offertory altogether and ordained that the celebration should move from the Creed or the sermon directly to the preparation of the table, with bread and wine being “made ready for blessing in the customary manner”. Once that was done, the minister continued with the Sursum corda and a truncated (and invariable) preface:

It is indeed fitting and just, right and salutary, that we should always and everywhere give thanks to you, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

Then: Who, on the night before he suffered, took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.”

In the same way, after supper, the cup also, saying: “This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins; as often as you do this, do it for the remembrance of me.”

That was the entire eucharistic prayer. The choir was then to sing the Sanctus and Benedictus. During the singing of the Benedictus, the bread and cup were to be “elevated according to the customary rite for the benefit of the weak in faith”. Then, while the choir sang the Agnus Dei, the minister communicated himself and the people. Here Luther permitted an alternative, apparently of his own devising. “The bishop,” he wrote,

should also be free to decide on the order in which he will receive and administer both species. He may choose to bless both bread and wine before he takes the bread. Or else he may, between the blessing of the bread and of the wine, give the bread both to himself and to as many as desire it, then bless the wine and administer it to all. This is the order Christ seems to have observed, where he told them to eat the bread before he had blessed the cup (Mark 14.22-23)....
Luther’s Mass concluded with one or the other of the set prayers after communion appointed in the Roman Rite, and one of three benedictions.\(^{12}\)

Luther revised this liturgy three years later. Die Deutsche Messe ("The German Mass," 1526) was a completely vernacular liturgy, whose first half (the liturgy of the word) still followed the order of the Roman Mass while streamlining it and permitting greater congregational participation in the way of hymns and sung paraphrases. Then, after the sermon, the minister was given a lengthy exhortation to speak, which sketched the purpose of the Mass and the conditions for a worthy receiving of communion. This exhortation was followed immediately by a recitation of the institution narrative, now in the form of a warrant, not in the context of a prayer. Luther again called for an elevation of the sacrament while a German paraphrase of the Sanctus was sung, though he also advocated, even more strenuously than in the 1523 Formula Missae, a split communion-rite, so that the bread was to be administered after Christ’s word over the bread and the wine after Christ’s word over the cup.

By this latter provision Luther was simply following through on his own conviction that “the nearer our masses are to the first mass of Christ, the better they undoubtedly are; and the further from Christ’s mass, the more dangerous.” The notion that Jesus celebrated Mass may be so naïvely anachronistic as to take the historian’s breath away. But Luther’s advocacy of a split administration of communion also made sense on doctrinal grounds. Remember that, in his teaching and spirituality, he insisted on the need to place one’s faith in an actual word of God, the specific word of divine promise addressed to one at any given moment. Administering the bread and the cup immediately after Christ’s word over each fulfilled this very condition. One heard Christ’s word, “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you,” and one immediately took and ate the sacrament – and by faith, the divine word itself. Then one heard Christ’s other word, “This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins,” and one immediately took and drank of the cup – and by faith, the divine word of promise itself. The ordinance made for (to say the least) awkward liturgy. Nevertheless, doctrinally speaking, it made perfect sense insofar as it made the liturgy a practical demonstration of Evangelical teaching and a tableau vivant of Luther’s spirituality of the Word. For it meant that, even as – and because – the believing

communicant received the mediate significance of the Mass (the true flesh and blood of Christ), he or she received the sacrament’s final significance, *die Vergebung der Sünden*, the forgiveness of sins.

Two readings from Luther’s enormous output follow.

The first is his *Treatise on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass* (1520), discussed in this Introduction. In the first half of this particular work (sections 1–15), Luther gives a positive exposition of the eucharist in the light of his doctrine of justification by faith alone. The second half of the *Treatise* (sections 16–39) is a sustained attack on what Luther considered papal Catholicism’s abuses of the Mass. I here ask you to read sections 1–18 of the work, in which Luther sets forth his eucharistic theology as constructively, as clearly, and even as winningly as ever he did. The translation is by Jeremiah J. Schindel, as revised by E. Theodore Bachmann and published in *Luther’s Works. American Edition*, vol. 35: *Word and Sacraments I*, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), pp. 79-92.

The second reading is Luther’s *Deutsche Messe und Ordnung Gottis Diensts*, “German Mass and Order of God’s Service”. The English translation is by Augustus Steimle, revised by Ulrich S. Leupold, *LW* 53, pp. 61-90.

Further Reading


A Treatise on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass
(1520)

D.M.L.A.1

Jesus

1. Experience, all chronicles, and the holy Scriptures as well, teach us this truth: the less law, the more justice; the fewer commandments, the more good works. No well-regulated community ever existed long, if at all, where there were many laws. Therefore, before the ancient law of Moses, the patriarchs of old had no prescribed law and order for the service of God other than the sacrifices, as we read of Adam, Abel, Noah, and others. Afterward circumcision was enjoined on Abraham and his household, until the time of Moses, through whom God gave the people of Israel a variety of laws, forms, and practices, for the sole purpose of teaching human nature how utterly useless many laws are to make people righteous. For although the law leads and drives away from evil to good works, it is impossible for men to do them [that is, good works] willingly and gladly, for he has always an aversion to the law and would rather be free. Now where there is unwillingness, there can never be a good work. For what is not done willingly is not good, but only seems to be good. Consequently all the laws cannot make one really righteous without the grace of God. Instead they inevitably produce only Pharisees, hypocrites, pretenders, and haughty saints, such as have their reward here2 and never please God. Thus God says to the Jews in Malachi 1, I have no pleasure in you; for who is there among you that would even as much as shut a door for me, willingly and out of love? 3

2. Another result of many laws is that many sects and divisions in parish-congregations arise from them. One adopts this way, another that, and there grows up in each man a false, secret love for his own sect, and a hatred, or at least a contempt for and disregard

1 Doctor Martin Luther, Augustinian.

2 See Matthew 6.2.

3 Malachi 1.10.
of the other sects. Thus brotherly, free, and mutual love perishes and selfish love prevails. So Jeremiah [2.28] and Hosea [8.11] – indeed, all the prophets – lament that the people of Israel divided themselves into as many sects as there were cities in the land, each desiring to outdo the others. Out of this [sectarian spirit] there arose also the Sadducees and Pharisees in the gospel.

So we observe today that through the “spiritual” law very little justice and righteousness have arisen in Christendom. The world has been filled with fakes and hypocrites and with so many sects, orders, and divisions of the one people of Christ, that almost every city is divided into ten parties or even more. And they daily devise new ways and methods (as they think) of serving God, until it has come to this, that priests, monks, and laity have become more hostile toward each other than Turks and Christians. Yes, there are deadly enemies among the priests and among the monks. They wrangle about their self-contrived ways and methods like fools and madmen, not only to the hindrance but also to the very destruction of Christian love and unity. Each one clings to his sect and despises the others; and they regard the laymen as though they were no Christians at all. This lamentable condition is only a result of the laws.

3. Christ, in order to prepare for himself an acceptable and beloved people, which should be bound together in unity through love, abolished the whole law of Moses. And that he might not give further occasion for divisions and sects, he appointed in return but one law or order for his entire people – and that was the holy Mass. (For although baptism is also an external ordinance, yet it takes place but once, and is not a practice of the entire life, like the Mass.) Henceforth, therefore, there is to be no other external order for the service of God except the Mass. And when the Mass is used, there is true worship, even though there be no other form, with singing. Organ playing, bell ringing, vestments, ornaments, and gestures. For everything of this sort is an addition invented by men. When Christ himself first instituted this sacrament and held the first Mass, there was no tonsure, no chasuble, no singing, no

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4 the spiritual law: *geistliche Gesetz*, by which Luther meant canon law, the law of the Church. It was customary at the time to divide *temporalia*, things which fell under the jurisdiction of secular princes, and *spiritualia*, things which fell under the jurisdiction of the Church.

5 The tonsure (>Latin, “clipping, shearing”) was a mark of a monk or someone in major orders (bishop, priest, deacon). It originally involved the shearing of the individual’s entire head of hair; by the tenth century, no more than the crown of the cleric’s head
pageantry, but only thanksgiving to God and the use of the sacrament. According to this same simplicity the apostles and all Christians for a long time held Mass, until there arose the various forms and additions by which the Romans held Mass one way, the Greeks another. And now it has finally come to this: the chief thing in the Mass has been forgotten, and nothing is remembered except the additions of men!

4. Now the nearer our masses are to the first Mass of Christ, the better they undoubtedly are, and the further from Christ’s Mass, the more dangerous. For that reason we may not boast of ourselves [here in the western church], over against the Russians or the Greeks, that we alone celebrate Mass properly, any more than a priest who wears a red chasuble may boast over against him who wears one of white or black. For such external additions or differences may by their dissimilarity produce sects and dissension, but they can never make the Mass better. Although I neither wish nor am able to displace or discard such additions, still, because such pompous forms are perilous, we must never permit ourselves to be led away by them from the simple institution of Christ and from the right use of the Mass. And, indeed, the greatest and most useful art is to know what really and essentially belongs to the Mass, and what is added and foreign to it. For where there is no clear distinction, the eyes and the heart are easily misled by such sham into a false impression and delusion. Then what men have contrived is considered the Mass, and what the Mass [really] is, is never experienced – to say nothing of deriving benefit from it. Thus, alas! it is happening in our times. For I fear every day more than a thousand masses are said, of which perhaps not one is a real Mass. O dear Christians, to have many masses is not to have the Mass. There is more to it than that.

5. If we desire to observe Mass properly and to understand it, then we must surrender everything that the eyes behold and that the senses suggest – be it vestments, bells, songs, ornaments, prayers, processions, elevations, prostrations, or whatever [else] happens in the Mass – until we first grasp and thoroughly ponder the words of Christ, by which he performed and instituted the Mass and commanded us to perform it. For therein lies the whole Mass, its nature, work, profit, and benefit. Without the words nothing is derived from the Mass.

Now the words are these: Take and eat, this is my body which was given for you. Take and drink of it, this is the cup of the new and was shaved. You will see what a tonsure looked like if you view the Brother Cadfael series of mysteries. Derek Jacobi, playing Cadfael, actually makes the tonsure look like a rather handsome fashion-statement.
eternal testament in my blood, which is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. These words every Christian must have before him in the Mass. He must hold fast to them as the chief part of the Mass, in which even the right, basic, and good preparation for the Mass and sacrament is taught, as we shall see.

6. If man is to deal with God and receive anything from him, it must happen in this manner: not that man begins and lays the first stone, but that God alone – without any entreaty or desire of man – must first come and give him a promise. This word of God is the beginning, the foundation, the rock upon which afterward all works, words, and thoughts of man must build. This word man must gratefully receive. He must faithfully believe the divine promise and by no means doubt that it is and comes to pass just as God promises. This trust and faith is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all works and righteousness. For because man does God the honour of regarding and confessing him as true, God becomes to man a gracious God, who in turn honours man and regards and confesses him [that is, man] as true. Thus it is not possible that a man, of his own reason and strength, should by works ascend to heaven, anticipating God and moving him to be gracious. On the contrary, God must anticipate all [of our] works and thoughts, and make a promise clearly expressed in words, which man then takes and keeps in a good, firm faith. Then there follows the Holy Spirit, who is given to man for the sake of this same faith.

7. Such a promise was given to Adam after his fall, when God spoke to the serpent, I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. In these words, however obscurely, God promises to help human nature – namely, that by a woman the devil shall again be overcome. This promise of God sustained Adam and Eve and all their children until the time of Noah. They believed in it, and by this faith they were saved; otherwise they would have despaired.

Similarly, after the flood, God made a promise to Noah and his children, until the time of Abraham. God summoned

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6 Genesis 3.15.

7 Genesis 9.8-11: “Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ‘As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.’”
Abraham out his homeland and promised him that by his descendants all nations should be blessed. 9 This promise Abraham believed and obeyed and thereby was justified and became a friend of God. 10 In the same book [of Genesis] this promise to Abraham is cited significantly and repeatedly, enlarged, and clarified, until Isaac is promised to him, 11 who was to be the seed from which Christ and every blessing should come. Abraham’s children were kept in this faith in God’s promise until the time of Christ, although in the meantime the promise was continually renewed and made more definite through David and many prophets. In the gospel the Lord [Jesus] calls this promise Abraham’s bosom. 12 For in it were kept all who, with a right faith, clung to this promise and, with Abraham, waited for Christ.

8 Genesis 12.1-3: “Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ ”

9 Genesis 22.18.


11 Genesis 18.10-14.

12 Luke 16.22. This is part of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Luther would translate this verse into German in much the same way as the King James Version renders the Greek into English: “And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom [eis ton kolpon Abraam]”. The NRSV, in an excess of pursed-lip prudery, renders the verse this way: “The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham.” This is misplaced delicacy, because it bleaches out the favour and intimacy that the image of “Abraham’s bosom (kolpon)” would have conveyed to ancient hearers and readers. The Greek phrase meant that Lazarus reclined and reposed on Abraham’s breast (or – oh, all right, if you insist on delicacy – Abraham’s chest), in much the same way as John’s Gospel recounts that, during the Last Supper, the one disciple “whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus”. At meals and banquets in the ancient Mediterranean world, there was no higher mark of honour, prestige, love, and
Then came Moses, who declared the same promise under many figures in the Law. Through him God promised the people of Israel the land of Canaan while they were still in Egypt. They believed this promise and by it they were sustained and led into that land.

8. In the New Testament, likewise, Christ made a promise or solemn vow, which we are to believe and thereby come to righteousness and salvation. The promise is the words just cited, where Christ says, *This is the cup of the New Testament*. These we shall now examine.

Not every vow is called a testament, but only a last irrevocable will of one who is about to die whereby he bequeaths his goods, allotted and assigned to be distributed to whom he will. Just as St Paul says to the Hebrews that a testament must be made operative by death and is not in effect while the one still lives who made the testament. For other vows, made as long as one lives, may be altered or recalled – and hence may not be called testaments. Therefore, wherever in Scripture God’s testament is referred to by the prophets, in that very word the prophets are taught that God would become man and die and rise again, in order that his word, in which he promises such a testament, might be fulfilled and confirmed. For if God is to make a testament, as he promises, then he must be a man. And so that little word *testament* is a short summary of all God’s wonders and grace fulfilled in Christ.

9. Christ also distinguishes this testament from others and says that it is a *new and everlasting testament*, in his own blood, *for the forgiveness of sins*. He thereby thoroughly annuls the old testament. For the little word *new* makes the testament of Moses obsolete and worthless, one that is no longer in effect. The old testament was a promise made through Moses to the people of Israel, to whom was promised the land of Canaan. For this testament God did not die, but the paschal lamb had to die instead

...intimacy than for the host to invite a guest to recline and rest on his *kolpon*.

13 The German word that Luther uses is *Figuren*. Luther was coming out of the mediaeval tradition of scriptural interpretation, in which a “figure” was a “type,” that is, a prefiguration of the Christ who was to come.

14 See Hebrews 9.16-17: “For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.”
of Christ and as a type of Christ. And so this was a temporal testament in the blood of the paschal lamb, which was shed for the obtaining and possessing of the land of Canaan. And as the paschal lamb, which died in the old testament for the land of Canaan, was a temporal and transitory thing, so too the old testament – together with that very possession or land of Canaan allotted and promised therein – was temporal and transitory.

But Christ, the true paschal lamb, is an eternal divine Person who dies to ratify the new testament. Therefore the testament and the possessions therein bequeathed are eternal and abiding. And that is what he means when he contrasts this testament with the other. A NEW testament, he says, so that the other may become obsolete and no longer be in effect. An ETERNAL testament, he says, not temporal like that other one, not to dispose of temporal lands and possessions but of eternal blessings. In MY blood, he says, not in the blood of a lamb. The purpose of all this is that the old should be altogether annulled and should give place to the new alone.

10. What then is this testament, or what is bequeathed to us in it by Christ? Truly a great, eternal, and unspeakable treasure, namely, the forgiveness of sins – as the words clearly state, This is the cup of a new eternal testament in my blood, which is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. It is as if Christ were saying, “See here, man, in these words I promise and bequeath to you forgiveness of all your sins and the life eternal. In order that you may be certain and know that such a promise remains irrevocably yours, I will die for it, and will give my body and blood for it, and will leave them both to you as a sign and seal, that by them you may remember me.” As Christ says, As often as you do this, remember me. Even as a man who bequeaths something [in his will] stipulates also what shall be done for him afterward [that is, after his death] – as is the custom at present in the requiems and masses for the dead – so also Christ has made a

15 See 1 Corinthians 5.7.

16 1 Corinthians 11.25.

17 By the late Middle Ages the last wills and testaments of those Christians with disposable income – kings and princes, senior clerics, nobles, merchants – normally provided endowments for chantries. These were either free-standing buildings or chapels within an existing church. A chantry served but one purpose, namely, as a place where a priest “chanted” Mass, that is, offered the sacrifice of the Mass, for the repose of the souls of the
requiem for himself in this testament. Not that he needs it but because it is necessary and profitable for us to remember him; we are thereby strengthened in faith, confirmed in hope, and made ardent in love. For as long as we live on earth our lot is such that the evil spirit and all the world assail us with joys and sorrows in order to extinguish our love for Christ, blot out our faith, and weaken our hope. Wherefore we urgently need this sacrament, in which we may gain new strength when we have grown weak and may daily exercise ourselves for the sake of strengthening and uplifting the spirit.

11. In all his promises, moreover, in addition to the word, God has usually given a sign, for the greater assurance and strengthening of our faith. Thus he gave Noah the sign of the rainbow. 18 To Abraham he gave circumcision as a sign. 19 To Gideon he gave [the sign of] the rain on the ground and on the fleece. 20 So we constantly find in the Scriptures many of these signs, given along with the promises. For in this way also worldly testaments are made: not only are the words written down, but seals and the marks of notaries are affixed, so that it may always be binding and authentic.

This is what Christ has done in this testament. He has affixed to the words a powerful and most precious seal and sign: his own true flesh and blood under the bread and wine. For we poor men, living as we do in our five senses, must always have along with the words at least one outward sign to which we may cling and around which we may gather – in such a way, however, that this

departed. In some chantries Mass was offered on behalf of one individual soul alone; other chantries were devoted to a whole family or clan, with a mass offered on behalf of each of its deceased members. The frequency of such masses depended on the amount of the endowment, and varied from daily to monthly to yearly. These missae defunctorum, “masses for the dead,” came to be called Requiem, because of the opening verse of the proper Introit (entrance Psalm) appointed for them, Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis, “Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them”. The “rest” in question was understood to mean some relaxation of – and eventual release from – the pains that a soul was enduring in purgatory.

18 Genesis 9.12-17.

19 Genesis 17.11.

20 Judges 6.36-40.
sign may be a sacrament, that is, that it may be external and yet contain and signify something spiritual, in order that through the external we may be drawn into the spiritual, comprehending the external with the eyes of the body and the spiritual or inward with the eyes of the heart.

12. Now we see how many parts there are in this testament, or Mass: –

There is, first, the testator who makes the testament, Christ.

Second, the heirs to whom the testament is bequeathed, we Christians.

Third, the testament itself, the words of Christ – when he says, *This is my body which is given for you. This is my blood which is poured out for you, a new eternal testament,* and so forth.

Fourth, the seal or token is the sacrament, the bread and wine, under which are his true body and blood. For everything that is in this sacrament must be living. Therefore Christ did not put it in dead writing and seals, but in living words and signs which we use from day to day. And this is what is meant when the priest elevates the host, by which he addresses us rather than God. It is as if he [that is, the priest] were saying to us, “Behold, this is the seal and sign of the testament in which Christ has bequeathed to us the remission of all sins and eternal life.” In agreement with this is also that which is sung by the choir, “Blessed be he who comes to us in the name of God.”21 We thereby testify how [in the sacrament] we receive blessings from God, and do not sacrifice or give to God.

Fifth, there is the bequeathed blessing which the words signify, namely, forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Sixth, the duty, remembrance, or requiem which we are to do for Christ – that is, that we should preach his love and grace, hear and meditate upon it, and by it be incited and preserved unto love and hope in him. As St Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 11[.26], *As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of Christ.* And this is what an earthly testator does, who bequeaths something to his heirs, that he may leave behind him a good name, the good will of me, and a blessed memory, that he should not be forgotten.

21 A paraphrase of the acclamation, *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini* (“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”), which occurs at the end of the beginning of most eucharistic prayers ancient and modern. Technically speaking, it is not a separate acclamation but part of a greater acclamation which begins with the seraphic cry, *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth* (“Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts” – Isaiah 6.3). Luther, for reasons he did not see fit to explain, suppressed the *Benedictus* in his *German Mass* of 1526.
13. From all this it is now easily seen what the Mass is, how one should prepare oneself for it, how [one should] observe and how use it, and how many are the abuses of it. For just as someone would act if ten thousand guldens were bequeathed to him by a good friend, so – and in even greater measure – we ought to conduct ourselves toward the Mass. It is nothing other than an exceedingly rich and everlasting and good testament bequeathed to us by Christ himself, bequeathed in such a way that Christ would have no other reason to die except that he desired to make such a testament. So fervently desirous was he to pour out his eternal treasures – as he says, With great desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I die. This is also why it happens that, in spite of so many masses, we remain so blind and cold. For we do not know what the Mass is, what we do in it, or what we get from it.

Since, then, the Mass is nothing other than a testament, the first and by far the best preparation for it is a truly hungry soul and a firm and joyful faith of the heart which accepts such a testament. Who would not go with great and joyful desire, hope, and comfort, and demand a thousand gulden, if he knew that at a certain place these had been bequeathed to him – especially if there were no other condition but that he remember, laud, and praise the testator? So in this matter you must above all else take heed to your heart, that you believe the words of Christ and admit their truth, when he says, “This is my blood, a new testament, by which I bequeath you forgiveness of sins and all life.” How could you do him greater dishonour and show greater disrespect for the holy Mass than by not believing or by doubting? For he desired this to be so certain that he himself even died for it. surely such doubt would be nothing else but denying and blaspheming Christ’s sufferings and death, and every blessing which he has thereby obtained.

14. Everything depends, therefore, as I have said, upon the words of this sacrament. These are the words of Christ. Truly we should set them in pure gold and precious stones, keeping nothing more diligently before the eyes of our heart, so that faith may thereby be exercised. Let someone else pray, fast, go to confession, prepare himself for Mass and the sacrament as he chooses. You do the same, but remember that this is all pure foolishness and self-deception, if you do not set before you the words of the testament and arouse yourself to believe and desire them. You would have to spend a long time polishing your shows, preening and primping to attain an inheritance, if you had no letter and seal with which you

\[22\] Luke 22.15.
could prove your right to it. But if you have a letter and seal – and believe, desire, and seek it – it must be given to you, even though you be scaly, scabby, stinking, and most filthy.

So if you would receive this sacrament and testament worthily, see to it that you give emphasis to these living words of Christ, rely on them with a strong faith, and desire what Christ has promised you in them – then it will be yours, then you will be worthy and well prepared. This faith and confidence must and will make you joyful and awaken [in you] a bold love for Christ, by means of which you will gladly begin to live a really good life and with all your heart to flee from sin. For he who loves Christ will surely do what pleases him and will leave undone what does not please him. But who will love Christ unless he tastes the riches of this testament of Christ, bequeathed to poor sinners out of pure mercy and without cost [to them]? This taste comes by the faith which believes and trusts the testament and promise. If Abraham had not believed the promise of God, he would never have amounted to anything. Just as certainly, then, as Abraham, Noah, and David accepted and believed God’s promises to them, so certainly must we also accept and believe this testament and promise.

15. Now there are two temptations which never cease to assail you. The first is that you are entirely unworthy of so rich a testament. The second is that, even if you were worthy, the blessing is so great that human nature is terrified by the very greatness – for what do not the forgiveness of all sins and eternal life bring with them? If either of these temptations comes to you, you must, as I have said, value the words of Christ more than [your own] thoughts. He will not lie to you, but your own thoughts will deceive you.

Just as if a poor beggar, yes, even a scoundrel, were bequeathed a thousand gulden, he would not demand them because of his merit or worthiness, or fail to claim them because of the size of the sum. Indeed, if anyone should reproach him for his unworthiness or for the size of the sum, he would surely not let that sort of talk frighten him. He would simply say, “What is that to you? I know very well that I am unworthy of this inheritance. I am not demanding possession on my own merits, as though it had been due me, but on the favour and grace of the testator. If he has not thought it too much to bequeath it to me, why should I so run myself down as not to claim and take it?” So also with respect to the sacrament, a timid and fainthearted conscience must rely, against its own thoughts, upon the testament of Christ and be daring in firm faith despite personal unworthiness and the greatness of the blessing. For this is precisely what makes it a divine testament, that it brings blessings so great to people so unworthy;
God desires thereby to awaken love for him above all things. So Christ comforted those dejected ones who thought the blessing too great and said, *Faint-hearted little flock, fear not; it has pleased your Father to give you the eternal kingdom.*

16. But see what they have made of the Mass! In the first place they have hidden these words of the testament and have taught that they are not to be spoken to the laity, that these are secret words to be spoken in the Mass only by the priest. Has not the devil here in a masterly way stolen from us the chief thing in the Mass and put it to silence? For who has ever heard it preached that one should give heed in the Mass to these words of the testament and rely upon them with a firm faith? And yet this should have been the chief thing. Thus have they been afraid and have taught us to be afraid, where there is no cause for fear – indeed, where all our comfort and safety lie.

How many miserable consciences, which perished from fear and sorrow, could have been comforted and rescued by these words! What devil has told them that the words which should be the most familiar, the most openly spoken among all Christians – among priests and laity, men and women, young and old – are to be hidden in greatest secrecy? How should it be possible for us to know what the Mass is, or how to use and observe it, if we are not to know the words in which the very Mass consists?

17. Let us learn, then, that in every promise of God there two things which one must consider: the word and the sign. As in baptism there are the words of the baptizer and the dipping in water, so in the Mass there are the words, and bread and wine. The words are the divine vow, promise, and testament. The signs are the sacraments, that is, sacred signs. Now as the testament is much more important than the sacrament, so the words are much more important than the signs. For the signs might well be lacking,

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24 Luther meant “papalist” Christians, i.e. the Pope and all who did the papacy’s bidding.
if only one has the words; and thus without sacrament, yet not without testament, one might be saved. For I can enjoy the sacrament in the Mass every day if only I keep before my eyes the testament, that is, the words and promise of Christ, and feed and strengthen my faith on them.

We see, then, that the best and greatest part of all sacraments and of the Mass is the words and promise of God, without which the sacraments are dead and are nothing at all, like a body without a soul, a cask without wine, a purse without money. A type without a fulfilment, a letter without the spirit, a sheath without a knife, and the like. Wherefore it is true that when we use, hear, or see the Mass without the words or testament, and pay attention only to the sacrament and sign, we are not observing the Mass even halfway. For sacrament without testament is a keeping of the case without the jewel, a quite one-sided separation and division.

18. I fear, therefore, that there is at present more idolatry in Christendom through the Mass than ever occurred among the Jews. For we hear nowhere that the Mass is directed toward the feeding and strengthening of faith, for which alone it was established by Christ. Instead, it is observed only as a sacrament without testament.

Many have written of “the fruits of the Mass,” and indeed have greatly exalted them; nor do I question the value of these fruits. But see to it that you regard them all, compared to this one thing, as the body compared to the soul. God has here prepared for our faith a pasture, a table, and a feast; but faith is not fed except on the word of God alone. Therefore you must pay attention above all else to the words, exalt them, highly treasure them, and hold fast to them. Then you will have not simply the little drops of blessing that drip from the Mass, but the very fountainhead of faith, from which springs and flows every blessing. It is the Lord who says in John 4, He that believeth on me, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water; and, Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. So we see that the first abuse of the Mass is this, that we have lost the chief blessing, namely, the testament and faith.

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25 In mediaeval piety, “the fruits of the Mass” denoted those blessings or spiritual benefits garnered by those who attended and were present at a celebration of Mass with full devotion.

Preface

FIRST OF ALL I want to make a request in all kindness – and in God’s name, too – that all who see this Order of Service or desire to adopt it, shall not impose it as a law or cause anyone’s conscience to be distressed or bound by it, but shall use it in Christian freedom as they may please, as, where, when, and as long as conditions call for it. For we do not publish this with the intent of correcting anyone or legislating for him, but because there is clamour for German masses and services everywhere, and widespread lament and offence has been caused by the different usages in the new masses. For everyone is constructing his own – some with good intentions, others again with presumption in order that they may shine as also having produced something new, to prove that they are not ordinary leaders. Such is the fate of Christian freedom. Few use it except for their own pleasure or advantage, not for the honour of God and the welfare of the neighbour.

Although the exercise of such freedom is a matter for everyone’s conscience and no one should seek to forbid or limit it, yet we must see to it that freedom is and ever shall be the servant of love and of the neighbour. And where men take offence or are led astray by the differences in usage, we are bound in truth to forego our freedom and (as far as possible) to seek the improvement of the people and not cause offence by what we do or omit to do. Since this external Order of Service may serve the neighbour, and since there is nothing here affecting matters of conscience before God, we should seek to be of one mind in Christian love, as St Paul teaches,¹ and as far as is feasible we should

¹ Philippians 2.2: “Make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”
Luther’s *German Mass* (1526)

have like usages and ceremonies, even as all Christians have one Baptism and one Sacrament. Nobody has received from God a special one of his own.

This is not to say that those who are already provided with a proper Order or by God’s grace can do better than I, should abandon theirs and give place to ours. For it is not my thought that all Germany must immediately adopt our Wittenberg Order. It has never been so that all foundations, monasteries, and parishes had a uniformity of observance. But it would be well if in every jurisdiction public worship were uniform and neighbouring towns and villages observed the same ceremonies as the city. Nor should there be any constraint or reproof, if in other jurisdictions they wish to observe the same ceremonies or make additions of their own. In short, we do not introduce any Order for the sake of those who already are Christians. They do not need them, for one does not live for such things. But those who are not yet Christians live for our sake, that they may make Christians out of us. Their worship is in the Spirit.

We need such Orders for those who either must still become Christians or need to be strengthened, since a Christian does not need Baptism or the Word of the Sacrament [“for the forgiveness of sins”] – it is all his [sc. the Christian’s already] – *as a Christian*, but *as a sinner*. Church-Orders are needed, most of all, for the sake of the simple-minded and the youth, who shall and must be trained and drilled in the Scriptures and God’s Word every day so that they may become familiar with the Scriptures, apt, well-versed, and learned in them, be enabled to defend their faith, and in due time may teach others and help to increase the kingdom of Christ. For their sake we must read, sing, preach, write, and compose [hymn tunes and other music] – and if it would help the

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2 **one Baptism and one Sacrament.** Cf. Ephesians 4:4-6: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” Here, however, Luther reflects the mediaeval Catholic view that “the most holy Sacrament of the Altar” – the eucharistic sacrament – was *the sacrament par excellence*, almost in a class by itself.

3 **those who are not yet Christians.** Luther is not referring to Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, or followers of any other religion. He is referring to “nominal” Christians who had not (yet) become “real” Christian believers – “accepted Jesus into their hearts as their personal Saviour” – on the basis of Justification by Faith Alone.

4 Cf. John 4:24: “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”
matter along, I would have all the bells pealing, and all the organs playing, and let everything chime in that has a clapper. For this is the damnable thing in the papal services, that they have been changed into laws, works, and merits to the utter destruction of faith.

Nor did they use them to educate the youth and the simple-minded, to drill them in the Scriptures and God’s Word, but became so enmeshed in them as to regard them as themselves useful and necessary for salvation. That is the devil himself. The ancients did not institute nor order them with such intentions.

There are three kinds of services and masses.

First, the Latin service which we have published under the title *Formula missae* [1523]. This service I do not wish here to abrogate or change. As it has been in use by us hitherto, so shall it remain available for use where or when it pleases us or occasion calls for it. For I would in no wise banish the Latin tongue entirely from the Service, for the youth is my chiefest concern. If I could bring it to pass and Greek and Hebrew were as familiar to us as the Latin, and offered as much good music and song, we would hold Mass, sing, and read on successive Sundays in all four languages, German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

I am not at all in sympathy with those who cling to one language and despise all others. I would rather train the youth and people who could also be of service to Christ in foreign lands and be able to converse with the natives there, in order to avoid the experience of the Waldensians in Bohemia, who confined their faith to one language so completely that they cannot speak correctly or intelligently with anyone, unless that person first learn their language. This was not the method of the Holy Spirit at the

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5 The ancients. The ancient Church Fathers.

6 the Waldensians in Bohemia. Bohemia was (and is still) the homeland of the Czech people. The Waldensians (or Waldenses) were a movement which began in France, under the leadership of Peter Valdes (in mediaeval Latin, the letter V was pronounced rather like a W – hence their name Waldenses), in the eleventh century. This movement called for worship and preaching in the vernacular (“tongues understanded of the people”), communion in both kinds, and eventually rejected the papacy; it spread slowly and modestly into the Italian Alps and into the eastern marches of the Holy Roman Empire. Luther, however, probably meant the Hussites, a movement native to Bohemia; they were named after Jan Huss, a Czech-speaking reformer who was tried for heresy and burned at the stake during the Council of Constance in 1415. The Bohemian movement actually began two centuries before Huss; it advocated communion in both kinds, communion of all the baptized (including infants), and liturgy in Czech. Luther’s strictures on the movement reflect long-standing German prejudice against the Czechs.
beginning. He did not tarry until all the world came to Jerusalem and studied Hebrew, but gave manifold tongues for the office of the ministry, so that the apostles could preach wherever they went. I would rather follow this example. It is proper that the youth should be trained in many languages, for who knows how God may use them in time to come. For this our schools have been established.

The second [kind of service] is the German Mass and Order of Service, with which we are concerned here, and which should be introduced for the sake of the simple layfolk. These two Orders of Service must be used publicly, in the churches, for all the people. For among them are many who do not believe [by faith alone] and are not yet Christians. The greater part of them stand around and gape, hoping to see something new, just as if we were holding a service among the Turks or the heathen in a public square or out in a field. For there is as yet no well-ordered and organised congregation here, in which the Christians could be ruled according to the Gospel. Our Service is a public provocation to faith and to Christianity.7

The third kind of service which a truly evangelical Church Order should have would not be held in a public place for all sorts of people, but for those who mean to be real Christians and profess the Gospel with hand and mouth. They would record their names on a list and meet by themselves in some house in order to pray, read, baptize, receive the Sacrament and do other Christian works. In this way those who do not lead Christian lives would be known, reproved, reclaimed, cast out or excommunicated according to the rule of Christ in Matthew 18.8 Here one could also establish a common benevolent fund among the Christians, which should be willingly given and distributed among the poor, according to the example of St Paul, 2 Corinthians 9.9

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7 a public provocation to faith and to Christianity. Luther means that his German Mass should challenge, even startle the not-yet-Christians into “real” Christianity, that is, into seeking salvation by faith alone.

8 Matthew 18.15-18: “If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”
and elaborate chants would be unnecessary. There could be a short, appropriate Order for Baptism and the Sacrament, with everything centred on the Word and prayer and love. There would be need of a good brief catechism on the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Our Father. In short, if one had the people [who are real Christians] and persons who wanted to be Christians in fact, the rules and regulations could easily be supplied.

But as yet I neither can nor desire to begin, or to make rules for such a congregation or assembly. I do not yet have the persons necessary to accomplish it; nor do I observe many who strongly urge it. If circumstances should force me to it and I can no longer refuse with a good conscience, I shall gladly do my part and help as best I may. In the meantime, the two kinds of service mentioned must suffice, and I shall publicly help to foster, in addition to the preaching, such services for all the people as shall train the youth and call and provoke others to faith, until the Christians who take the Word seriously find themselves and become insistent. If I should begin it [sc. devising the third kind of service] by myself, it may result in a revolt. For we Germans are an untamed, crude, boisterous people with whom one had better not start anything lightly, except under the compulsion of a very great need.

Let us get on with it, in God’s name. First, the German Service needs an easily understood, plain, simple catechism. Catechism means “instruction,” in which heathens who want to be Christians are taught and directed in what they should believe, do, refrain from doing, and know in the Christian religion. For this reason beginners who were admitted to such instruction, and studied the Creed before they were baptized, were called catechumens. This instruction or direction I know not how to put in a clearer or

9 2 Corinthians 9.6-15: “The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, ‘He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever.’ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”

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Luther’s *German Mass* (1526)

better way than has done since the beginning of Christendom and retained in our own day – namely, these three: the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Our Father. These three contain, simply and briefly, just about everything a Christian needs to know. This instruction must be given, as long as there is no special congregation, from the pulpit at stated times or daily as may be needed, and repeated or read aloud evenings and mornings in the homes for the children and the servants, if we want to train them as Christians. They should not learn merely to say the words by heart, as heretofore, but with each part they should be asked questions and give answers, what each part means and how they understand it. If everything cannot be covered at once, one part should be taken up and the next day another part. For if the parents and guardians of youth will not take the pains to do this themselves, or secure others to do it, there will never be a catechism – unless it should come to pass that separate [special] congregations were organised, as mentioned above.

They should be questioned like this: –

*Question.* What do you pray?
*Answer.* The Our Father.

*Question.* What does it mean when you say, “Our Father in heaven”?
*Answer.* That God is not an earthly but a heavenly Father who would make us rich and blessed in heaven.

*Question.* What does this mean: “Hallowed be your Name”?
*Answer.* That we should honour his Name and keep it from being profaned.

*Question.* How is his Name dishonoured and profaned?
*Answer.* When we, who should be his children, live evil lives and teach and believe what is wrong.

And so on – what “the kingdom of God” means, how it comes, what God’s will is, what “daily bread” means, etc.

So in the Creed: –

*Question.* What do you believe?
*Answer.* I believe in God the Father....

[Let the whole Creed be recited] to the end. Thereafter [examine the catechumens in] one part after the other, as time permits, one part or two at once. For example: –

*Question.* What does it mean to believe in God the Father almighty?
*Answer.* It means to trust him with all the heart, and with assurance to expect all grace, favour, help, and comfort from him in time and in eternity.

*Question.* What does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ his Son?
Answer. It means to believe in the heart that we would all be eternally lost if Christ had not died for us.
And so forth.
Likewise in the Ten Commandments. One must ask: What does the first Commandment mean, the second, the third, and the other Commandments?
These questions can be taken from our Little Book of Prayers, where the three chief parts [of the catechism, the Our Father, the Creed, the Ten Commandments] are briefly explained, or one can follow his own method, until all Christian teaching is summed up for the heart in two portions, as it were, in two pouches, which are faith and love. Faith’s pouch may have two purses. Into the one we put this, that we believe that through the sin of Adam we are all corrupt, [all] sinners, and [all] under condemnation (Romans 5, Psalm 51). Into the other purse we put this, that we are all saved through Jesus Christ from such corruption, sin, and condemnation (Romans 5, John 3). Love’s pouch may also have two purses. One shall contain this, that we should serve and do good to everyone, just as Christ has done for us (Romans 13). The other purse shall have this, that we should suffer and endure all kinds of evil with joy.
When a child begins to understand this, it should be encouraged to bring home Scripture texts from the sermons and repeat them at meal-time for the parents, as was formerly the custom with the Latin lesson. Then those texts should be put into the pouches and purses just as the pfennige, Groschen, or Gulden are put into the pockets. For instance, let faith’s pouch be the golden pouch.11 Into the first purse this text shall go, Romans 5[.18a, 19]: “Through one man’s sin all men are sinners and have passed under condemnation.” Also this one, Psalm 51[.6]: “Behold, I was formed in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” These are two Rhenish Gulden for the purse. The Hungarian

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10 Luther’s Betbuchlein (1522) contained “A Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer,” which he had previously published as a separate booklet in 1520.

11 pfennige, Groschen, or Gulden. The most common coins in everyday life throughout sixteenth-century Germany; a pfennig (penny) was made of copper, groschen of silver, and Gulden of gold. The more powerful (and financially secure) princedoms and dukedoms each minted their own coins in the most widely accepted denominations. The Gulden of some princedoms were purer, with fewer alloys (like brass or copper), than those of others, and thus were deemed more stable, secure, and valuable.

12 the golden pouch. The pouch in which gold coins are kept.
Gulden\textsuperscript{13} go into the other purse, such as this text, Romans 4[.25]: “Christ was handed over for our trespasses and was raised again for our justification.” Again, John 3[.29]: “Here is the Lamb of God who bears the sin of the world!” These are two precious Hungarian Gulden for that purse.

Let love’s pouch be the silver pouch. Into the first purse shall go the texts concerning well-doing, such as Galatians 5[.13]: “Through love be servants to one another.” Matthew 25[.40]: “What you have done to one of the least of these my brothers, you have done to me.” These would be two silver Groschen for that purse. Into the other purse shall go this text, Matthew 5[.11]: “Blessed are you when people shall persecute you on my account.” Hebrews 12[.6]: “The Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts.” These are two Schreckenberger [Groschen] for that purse.\textsuperscript{14}

Let none think himself too wise for this and despise such child’s play. Christ, in order to train men, must needs become a man himself. If we wish to train children, we must become children with them. Would to God such child’s play were widely practised! In a short time we would have a wealth of Christian people, souls becoming rich in the Scripture and the knowledge of God, until they would, of their own accord, add more purses as commonplaces and comprehend all Scripture in them. Otherwise things will remain as they have been, a daily coming to church and coming away again. For no one thinks that it makes any difference except for the time it takes. No one expects to learn anything there. A man listens to preaching for three or four years and does not learn enough to give answer concerning one article of the Creed – this I know from daily experience. Enough is written in the books, yes, but it has not been driven home to the hearts.

**Concerning the Service**

Since the chief and greatest aim of any Service is to preach and teach God’s Word, we have arranged for sermons and lessons as follows. – For the holy day or Sunday we retain the customary Epistles and Gospels\textsuperscript{15} and have three sermons. Early – at five or six

\textsuperscript{13} Rhenish Gulden... Hungarian Gulden. The former were gold coins minted in the Rhineland (in western Germany); the latter were minted in Hungary, the northwestern portion of which remained outside of Ottoman rule and within the Holy Roman Empire. Hungarian Gulden were of purer gold (and thus more valuable) than Rhenish Gulden.

\textsuperscript{14} Schreckenberger [Groschen]. Silver coins minted in Schreckenberg, one of the hundreds of petty states within Germany.
o’clock [in the morning] – a few Psalms are chanted for Matins [Morning Prayer]. A sermon follows on the Epistle of the day, chiefly for the sake of the servants, so that they too may be cared for and hear God’s Word, if perchance they cannot be present at the other sermons. After this [may be sung] an antiphon and the Te Deum or Benedictus, alternately, concluding with the Lord’s Prayer, Collect [of the Day], and Benedicamus Domino.16

At the Mass, at eight or nine o’clock, there is preaching on the Gospel appointed for the day. At Vespers in the afternoon, there is preaching before the Magnificat,17 on the Old Testament [reading], taken in order. The customary Epistles and Gospels of the various days of the year are retained by us, because there is nothing especially censurable in this custom. This is the arrangement at Wittenberg at the present time when there are many here who must learn to preach in places where the [old] system of Epistles and Gospels still is and may remain in vogue. Since in this matter we can be of service to others without loss to ourselves, we have made no change, without thereby implying any criticism of those who would take the complete books of the Evangelists in hand.18 This, we think, provides sufficient preaching and teaching for the layman; he who desires more will find an abundance on the other days.

On Monday and Tuesday, early, we have a German lesson on the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer, Baptism and the Sacrament, so that these two days shall preserve the

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15 **the customary Epistles and Gospels.** The two readings (both from the New Testament) appointed for each Sunday, fixed-date festival, and feria (weekday) in the Missal of the Roman Rite.

16 **the Te Deum or Benedictus, alternately:** *Te Deum* is the hymn which begins, “We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord”; *Benedictus* is the Song of Zechariah (Luke 1.68-79). In the Roman Breviary (the Daily Office of the Roman Rite), the latter hymn was to be sung at Lauds (*laudes matutinae*, “morning praises”) on ferias; the former, at Lauds on Sundays and other major festivals. **Benedicamus Domino:** “Let us bless the Lord” – the usual dismissal at end of the daily offices; the response was (is), *Deo gratias* (“Thanks be to God”).

17 **Magnificat.** The Song of Mary (Luke 2.46-55). In Latin, this song’s opening line is, *Magnificat anima mea Domonum*, “My soul doth magnify (i.e. extol the greatness of) the Lord”.

18 Luther is referring to reformers who arranged the Sunday and daily lectionary so as to have each Gospel read “in course,” one or two chapters at a time, from beginning to end. When one had gone through all four Gospels, one began all over again with Matthew 1.
Catechism and deepen its understanding. On Wednesday, early, another German lesson for which the Evangelist Matthew has been appointed, so that they day shall be his very own, especially since he is an excellent evangelist for the instruction of the congregation, reports the great Sermon of Christ on the Mount, and strongly urges the exercise of love and good works. The Evangelist John, who is so mighty in teaching faith, has his own day, too, on Saturday afternoon at Vespers. In this way we have a daily study of two evangelists. Thursday and Friday bring us, early in the morning, the weekday readings from the Epistles of the apostles and the rest of the New Testament. Thus enough readings and sermons are appointed to give the Word of God free course among us. Then there are still the lectures given in the university for the scholars.

To exercise the boys and pupils in the Bible, this is done: – Every day of the week they chant a few Psalms in Latin before the Lesson [scriptural reading], as customary at Matins hitherto. For we want to keep the youth in the knowledge and use of the Latin Bible, as was said above. After the Psalms, a chapter from the New Testament is read in Latin by two or three of the boys in succession, depending on its length. Another boy then reads the same chapter in German, for the exercise and for the benefit of any layman who might be present. They then proceed with an antiphon to the German reading mentioned above. After the reading [and antiphon] the whole assembly sings a German hymn, the Lord’s Prayer is said secretly, the pastor or chaplain reads a Collect, closing with the *Benedicamus Domino* as usual.

At Vespers the schoolchildren chant a few of the Vesper Psalms in the same manner as heretofore in Latin, with an antiphon, followed by a hymn (if one is available). Two or three of the boys, one after the other, read a chapter (or half a chapter, depending on the length) in Latin from the Old Testament. Another boy reads the same chapter in German; the Magnificat follows in Latin, with

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19 a German lesson. A scriptural reading (with expository sermon) relevant to one of the listed topics.

20 Luther means the First Lesson for each feria, as appointed in the Roman Missal.

21 University lectures were usually open to the public as well as to registered students.

22 the boys and pupils. Here Luther is talking about schools for children, not university.

23 secretly. *Sotto voce,* “in a soft voice,” in an undertone or murmur.
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an antiphon or hymn; then the Lord's Prayer, said secretly, and the Collects with the *Benedicamus Domino*. This is the daily weekday Service in the cities where there are schools.

**Sunday Service for the Laity**

We allow the vestments, altars, and candles to remain in use until they are used up or until it pleases us to make a change. But we do not oppose anyone who would herein do otherwise. In the true Mass of real Christians, however, the altar could not remain where it is and the priest would always face the people – as, doubtless, Christ did at the Last Supper. But let that await its own time.

To begin the Service, we sing a hymn, or a German Psalm in the Third Tone after this manner:

"At all times I will bless the Lord;*
his praise shall ever be in my mouth.
I will glory in the Lord;*
let the humble hear and rejoice."

and so forth [to the end of the Psalm].

Then follows the *Kyrie eleison* in the same Tone, three times and not nine times:

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Then the priest reads a Collect in monotone on F fa-ut, as follows:

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24 Gregorian chant has eight “tones” – each one more like a progression of musical notes than a melody. Luther here (and in later writings) made use of the first, the fifth, and the eighth Gregorian Tones.

25 Psalm 34. In his text Luther included the musical pointing of the whole Psalm.

26 *Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.* "Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy." In the Mass of the Roman Rite, each of these three petitions was to be repeated three times – making what is known as "a ninefold Kyrie". Luther here decrees that each petition – each Kyrie – should be sung once, that is, a "threefold" Kyrie.
Almighty God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy, that by your holy inspiration we may think those things that are right, and by your power may perform the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.28

After this, the Epistle [is sung] in the Eighth Tone, and let him [sc. the reader] for the reciting note remain on the same pitch as the Collect.

[Luther at this point lays down general rules and provides a specific example – 1 Corinthians 3.1-5, in musical notation – for singing the Epistle.]

He should read the Epistle facing the people, but the Collect facing the altar.

After the Epistle a German hymn – either “Now Let Us Pray to the Holy Ghost”29 or any other – is sung with the whole choir.

Then he reads the Gospel in the Fifth Tone, again facing the people.

[Luther at this point lays down general rules, and provides a specific example – John 1.19-28 (Fourth Sunday of Advent), in musical notation – for chanting the Gospel.]

After the Gospel the whole congregation sings the Creed in German: “In One True God We All Believe.”30

The follows the sermon on the Gospel for the Sunday or feast-day. And I think if we had the postil for the entire year,31 it would

27 on F fa-ut. In mediaeval musical notation, this is the equivalent of f on the second-highest line of the bass clef.

28 This prayer conflates two collectae of the Roman Rite. The address and initial petition come from the Collect for the Third Sunday after Pentecost (“Protector in te sperantium, Deus, sine quo nihil est validum, nihil sanctum; multiplicā super nos misericordiam tuam…..”) The body of the petition is derived from the Collect for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost. (“Largire nobis, quaesumus, Domine, semper spiritum cogitandi quae recta sunt, propitius et agendi…..”)

29 See Appendix to this Reading.

30 See Appendix to this Reading.
be best to appoint the sermon for the day to be read in whole or in part out of the book – not only for the benefit of those preachers who can do nothing better, but also for the purpose of preventing the rise of fanatics and sects. If we observe the sermons read at Matins, we note a usage similar to this. For unless it is a spiritual understanding and the Spirit himself that speaks through the preachers – whom I do not wish hereby to restrict, for the Spirit teaches better how to preach than all the postils and homilies, – we shall ultimately get where everyone will preach his own ideas, and instead of the Gospel and its exposition we shall again have sermons on blue ducks. This is one of the reasons why we retain the Epistles and Gospels as they are given in the postils – there are so few gifted preachers who are able to give a powerful and practical exposition of a whole evangelist or some other book of the Bible.

After the sermon shall follow a public paraphrase of the Lord’s Prayer and admonition for those who want to partake of the Sacrament, in this or a better fashion:

Friends in Christ: Since we are here assembled in the name of the Lord [Jesus Christ] to receive his New Testament [i.e. the Sacrament], I admonish you first of all to lift up your hearts to God to pray with me the Lord’s Prayer, as Christ our Lord has taught us and graciously promised to hear us.

That God our Father in heaven may look with mercy on us, his needy children on earth, and grant us grace so that his holy Name may be hallowed by us and all the world through the pure and true teaching of his Word and the fervent love of our lives; that he would graciously turn from us all false doctrine and evil living whereby his precious Name is being blasphemed and profaned.

That his kingdom may come to us and expand; that all transgressors, and those who blinded and bound in the devil’s kingdom, be brought to know Jesus Christ his Son by faith; and that the number of Christians may be increased.

That we may be strengthened by his Spirit to do and to suffer his will, both in life and in death, in good and in evil things, and always to break, slay, and sacrifice our own wills.

31 postil. In Luther’s day, this meant a collection of homilies (by one or more preachers) on each and every Epistle and/or Gospel appointed in the lectionary of the Church Year. Luther himself eventually completed two series of such collections, his Kirchenpostille (“Church Postils”), in 1527.

32 In the Roman Breviary, portions of the writings of the Church Fathers (often from one of their sermons) were appointed to be read at Lauds.
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That he would also give us our daily bread, preserve us from greed and selfish cares, and help us so to trust that he will provide for all our needs.

That he would forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, so that our hearts may rest and rejoice in a good conscience before him, and that no sin may ever frighten or alarm us.

That he would not lead us into temptation but help us by the Spirit to subdue the flesh, to despise the world and its ways, and to overcome the devil with all his wiles.

And lastly, that he would deliver us from all evil, both of body and soul, now and for ever.

All those who earnestly desire these things will say from their very hearts, Amen! – trusting without any doubt that it is Yes! and answered in heaven as Christ has promised. Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you shall receive it, and you will (Mark 11.24). Amen.

Secondly, I admonish you in Christ that you discern the Testament of Christ in true faith and, above all, take to heart the words wherein Christ imparts to us his Body and his Blood for the forgiveness of our sins. That you remember and give thanks for his boundless love, which he proved to us when he redeemed us from God’s wrath, sin, death, and hell by his own blood. And that in this faith you outwardly receive the bread and wine – that is, his Body and his Blood – as the pledge and guarantee of this. In his Name, therefore, and according to the command that he gave, let us use and receive the Testament.

Whether such paraphrase and admonition should be read in the pulpit immediately after the sermon or at the altar, I would leave to everyone’s judgement. It seems that the ancients did so in the pulpit, so that it is still the custom to read general prayers or to repeat the Lord’s Prayer in the pulpit. But the admonition itself has since become a public confession. In this way [i.e. as recommended here], however, the Lord’s Prayer with a short exposition would be current among the people, and the Lord would be remembered just as he commanded at the [Last] Supper.

I would like to ask, however, that this paraphrase or admonition follow a prescribed wording or be formulated in a definite manner for the sake of the common people. We cannot have one do it one way today and someone else do it another way tomorrow, and let everybody parade his talents and confuse the people so that they can neither learn nor retain anything. What chiefly matters is the teaching and guiding of the people. That is why here we must limit our freedom and keep to one form of
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paraphrase or admonition, particularly in a given church or congregation – if, for the sake of [its own] freedom, it does not wish to use another form.

Thereupon the Office and Consecration to the following Tune [Luther provided the musical notation for chanting the institution narrative at this point; it is not included here]:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way he took the cup also, after supper; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of this, all of you; this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

It seems to me that it would accord with [the institution of] the Lord’s Supper to administer the sacrament immediately after the consecration of the bread, before the cup is blessed; for both Luke and Paul say, “He took the cup after they had eaten,” etc. Meanwhile, the German Sanctus or the hymn, “Let God Be Blessed,” or the hymn of Jan Huss, “Jesus Christ, Our God and Saviour,” could be sung. Then shall the cup be blessed and administered, while the remainder of these hymns is sung, or the German *Agnus Dei.* Let there be a decent and orderly approach – not the men and women together, but the women after the men. For this reason they should also stand apart from each other in separate places. I have written elsewhere what should be done about private confession, and my reason can be found in the *Bettbüchlein* [“The Little Book of Prayers,” 1522].

We do not wish to abolish the elevation but retain it because it goes well with the German Sanctus and signifies that Christ has

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33 This narrative is a conflation of 1 Corinthians 11.23-25 and Matthew 26.26-28.

34 Luke 22.20, 1 Corinthians 11.25.

35 See Appendix to this Reading, below.

36 See Appendix to this Reading, below. Luther does not mean that the recommended hymns be sung during the recitation of the words over the cup; he means that the hymns should be sung *until* the recitation of the words, then the singing should be resumed while the cup is administered.
commanded us to remember him. For just as the Sacrament is bodily elevated, and yet Christ’s Body and Blood are not [outwardly] seen in it, so he is also elevated and remembered by the word of the sermon, and confessed and adored in the reception of the Sacrament. In such case he is apprehended only by faith – for we cannot see [with our body’s eyes] how Christ gives his Body and Blood for us while even now daily showing and offering it before God to obtain grace for us.

The German Sanctus

Isaiah ‘twas the prophet who did see
Seated above the Lord in majesty
High on a throne in splendour bright;
The train of his robe filled the temple quite.
Standing beside him were two seraphim;
Six wings, six wings he saw on each of them.
With twain they hid in awe their faces clear,
With twain they hid their feet in rev’rent fear.
And with the other twain they flew about;
One to the other loudly raised the shout:
Holy is God, the Lord of Sabaoth,
Holy is God, the Lord of Sabaoth,
Holy is God, the Lord of Sabaoth,
Behold his glory filleth all the earth.
The angels’ cry made beams and lintels shake,
The house also was filled with clouds of smoke.

The Collect follows, with the Benediction: –

We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have refreshed us with this your saving gift, and we beseech your mercy to strengthen us through the same in faith toward you and in love among us all, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

37 the elevation. In the Mass of the Roman Rite, the presiding priest was (and is still) to raise the consecrated Host above his head as soon as he had spoken the words of institution over the bread. The cup was not to be elevated in the same way. Luther, however, implies that the cup as well as the Host is to be elevated, each after the consecrating words have been spoken over it.
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.38

* 

This is what I have to say about the daily service and instruction in the Word of God, which serves primarily to train the young and challenge the unlearned. For those who itch for new things will soon be sated and tired with it all, as they were heretofore in the Latin service.39 There was singing and reading in the churches every day, and yet the churches remained deserted and empty. Already they do the same in the German service. Therefore it is best to plan the services in the interests of the young and such of the unlearned as may happen to come. With the others neither law nor order, neither scolding nor coaxing, will help. Allow them to leave those things in the service alone which they refuse to do willingly and gladly. God is not pleased with unwilling services; they are futile and vain.

But on the festivals – such as Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, St Michael’s,40 Purification,41 and the like – we must continue to use Latin until we have enough German songs. This work is just beginning; not everything has been prepared that is needed. We must arrive at a common standard to assess and control the profusion of Orders.

Lent, Palm Sunday, and Holy Week shall be retained, to force anyone to fast but to preserve the Passion story and the Gospels appointed for that season. This, however, does not include the Hunger Cloth,42 throwing of palms, veiling of pictures, and whatever else there is of such tomfoolery – nor chanting the four Passions, nor preaching on the Passion for eight hours on Good Friday. Holy Week shall be like any other week, except that the Passion story shall be explained every day for an hour throughout the week or on as many days as may be desirable, and that the

38 Numbers 24-26.

39 Luther means his own Formula missae of 1523.

40 St Michael and All Angels (September 29).

41 The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary (February 2). This Holy Day’s primary title (and dedication) is The Presentation of our Lord in the Temple. It is also known as Candlemas, for it was on this feast that the new year’s supply of candles was – and in many churches still is – blessed.

42 the Hunger Cloth was a curtain set up in front of the altar during Lent, in order to hide it.
Luther’s *German Mass* (1526)

Sacrament be given to everyone who desires it. For among Christians the whole service should centre on the Word and Sacrament.

In short, this or any other Order shall be used in such a way that whenever it becomes an abuse, it shall be immediately abolished and replaced by another, just as King Hezekiah put away and destroyed the bronze serpent, though God himself had commanded it to be made, because the children of Israel had made an abuse of it. For the Orders must serve for the promotion of faith and love and not be to the detriment of faith. As soon as they fail to do this, they are invalid, dead, and gone – just as a good coin, when counter-feited, is cancelled and changed because of the abuse; or as new shoes, when they become old and uncomfortable, are no longer worn but thrown away, and new ones are bought. An Order is an outward thing. No matter how good it is, it can be abused. Then it is no longer an Order but a disorder. No Order is, therefore, valid in itself – as the popish orders were held to be until now. But the validity, value, power, and virtue of any Order is in its proper use. Otherwise it is utterly worthless and good for nothing.

God’s Spirit and grace be with us all.

MARTIN LUTHER.

*APPENDIX

Hymns mentioned in the text

1. *Now Let Us Pray to the Holy Ghost*43

The first stanza of this hymn was a mediaeval *Leise* – one of many sacred folk songs in German. This vernacular song was in circulation from early on in the Middle Ages. Luther liked it so much, that in 1524 he wrote a further three stanzas to the popular tune of the original. (The refrain “Kyrioleis” is, of course, a contraction of *Kyrie eleison.*)

Now let us pray to the Holy Ghost,
for the true faith of all things the most,
that in our last moments he may befriend us,
and as home we go, that he may tend us.

Kyrioleis.

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43 Translated by George MacDonald, revised by Ulrich S. Leupold. *LW*53, p. 264.
Luther’s *German Mass* (1526)

Thou noble light, shine as thou hast shone; teach us to know Jesus Christ alone, clinging to our Saviour whose blood hath bought us, who to our true home hath again brought us.

*Kyrieleis.*

Thou sweet Love, grant us favour, that so we feel within of thy love the glow, that we from our hearts may love true the others, and with peace and joy live as good brothers.

*Kyrieleis.*

Thou comfort best in danger or blame, help us to fear neither death nor shame, that we may not falter when all shall fail us and the foe with his taunts shall assail us.

*Kyrieleis.*

*2. In One True God We All Believe*\(^4^4\)

Luther composed this paraphrase of the Apostles’ Creed in 1524.

In one true God we all believe, Maker of earth and heaven; who, us as children to receive, hath himself as Father given. Now and henceforth he will feed us, soul and body will surround us, ’gainst mischances he will heed us, nought shall meet us that shall grieve us. He watches o’er us, cares, defends, and everything is in his hands.

And we believe in Jesus Christ, his own Son, our Lord and Master, who beside the Father highest reigns in equal might and glory. Born of Mary, Virgin Mother by the Spirit’s operation, he was made our older brother that the lost might find salvation;

\(^4^4\) Translated by George MacDonald, revised by Ulrich S. Leupold. *LW*’53, pp. 272-273.
slain on the cross by wicked men
and raised to life by God again.

We all confess the Holy Ghost
with the Father and the Saviour,
who the fearful comforts most
and the meek doth crown with favour.
All of Christendom he even
in one heart and spirit keepeth.
Here all sins shall be forgiven;
wake too shall the flesh that sleepest.
After these suff’rings there shall be
life for us eternally.

3. Let God Be Blest\textsuperscript{45}

Luther substantially revised this very popular pre-Reformation
hymn, itself already in vernacular German, in 1524. “Kyrieleison” is
another contraction of Kyrie eleison.

Let God be blest, be praised, and be thanked,
who to us himself hath granted
this his own flesh and blood to feed and save us.
May we take well what he gave us.
Kyrieleison.

By thy holy Body without blame,
which from thine own Mother came,
And by thy holy Blood,
help us, Lord, from all our need.
Kyrieleison.

The holy Body is for us laid lowly
down in death, that we live holy;
no greater good he to us could render,
to make think his love so tender.
Kyrieleison.

Lord, thy love so great hath in thee wrought
that thy Blood to us hath marvels brought,
of our debt paid the sum,
that God gracious is become.
Kyrieleison.

\textsuperscript{45} Translated by George MacDonald, revised by Ulrich S. Leupold. LW\textsuperscript{53},
p. 253-254.
Luther’s *German Mass* (1526)

God on us all his blessing free bestow now,  
that in his ways we may go now! 
brotherly troth and fervent love ensuing, 
never so thy Supper ruing. 

Kyrieleison. 

Let thy Holy Ghost not forsake us,  
grant that of a sane mind he may make us, 
that thy poor Christendom 
into peace and union come. 

Kyrieleison. 

4. Jesus Christ, Our God and Saviour

In the text of his *German Mass*, Luther ascribes this hymn to Jan Huss, the Czech reformer executed in 1415. Huss’s hymn, however, served Luther as no more than a template; he revised it so substantially, that it is his own composition.

1. Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour 
turned away God’s wrath for ever, 
by his bitter agony 
helped us out of hell’s misery.

2. That we never should forget it, 
gave he us his Flesh to eat it, 
hidden in this bit of bread, 
and to drink gave us his Blood.

3. Whoso to this board repaireth, 
take good heed how he prepareth. 
Who unworthy thither goes, 
thence death instead of life he knows.

4. God the Father praise thou duly, 
that he thee would feed so truly, 
and for ill deeds by thee done 
up unto death hath given his Son.

5. Have this faith, and do not waver, 
‘tis food for every craver 
who, his heart with sin opprest, 
can no more for its anguish rest.

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46 Translated by George MacDonald, revised by Ulrich S. Leupold. *LW* 53, pp. 250-251.
6. Such kindness and such grace to get
   Seeks a heart with agony great.
   Is it well with thee? Take care,
   lest at last thou shouldst evil fare.

7. Lo, he saith himself, “Ye weary,
   come to me, and I will cheer ye;
   needless were the doctor’s skill
   to the souls that be strong and well.

8. Hadst thou any claim to proffer,
   why for thee then should I suffer?
   This table is not for thee,
   if thou wilt set thine own self free.”

9. If such faith thy heart possesses,
   and the same thy mouth confesses,
   fit guest then thou art indeed,
   and this food thine own soul will feed.

10. Fruit of faith therein be showing,
    that thou art to others loving;
    to thy neighbour thou wilt do
    as God in love hath done to you.

5. The “German” Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, O Jesu,
who dost bear the whole world’s sin,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, O Jesu,
who dost bear the whole world’s sin,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, O Jesu,
who dost bear the whole world’s sin,
peace in mercy grant us. Amen.

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47 Translated by Ulrich S. Leupold, *LW*53, p. 152.
V, 3

Heinrich Bullinger

Of the Lord’s Holy Supper

(1551)
INTRODUCTION

Luther’s experience with Karlstadt at Wittenberg and his subsequent catch-up reforms of the Mass revealed that, even as early as 1523, he had already begun to lose the initiative within the rapidly expanding Protestant movement. Others seized upon his solafidian spirituality and sought to give it a thorough and (what they considered to be) more consistent application – nowhere more so than in eucharistic doctrine. Soon after dealing with Karlstadt in 1523, Luther found one such group of ardent reformers circulating close to home. These reformers saw no need for Christ’s flesh and blood to be really present in the sacrament, interfering (as it were) between the spiritual word of God and its reception by the spiritual principle of faith. Luther’s own writings against papal Catholicism lent some credence to this position, for he had concentrated so fiercely on what was wrong with the Mass that he rarely felt the need to discuss the real presence at all; and in his attacks on the doctrine of transubstantiation he had never taken thought to offer an alternative account. As with Karlstadt and the liturgy, so now with those whom Luther sneeringly denounced as die Schwarmgeister – “the fanatics” or even “blissed out air-heads” – he now had to backtrack in order to catch up. And he came out swinging, fighting for the real presence of Christ with all the verbal (not to mention, scatological) violence that his pen could command. His tracts against “the fanatics” certainly had the effect of leading others to drive them from Luther’s immediate vicinity; but those writings did not silence them. “The fanatics” merely gravitated toward more sympathetic ground – such as the Swiss city of Zürich, where Hulderich Zwingli had independently initiated Reformation.

1.

A former priest who became chief minister of the church of Zürich, Zwingli (1484-1531) was a Christian humanist as much as a Protestant reformer. Indeed, he embraced Protestantism, very soon after Luther’s initial protests, because it offered him and other like-minded associates an opportunity to carry out the reforms of Church, doctrine, and spirituality which had sat on the agenda of Renaissance humanism for nearly a century. This humanism loved classical antiquity, but its love was very selective. Because Aristotelian thought had dominated theology and philosophy for over three centuries, Renaissance humanists forgot that Aristotle himself had been an ancient; they sought instead to revive the influence of Plato and Platonism. This tended to give humanists of Zwingli’s ilk a built-in bias against the material order in favour of
the spiritual order, which they conceived to be not merely the flip-
side of reality but an altogether “higher” order opposed to the
material. In other words, the Protestant humanism of Zwingli, his
associates and protegés, tended to be dualist. Their theology
tended to pose issues in terms either of the material or of the
spiritual – one could not have both.

Zwingli himself was clearer about what he denied than about
what he affirmed; but the implicit dualism of his humanist
perspective undoubtedly lay behind his statements about the
eucharist. He denied that Christ could ever, in any sense, be “in,
under, or with” the consecrated bread and wine. Indeed, he even
denied that there was any such thing as “consecration”. The bread
remained bread, and the wine remained wine, even in
communion. For Christ’s natural body had been assumed into
heaven; and as it was impossible for a natural body to be in more
places than in one at any one time, so Christ’s body must be in
heaven and nowhere on earth – certainly not in the sacrament on
all those altars in Germany, Switzerland, France, England, Italy, and
Scandinavia.

Needless to say, Zwingli’s doctrine faced one big obstacle. What
about the words of institution? Christ had said, “This is my body,”
hadn’t he? Zwingli replied that these words did not mean what
they appeared to say. When Jesus said, “This is my body,” he really
meant (according to Zwingli), “This signifies my body.” So the
bread and wine were “bare memorials,” that is, mere symbols of
an otherwise absent Christ, signs which did no more than remind
the faithful about Christ and what he had done for them.

Nevertheless, Zwingli firmly maintained that the faithful did
indeed have true communion with Christ when they received the
bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper. This communion, he said,
took place “in the understanding,” and it happened not by means
of the elements of bread and wine but by means of the Christian’s
own faith. At the Supper, Christians beheld the tokens of bread and
wine and reminded themselves of Christ’s death and passion for
their sakes; and when they received the bread and wine “by faith
with thanksgiving,” they demonstrated their solidarity with the
Crucified, and with one another for the sake of Crucified. First and
foremost, then, Christians communicated with the faith inside their
own minds; and they received Christ so far as their faith bore
witness that they had accepted Jesus into their rational souls as
their personal Saviour.

A number of other reformers in Switzerland and western
Germany were thinking along similar lines, the most prominent
being Johannes Oecolampadius (born Johannes Hussgen, 1482-
1531), the leader of the reformed church at Basle. Zwingli was the
brains, Oecolampadius the CEO, of this wing of the Protestant
movement. Together they built up a formidable consensus among the reformed churches of Switzerland and the Palatinate (Rhineland Germany). This consensus held Luther in honour as the first begetter of the Protestant movement, but they were distressed by his assault on “the fanatics”. In 1524 Zwingli issued a discreet, relatively respectful animadversion on Luther’s position. Luther took no notice of it – he may not have known about it – until 1526. Being a German, he took the same attitude toward Zwingli that Nathanael took toward Nazareth – “Can anything good come out of Switzerland?” His remarks on Zwingli, though brief, were slighting in the extreme; and Zwingli felt obliged to reply. By 1528 the two reformers were engaged in a full-blown controversy about the eucharist, and the Protestant movement looked as if were going to self-destruct. To repair the situation, Philip, Margrave (prince) of Hesse, convinced Luther to meet with Zwingli, in order to see if they could work things out. Luther drew up fifteen “articles of faith” regarding the eucharist and brought them to the “colloquy” (conference) which Philip convened at Marburg on the first three days of October in 1529. The two titans reached agreement on fourteen of these articles; but the fifteenth article – in which Luther insisted that the whole of Christ’s person comes down from heaven and makes his real flesh and blood present “in, under, and with” the consecrated bread and wine – stuck in Zwingli’s craw, and he could not bring himself to swallow it. On that note the two parties left Marburg, the Protestant movement irreparably divided between Luther and Zwingli. Within a year, both sides were framing confessional statements which targeted not only Roman Catholic teachings but also each other’s. Those churches which remained loyal to Luther became known as the Evangelical churches; the churches associated Zwingli and Oecolampadius came to be called the Reformed churches.

Zwingli died in 1531, leading Zürich’s militia into battle against the forces of neighbouring Catholic cantons. Though his teaching about the eucharist did not dominate the Reformed churches the way Luther’s dominated the Evangelical (Lutheran) confession, it did continue to have an influence on Reformed thinking through his protegé and successor as chief pastor of Zürich, Heinrich Bullinger.

2.

Bullinger (1504-1575) was the illegitimate son of a parish priest; but that did not prevent him from receiving a first-class education and a thorough schooling in humanist principles. He turned out to be an indefatigable networker, corresponding with anybody and everybody throughout Europe who looked like a useful (or potentially useful) contact in consolidating the Reformed “front”.

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In short, his *forte* was consensus-building – with the Züricher perspective as the cornerstone. It was Bullinger who drafted the first major confession of faith in the Reformed tradition, *The First Helvetic Confession* (1536), and he had no objection to other Reformed churches, in the Netherlands, in France, in Germany, and in Scotland, using that confession to develop their own. For Bullinger really did believe in doctrinal consensus, as opposed to ideological uniformity. In his view, so long as individual divines stuck to the common basis, they were free to develop various conclusions of their own.

Bullinger could adopt a hard line when he thought a fundamental issue was at stake. This became obvious when he and John Calvin negotiated the *Consensus Tigurinus* ("The Zürich Agreement," 1549), an agreed statement on the doctrine of the sacraments. He stymied Calvin’s every effort to loosen the hold of Zwinglian doctrine and create a loophole for Calvin’s own conviction that Christ was in some sense really present in the Lord’s Supper. But in other respects, Bullinger was ready to live with a fair amount of diversity for the sake of unity; and this made his writings especially attractive to English reformers. Indeed, *The Convocation of the Province of Canterbury* made Bullinger’s *Five Decades of Sermons* (1549-1551) required reading for all unlicenced parish clergy in that province of the Church of England.

We shall be reading the Ninth Sermon of Bullinger’s *Fifth Decade*, “Of the Lord’s Holy Supper”. It is the most concentrated, the most coherent, and in many respects the most attractive statement of the Zwinglian view. The translation is by one “H. I.,” first published in England in 1577. A modernised edition of this translation was published by the Parker Society in the Victorian era; it is from this edition that the text of Bullinger’s Sermon is taken.

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1 *Helvetica* is the Latin term for “Swiss”.

2 In February 1586.

3 So called because each of the five volumes contained ten (a “decade” of) sermons.

Introduction

FURTHER READING


Gary Macy, The Banquet’s Wisdom: A Short History of the Theologies of the Lord’s Supper (1992), pp 135-188..


Heinrich Bullinger

THE NINTH SERMON

UNTO the holy baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ is coupled the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord, which we call the Lord’s Supper. For those whom the Lord hath regenerated with the laver of regeneration, those doth he also feed with his spiritual food, and nourisheth them unto eternal life. Wherefore it followeth necessarily that we entreat next of the holy Supper of the Lord.

This hath many names, even as hath the feast of Passover, and is instituted in the place thereof. In old time it was called “the Passing Over” or “the Lord’s Passover,” which was indeed a memorial of the passover, also a remembrance, sign, solemnity, a festival or holy day, a meeting together or an holy assembly, an observation or worshipping, a ceremony and sacrifice of passover, a sacrifice or offering, of which we have spoken in place convenient.

This is called by St Paul the Apostle THE LORD’S SUPPER, because this ceremony was instituted by the Lord in his last supper, and because therein is offered unto us the spiritual banquet. The same Paul termeth it THE LORD’S TABLE – and that, doubtless, for none other causes. By the same Paul it is also called THE COMMUNION, not so much for that we have communion or fellowship with

Bullinger had discussed baptism in the Eighth Sermon of this Fifth Decade.
Christ and he with us, as that we being many are one bread and body, which do partake of the same bread.  

Luke calleth it BREAKING OF BREAD, naming the whole by part. And it is evident that our forefathers of old gave not unto the receivers of the Lord’s supper a morsel, but that they brake the bread amongst themselves. In time past firm leagues were performed by breaking of bread.

It is called also a MEMORIAL or REMEMBRANCE OF THE LORD’S PASSION, for the Lord saith, Do this in the remembrance of me.

It is named a THANKSGIVING, because when we cele-brate the Lord’s Supper we thank him for all his benefits – and especially for his death, by the which we are redeemed.

It is called also A TOKEN and A MYSTERY and A SACRA-MENT OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF THE LORD.

Our forefathers did term it by this word, SYNAXIS. Synaxis is a joining together, a knitting, a closing, or an agreement. For the church is joined and united unto Christ in the holy Supper by a most strait league – and to conclude, the members themselves are therewith joined very fast together. Furthermore, it is called AN ASSEMBLY OF SAINTS, AN HOLY COMPANY, and A GATHERING TOGETHER. For in the old time it was never customably celebrated but in the common assembly of the church – which is plainly to be proved by the words of the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 11.

To conclude, we shall offend nothing at all if we call the Supper of our Lord THE TESTAMENT AND WILL OF GOD AND OF OUR LORD. For herein shalt thou find all things belonging to a full and perfect testament – for Christ is the testator; all faithful Christians are appointed heirs; the legacy is the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting, obtained by the body of Christ given and his blood shed. The letters or table of this testament or will be the words of the Lord’s Supper, witnessing (as it were) by a public writing that Christ is the food and life of the faithful; the order and doing thereof is (as it were) the seal. Wherefore, even as we do call that a testament which hath letters sealed, containing a testament both by writing and sealing, so the Lord himself did call his Supper a testament – for this cup, said he, is the new testament in my blood. For otherwise the new testament is not the remission of sins – which thing Jeremy the prophet doth plainly testify in the 31st chapter, and Paul to the Hebrews in the seventh chapter.  

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6 Cf. 1 Corinthians 10.17: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”

7 Jeremiah 31.31-34: “The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their
Of the Lord’s Holy Supper
(1551)

This holy mystery hath divers other names, but these for the most part are chiepest and most commonly used. Of the other names we will speak elsewhere.

They do define the Lord’s Supper to be a spiritual banquet, wherewith the Lord doth both keep his death in remembrance and also feedeth his people unto life. But let me set down a more large description thereof unto you. The Supper of the Lord is an holy action instituted unto the church from God, wherein the Lord, by the setting of bread and wine before us at the banquet, doth certify unto us his promise and communion, and sheweth unto us his gifts and layeth them before our senses; gathereth them together into one body visibly; and, to be short, will have his death kept of the faithful in remembrance; and admoniseth us of our duty and especially of praise and thanksgiving.

First, we say that the Supper of the Lord is an action or deed. For the Lord, when he made his supper, did give thanks to God; he brake bread and gave the cup and said, Do this in the remembrance of me. Again, it cannot be every action. For at the table, where we eat meat, we also give thanks unto God, we

ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt .... But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.”

Hebrews 7.20-28: “This was confirmed with an oath; for others who became priests took their office without an oath, but this one became a priest with an oath, because of the one who said to him, ‘The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest for ever” ’ [Ps. 110.4] —accordingly Jesus has also become the guarantee of a better covenant. Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever.”
break bread and give the cup; but it is an holy action, because it is from God and instituted unto the church. Wherefore it differeth from our ordinary meat-supper, as well for that it is specially instituted by the Son of God unto the church as also because it hath the word of God and the peculiar example of Christ. Therefore St Paul, making a difference between this and common eating, saith: *If any man hunger, let him eat at home, lest that ye come together to your condemnation.* And again: *Have ye not houses to eat and drink in?* — as though he might say, “This supper is mystical.” Again, what manner of action it is, it doth forthwith appear by that which followeth, where the Lord, by the setting of bread and wine before us at the banquet, doth assure us of his promise and communion, &c. This Supper therefore hath his peculiar limits — of the which although I spake when I entreated generally of the virtue of the sacraments, yet will I repeat certain of them that make most for this purpose when I shall draw toward an end of this sermon.

But concerning the description of this Supper, these things are chiefly to be considered and declared: — First, who did institute it, and who is the true author and host of the Lord’s Supper. Not any man, but the very Son of God himself, the wisdom of the Father, very God and very man. So that we come not to the table of men, although a man being the minister be the chiefest there; neither do we receive holy signs at the hands of the minister only, but also at the hand of our Lord himself, — as though he might say, “This supper is mystical.”

He instituted the Supper the same night that he was betrayed — and the next night, by his death and blood-shedding, he confirmed the new testament. For so soon as he had eaten the figurative lamb with his disciples, and had plainly told them that from that time forwards that ceremony should not be used, the Supper was established in the place of that which was abolished — that, like as the bloody lamb did signify that Christ should suffer, even so the

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8 *meat.* In 16th-century English usage, the word *meat* did not refer to animal flesh only; it also meant *food* in general.

9 1 Corinthians 11.34, 22.

10 Here the English translation omits this clause in the original Latin text: *accumbentes ad mensam Christi Domini nostri,* “when we sit at the table of Christ our Lord”.
bread which is without blood witnesseth that Christ, who is the bread of life, is already baked upon the cross and hath suffered and made the food of all believers. Wherefore that night was worthy to be observed and celebrated, and that last supper is full of mysteries. For we commonly most of all account of the words and deeds of our dearest friends, which they use a little before their death. Wherefore as all Christ’s doings are beloved and precious unto us, so ought this his last supper to be most dearly beloved and precious in our sight.

The Supper consisteth of the word and manner, promise and ceremony. The word is this – that Christ is preached to have been given up to death for our sins, and that he shed his blood for the remission of our sins. Promise is made unto all that believe, that their offences shall be forgiven. The same thing is also expressed by the manner. The manner is diligently set down in writing by St Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who St Paul following hath nothing at all varied from them. The words therefore, dearly beloved, as they be gathered out of these four into one text, I will recite unto you:

The same night, in the evening wherein he was betrayed, the Lord came with the twelve; and when it was time, he sat down, and the twelve with him. And while they were eating, Jesus took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and it unto his disciples, saying, “Take, and eat; this is my body which is given (or broken) for you. Do this in the remembrance of me.” Likewise taking the cup after he had supped, he gave thanks, and delivered it unto them, saying, “Take ye this, and divide it among you: drink ye all thereof.” And they drank all thereof. And he said unto them, “This is my blood which is of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of their sins. This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you. This do, as oft as you shall drink it, in the remembrance of me. Verily, I say unto you that I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until that day come that I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

These are, word for word, the solemn and most holy words of the Lord spoken at his last supper.

The high bishop of the catholic church, Christ our Lord, celebrated his supper with his disciples in like sort, as we have now seen and heard, without pomp, simply, plainly, and sparingly. He took away the over-busy ceremony of the Law [of Moses], appointing another very easy to be gotten and nothing sumptuous. Most things appertaining to the Law were troublesome, and all things belonging to the gospel easy and nothing sumptuous. The Lord sitteth down with his twelve disciples – whereby we learn
that, first of all, there must a company be gathered together, which
must celebrate the Supper.

In his assembly these things doth the Lord:

First of all, he preacheth most diligently unto his disciples, of
those things especially which concern the mystery of his passion
and of our redemption. But wheresoever is the preaching and
hearing of the word of God or of the gospel of Christ, there are
also groanings and vows or prayers of the faithful. Wherefore they
that intend to celebrate the Supper of the Lord, before all thing –
according to the example and institution of the high bishop Christ
our Lord – they do most diligently hear the preaching of the
gospel, and also pray most earnestly.

Afterward he took bread, and the Lord blessed it and brake it;
moreover, he gave unto his disciples and bade them eat. Anon he
parted the cup among them, commanding them all to drink
thereof. And thereupon he plainly and expressly commanded,
saying: *Do this* – to wit, as you have seen me do. Wherefore the
disciples did eat the bread and drank all of the cup. Therefore, they
that celebrate the Lord’s Supper lawfully, do one unto another
break, distribute, and eat the Lord’s bread which they receive at
the hands of Christ’s ministers, and likewise distribute and drink all
of the Lord’s cup which they receive at the hands of Christ’s
ministers. And like as the high bishop Christ bade them do it in
remembrance of him, so they that celebrate the Lord’s Supper
remember the death of Christ and all his benefits.

Moreover, as the Lord hath gone before us in his example in
giving thanks unto God the Father, so likewise do the faithful make
an end with this holy mystery with giving of thanks, praising his
goodness and mercy, *because he is good, and his mercy endureth
for ever*.11

This is the most simple and best manner of the Lord’s Supper,
which the apostles receiving of Christ delivered to be observed of
all nations.

Wherefore, when this question is asked: Whether it be lawful to
sup after another rite or manner; whether it be lawful to add or
diminish anything from the manner left and delivered, or to
change anything therein; whether the Supper of the Lord ought
only to be celebrated after the manner already delivered, and not
after any other: – there is no small folly and rashness – yea, rather,
great ungodliness – therein bewrayed.12 For to what end serveth
the most simple, most plain, best, and perfectest form of the
Supper, delivered of the Lord himself and received of his apostles,

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11 Psalm 136.1.

12 *bewrayed*: revealed or disclosed, in the sense of betrayed.
if we devise another? Who, I pray you, shall deliver a better [form] than the Son of God himself, the high priest of the catholic church, hath already delivered? Or who, I beseech you, that is well in his wits shall either add or diminish anything to the ordinance of God? Who dare be so bold as to change that which is delivered by the everlasting wisdom of God? All the sayings and doings of Christ are most perfect. Therefore the form also of the Lord’s Supper is a most perfect form of a right singular and excellent ordinance or institution. The rites or ceremonies of celebrating the sacraments of the Old Testament were most perfect, so delivered from the first institution of them that nothing was added to them nor taken from them by such as were religious, no, not [for] many years after. For Ezechias [Hezekiah] the king celebrated the Passover; so likewise did Josias [Josiah] celebrate the same – but not after any other rite or manner than was delivered from Moses. The fathers circumcised their infants, but not after any other manner nor any other rite than was first instituted. In times past whose had not sacrificed in the same place and according to the same manner which God commanded by Moses, was by the Law accused of murder. Nadab and Abi hu are smitten with lightning from heaven for bringing strange fire into the tabernacle. Oza [Uzzah] is smitten with sudden death for that the ark of the Lord of hosts was not handled in such sort as was by the Law commanded. And therefore that manner of celebrating the Lord’s Supper, as it was by the Lord instituted and delivered to the church by the apostles, is to be observed with great religion – unless we will believe that the institutions and manners of celebrating our sacraments are more unperfect than theirs of old time, and that God the Father doth nowadays less regard the profanation or the religious observation of his Son’s institution than these of Moses and the fathers in old time. But Paul, the vessel of election, knowing Christ’s institution to be most perfect, and that the same ought to be kept still in the church simply and without any addition, saith to the Corinthians: I received that of the Lord, which I have also delivered unto you. For he thought it an heinous offence to deliver any other thing to the church than that which he had received of the Lord. Let us therefore with great religion hold that fast which is delivered unto us by the Lord and the apostles. But the Apostle delivered none other thing to the Corinthians – yea, many years after the Lord’s

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13 Numbers 26.61: “But Nadab and Abi hu died when they offered illicit fire before the LORD.” Nadab and Abi hu were sons of Aaron.


15 1 Corinthians 11.23.
ascension into heaven – than that which was faithfully set down unto us in writing by the holy apostles and evangelists, St Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Certainly it is well known how that certain hundred years after the death of the apostles this simple manner of celebrating the Lord’s Supper was held in the church. For the pastor or minister of the church, after that he had preached the gospel and given public thanks to God in open prayer, then came he forth into the midst of the holy assembly. Before the face of the people stood a table furnished with bread and wine, behind the which the minister standing blessed the people, saying, “The Lord be with you.” The people answered: “And with thy spirit.” Then replied the minister: “Lift up your hearts” – admonishing the congregation that the holy mysteries shall be celebrated and therefore that they must lift up their minds from visible things unto invisible. The people answered: “We lift them up unto the Lord.” Afterwards, exhorting the whole company to give thanks, he cried aloud: “Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God.” The congregation answered: “It is meet and right so to do.” Then proceeded the minister, saying: “It is very meet and right, our bounden duty, and behaveful for us” – turning himself then to the Lord – “that we give thanks always and in all places unto thee, Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Christ our Lord; who the day before that he suffered his passion took bread, gave thanks, brake it, and gave it to his disciples” – with the residue as followeth in the gospel. These things being repeated out of the gospel, the minister proceeded further, saying: “Let us pray. Being admonished by wholesome precepts and instructed by divine institution, we are emboldened to say: Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.” After the rehearsal of the holy mysteries, the people received the holy mysteries and did communicate together; and after they had given thanks and praised God, they were dismissed.16 And of this form there remain certain footsteps in the writings of the ancient Fathers to be seen – to wit, in St Cyprian, St Augustine, and others.

But consequently in latter times the prayers, blessings, and the ceremonies grew to be very great. Moreover, Christ’s institution was changed and turned into a strange use – and in fine, the Mass was patched together, in which appeareth small antiquity. But touching these matters I have already entreated very largely in

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16 Bullinger’s account of the primitive liturgy looks remarkably like Luther’s *Formula Missae et Communionis* of 1523 – which was nothing so much as a redaction of the Mass of the Roman Rite, with a drastically truncated Canon. Indeed, the resemblance is so close that one is tempted to think that Bullinger simply expropriated Luther’s *Formula* and ascribed it to the sub-apostolic Church.
another place, and you yourselves are very well seen in this point. We which defend and hold that the institution of our Lord Christ which is delivered unto us by the apostles is most pure and perfect, do nothing regard neither what any man, nor at what time any bishop, hath added this or that to the holy rite, or else hath taken away or changed; but rather what he, who is before and above all, did first himself and commanded to be done. If the authority of him that did institute, – if learning and holiness, – if antiquity may be of force, then the victory is ours, who have Christ on our side with the best chosen company of the apostles. For from these we have what we celebrate – and that which we hold that all godly men ought to celebrate.

But why the Lord instituted this mystery under the form of bread and wine, it is evident. For bread comforteth, and wine maketh glad, the heart of man. Moreover, our fathers in the figure of manna did eat bread, which rained down from heaven. Also in their sacrifices gratulatory and of thanksgiving, and in their drink-offerings, they used bread and wine. But there hath sprung a great contention concerning the substance of the Lord’s Supper, some holding opinion that it ought to be celebrated with unleavened bread, and others, with such as is leavened. But among our forefathers of old there was about these matters no such contention, for the churches used both indifferently as them pleased. It may seem that at the first supper the Lord used unleavened bread at the table, according to the ancient manner of celebrating the Passover – whereupon many churches used unleavened bread, who notwithstanding condemned not them of heresy which used leavened bread. The pope and his adherents, conceiving no small displeasure hereat, hath deeply accursed the Greek church for so trifling a matter. But the Artotyrites were

17 A reference to Bullinger’s treatise, De origine erroris circa cœnam Domini et Missam papisticam (“On the origin of the error surrounding the Lord’s Supper and the popish Mass,” Zürich, 1539), chapter VII.

18 Cf. Psalm 104.14-16: “[The LORD] maketh grass to grow for the cattle, and green herb for the service of men; that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man; and oil to make him a cheerful countenance, and bread to strengthen man’s heart.”

19 Artotyrites were those who celebrated the eucharist with bread (artos) and cheese (turos). Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis (on Cyprus) 367-403; the work Bullinger refers to here is Epiphanius’s Panarion (a.k.a. Refutation of All the Heresies), II.29.
upon some just cause condemned by the ancient Fathers, of whom Epiphanius maketh mention between the Pepuzianes and the Priscillians setting bread and cheese upon the table in their celebrating, contrary to Christ’s institution.

It is furthermore disputed upon, whether unmingled wine or delayed\textsuperscript{20} with water is by the faithful to be used at the Supper. Cyprian the martyr holdeth opinion that in this mystery the wine ought not to be unmingled but delayed with water, and so to be offered, that is, drunken by the faithful. For thus he hath written: “Because Christ hath borne us all, who also bare our sins, we may perceive that in the water the people is to be understood, in the wine the blood of Christ is to be understood. For when water is mingled with the wine in the cup, the people is united unto Christ, and the multitude of the believers is coupled and joined unto him in whom they believed. And thus in blessing the Lord’s cup, only water may not be offered, neither in like sort may wine only. For if any man offer only wine, the blood of Christ beginneth to be without us; but if it be water only, then doth the multitude begin to be without Christ. But when they are mingled together and are joined with a confused mixture betwixt them, then is there an heavenly and spiritual sacrament wrought.”\textsuperscript{21} By these words truly doth St Cyprian shew unto us a good mystery. But why do we seek to be wiser than Christ, and to mingle together more mysteries than we have received of him? The holy Scripture maketh mention of no water, but rather reporteth that the Lord used nought else but mere wine. For the Lord saith, \textit{Verily I say unto you, that henceforth I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine.} For he plainly said not \textit{the wine} but \textit{the fruit of the vine}, that herein we should make no manner of mingling. But what if that holy martyr of God himself, St Cyprian, hath laboured by all the means he might to shew that that only is to be followed of the faithful in celebrating of the Lord’s Supper, which they have received of our Lord Christ himself? And forasmuch as that testimony doth make much to all this our treatise concerning Christ’s Supper to be celebrated according to the words of the gospel, I will recite it word for word out of the second epistle of the 3rd book of his Epistles. “We must not,” saith he,

depart in any respect from the doctrine of the gospel, and those things that our Master taught and did himself, the scholars also ought to observe and do. The blessed Apostle in

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{delayed}: diluted.

\textsuperscript{21} Cyprian, \textit{Letter 63, § 13}. 

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another place speaketh more constantly and stoutly, saying: *I marvel that you are so soon changed from him that called you to grace unto another gospel, which is nothing else; but there be some that trouble you and go about to overthrow the gospel of Christ. Howbeit, if we ourselves or an angel from heaven do preach unto you any other thing than that we have taught, let him be accursed. As I have said before, so say I now again: If any man preach any other thing unto you than that which you have received, let him be accursed.* \(^{22}\)

Since, therefore, neither the Apostle himself, neither an angel from heaven, can preach or teach otherwise than Christ himself once hath taught and his apostles have preached, I much marvel from whence this custom hath grown, that, contrary to the doctrine of the gospel and the apostles, in some places water is offered in the Lord’s cup – which being taken alone cannot express the Lord’s blood. \(^{23}\)

And again:

There is no cause, dearly beloved brother, that any man should think that the custom of certain men is to be followed, if there be any that heretofore have supposed that water alone is to be offered in the Lord’s cup. For it must be demanded of them, whom they have followed herein. For if in the sacrifice, which is Christ, none is to be followed but Christ, doubtless then ought we to hearken unto, and do after, that which Christ hath done and commanded to be done – since he himself saith in his gospel, *If you do that which I command you to do, I will call you no longer servants, but friends.* \(^{24}\) And that Christ alone should be heard, the Father himself also witnesseth from heaven, saying, *This is my well-beloved Son in whom I have delight: hear him.* \(^{25}\) Wherefore, if only Christ is to be heard, we ought not to regard what any other before us hath thought meet for us to do, but what Christ did first who is before all other. Neither ought we in any case to follow the custom of mean, but the truth of God – considering what the Lord speaketh by the prophet Esay [Isaiah], saying, *They worship me in vain.*

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\(^{22}\) Galatians 1.6-9.


\(^{24}\) John 15.14.

\(^{25}\) Matthew 17.5.
teaching the commandments and doctrine of men.\textsuperscript{26} And again, the Lord, repeating the selfsame words in the gospel, saith: Ye set God’s commandments aside to establish your own traditions.\textsuperscript{27} And in another place he saith: He that shall break any one of the least of these commandments, and shall on this sort teach men, shall be accounted least in the kingdom of heaven.\textsuperscript{28} But if it be no lawful to break the least of the commandments of God, how much more heinous is it to break things so great, so weighty, and so much belonging to the Lord’s passion and the sacrament of our redemption, or else to change it into any other order by man’s tradition than is instituted by God?\textsuperscript{29}

And so forth as followeth. There is no man can deny but that these things are of authority, even against the author [Cyprian] himself. For neither by the Scriptures nor by the example of Christ can it be proved that water was mingled with the wine at the last supper. As for the authorities and testimonies which the author alleges, every man may perceive how little they make to the purpose — yea, that they be wrested from their natural meaning. The gospel plainly pronounceth that the Lord drank of the fruit of the vine unto his disciples. And as often as Paul maketh mention of the cup, yet teacheth he in no place that water was mingled with the wine or that it ought to be mingled with it. Wherefore these water-men—that is to say, they that use water only in celebrating the Lord’s Supper — are justly condemned, such as the Marcionites and Tatians were. Howbeit, it is an indifferent matter whether you use red wine or white in this Supper.

Again, why did not the Lord deliver the sacrament of the Supper unto us under one form of bread or wine only, but rather under both kinds? The doctors of the church by one consent suppose this to be the cause: for that he would signify, or rather testify, unto us that he took both soul and flesh upon him, and gave the same for us, and also hath delivered our souls and flesh from everlasting destruction.

For although there be two kinds, yet do they make but one sacrament — and they may not be separated, neither is their

\textsuperscript{26} Isaiah 29.13.

\textsuperscript{27} Mark 7.9.

\textsuperscript{28} Matthew 5.19.

\textsuperscript{29} Cyprian, Letter 63, § 14.1-3.
opinion of judgement to be allowed of, who of their own private or, rather, sacrilegious authority do corrupt the institution of Christ, offering to the lay-people which do communicate the one kind only of bread, and granting to priests both kinds, and so challenging\footnote{challenging: a now-obsolete use of the verb to challenge; in this case it means “to lay claim to, to demand as a right” (OED, s.v. CHALLENGE, v., 5).} both kinds to them-selves only. But Paul the Apostle received the authority from the Lord himself to admit all the faithful people of Christ unto the Lord’s cup – and therefore let these bold fellows consider from whom they have received commandment to put back the laity and to forbid them the cup, which by the Lord our God is granted unto them. For Christ in plain words – and, as it were, by the spirit of prophecy, foreseeing what should come to pass in the church – said not of the bread, “Eat ye all, of this,” but when he took the cup he added, Drink ye all, of this. St Mark also adjoineth hereunto, not without deep judgement: And they drank all thereof. Hereunto also appertaineth that which the Lord speaketh in St Luke: Take this and divide it among you. St Paul the Apostle, having a special regard unto this excellent and plain institution of Christ, three or four times joineth the cup to the bread, saying: As often as you shall eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you shall express the Lord’s death. Again: Whosoever eateth of this bread or drinketh of the Lord’s cup unworthily, he shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. And again he saith: Let a man examine himself, and then let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. Again: Whoso eateth and drinketh unworthily, &c. These testimonies are manifold and worthy absolutely to be believed, and unto which all traditions of all men whatsoever should give place.

The Lord hath instituted the cup of the Supper unto all the faithful; wherefore the apostles exhibited the same unto all the faithful. For if the sacrament of the blood of Christ were given to the apostles only, surely then the thing itself - to wit, the remission of sins, which is obtained through Christ” blood --belongeth only to the apostles. Howbeit, the Lord saith plainly: This is the blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. It is also in other places of the Scripture manifestly set down that Christ’s blood was shed for the remission of the sins of all the faithful. Wherefore, if the faithful be capable of the thing, how much more of the sign? Now, if our adversaries proceed further and say that the apostles only sat at the supper (who represent the figure of the priests,) and that the use of the cup was granted unto them only and not to be granted unto other but to such only as were present at the first supper – then do we demand of them by...
what authority they give the Lord’s bread to the laity, or by what right they do admit simple women unto the Lord’s Supper? – since it is manifest that neither the one nor the other, according unto their speaking in this matter, sat at the Lord’s table. And in this point they, being taken tardy, can go no further.

But they object the danger of the cup, which, if it be given unto all without exception, it would come to pass, through the folly and negligence of men, there might some offence be committed in letting it fall or pouring it on the floor. As who should say the eternal providence hath not foreseen so great an offence, which these wise men do well perceive now at length in the end of the world and do amend that wherein the Son of God did amiss. For they cry out that one kind is enough for the lay people, forasmuch as by a necessary coherence it followeth that where the body of Christ is, there is his blood also. And thus must it then follow, that the one kind is instituted in vain. But the Lord distinctly first offered the bread and afterward the cup – and the Lord instituted nothing in vain. Therefore both kinds, since the Lord hath so commanded, ought to be parted among all the faithful – which as many as have read the writings of the ancient Fathers will report was observed ever before, even almost unto the time of the council of Constance; of whom many have not been afraid to say that the dividing of this sacrament after this manner could not be done without sacrilege.

The matter and substance of the Supper being declared, there is lightly some question moved concerning the form or the consecration of the bread and wine. But forasmuch as I have entreated hereof in the general consideration of the sacraments, there is no cause why I should, with loath-someness to the hearers, repeat the self-same thing again. We do not acknowledge any transubstantiation to be made by force of words or characters. But we affirm that the bread and wine remain as they are in their own substances, but that there is added unto them the institution, will, and word of Christ, and so become a sacrament, and so differ

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31 The Council of Constance sat from 1414 to 1417. Among a great many other issues, it condemned the teachings of John Wyclif and those of Jan Hus. Hus was present at Constance under a safe-conduct from the Holy Roman Emperor. The council suspended the safe-conduct and handed Hus over to the secular authorities. He was burned as a heretic at Constance on 6 July 1415.

32 of whom: sc. the ancient fathers.

33 In the Seventh Sermon of this Fifth Decade.
much from common bread and wine, as we have said in place convenient.

Consequently ensueth the question touching this point: Who should administer the Supper? — that is to say, whether anyone of the congregation ought to be chief in the celebrating of the Supper? Then, who should the same be? Surely the thing itself requireth, and nature also commandeth, that everything be done decently and in good order; and religion requireth that all things appertaining to the Supper be done according to Christ’s example. But he was the chief dealer in the supper, and he likewise hath appointed ministers of the church, by whom he will have the sacraments to be administered. Wherefore, like as every man doth not baptise, but the lawful minister of the church, so appertaineth it not unto every man to prepare and minister the holy Supper, but to the minister which is ordained by God.

Herein now we disprove papistical doctrine which alloweth of private Masses, and teacheth that the priest offereth up the body and blood of our Lord for the standers-by, and that by the Mass he applieth the merit of redemption unto them that with devotion come to that sacrifice. For as there is no one word of the Lord extant that commandeth the priests to sacrifice or privately to apply the Supper for others, or that promiseth anything unto them that stand by and look on it — for he saith, *Do this; eat ye and drink ye all in the remembrance of me*; he saith not, “Look upon the priests only while they be eating and drinking for you” — so Christ is not bodily present in the bread and wine. He is joined unto our hearts and minds by his Spirit; for it were of none effect that he remained in the bread. And if he were indeed, yet could he not be sacrificed both for that he hath offered up himself once upon the cross, neither can the most worthy and only-begotten Son of God be offered up again to God the Father by a sinful man, as also for that there is no need for him to offer again. For St Paul saith: Christ, being one only sacrifice offered up for sin, sitteth for ever at the right hand of God, looking for that which is yet to come, until his enemies be made his footstool. For by one oblation he hath made them for ever perfect that are sanctified. And again he saith: Where as is full remission of sins, there is no more oblation for sin. But we have full remission of sin by the death which Christ once suffered; therefore there is no

34 1 Corinthians 14.40.

35 Hebrews 10.12-14.

36 Hebrews 10.18.
sacrifice in the church for sin. Indeed, the church doth celebrate the memorial of the sacrifice which was once perfectly finished upon the cross. But the church doth not offer up sacrifice any more, either with blood or without blood. Praise and thanksgiving are a most acceptable sacrifice to the Lord: the same minister offereth not for others but with others. Here now, therefore, we ascribe none other thing to the minister but the ministry, that he be the president or chief dealer to recite the prayers in the celebration of the Supper. And after the holy prelection and the pronouncing of the solemn words, let him, after the example of Christ, begin to break the Lord’s bread and distribute his cup; and let him receive the sacrament for himself (as the other faithful people do) as companion of the faith; and when the communion is done, let him end the holy action with thanksgiving and some holy exhortation.

Concerning the place where the Supper is to be celebrated, I find no contention hath been amongst the most ancient ministers of the church. It is read how that our Lord Jesus used the hall of a certain private man’s house. And also the Apostle Paul both preached and brake bread at Troas in a certain dining-place. The ancient church, which ensued immediately after the death of the apostles almost unto the time of Constantine the Great, had none or very few large and public churches; for it was scarce lawful or safe in so troublesome a time for the Christians to creep abroad. In the meantime they used very honest places, in the which they met together in holy assemblies, having places of prayer. At this present [time] there seemeth no place to be more worthy or more commodious to celebrate the holy Supper in than that which is appointed for doctrine and prayer. For so have we learned of St Paul, 1 Corinthians, chapter 11. Howbeit, if tyrannical power will not suffer us to have a church, what shall let us but that we may reverently celebrate the Supper in honest private houses?

Touching the holy instruments belonging to the Supper, the matter also requireth to speak something in this place. In the time that the apostles lived, they supped at tables set forth and furnished for the purpose; they knew no fixed altars builded of stone, which are more fit to make fire upon and to burn beasts on for a sacrifice. A removing table agreeth better with the example of Christ. Notwithstanding, we condemn not standing altars, so that [as long as] they serve only to the lawful use of the Supper. St Paul, in

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37 Acts 20.7-11.

38 let: prevent.

39 A removing table: i.e., a table that can be moved and stored.
the first [epistle] to the Corinthians, calleth the altars of ethnicks\textsuperscript{40} tables, so that we need not to marvel that the ancient Fathers termed our tables altars. For it is an easy matter to fall from the one to the others; and it should seem that they alluded unto the only altar of the tabernacle of God. In old time the tables were covered with some fair cloth, with some linen table-cloth or towel – from whence perhaps were borrowed those things which are called corporals. As for that outward bravery\textsuperscript{41} and worldly trimming, it was not then used on the altars of Christians. We read how it was forbidden by the Law [of Moses] that there must no altar be builded of hewn stone – by which proviso all cost and bravery in religion is forbidden.

Thus it is manifest that in the ancient times there were no precious nor costly vessels used at the Supper. For like as Christ and the apostles taught that frugality should be used in all places, condemning superfluity, and beating into us the contempt of gold and silver, so in those holy mysteries they have not overthrown that doctrine of theirs or given occasion of excess. After long persecution, when peace was restored to the church, then began the custom to celebrate in the church with vessels of gold and silver. But then also there were some that brought the same again to his old frugality and simplicity. Chrysostom cried out (as I have also declared in another place\textsuperscript{42}) that in receiving the Lord’s Supper we ought to have golden minds, not golden vessels.\textsuperscript{43} And St Ambrose saith: “The sacraments require not gold, neither are those things pleasant in gold which are not bought with gold. The ornaments of the sacraments are the redemption of captives.”\textsuperscript{44} St Hierome [Jerome] commends St Exuperius, bishop of Toledo.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{40} ethnicks: i.e. Gentiles. The reference here is to 1 Corinthians 10.21.

\textsuperscript{41} bravery: “display, show; splendour … concr. Fine clothes…. A fine thing; an adornment” (\textit{OED}, s.v \textit{bravery} 3 a, b.)

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{De origine erroris circa cœnam Domini et Missam papisticam} (1539), chapter VI.

\textsuperscript{43} John Chrysostom, \textit{Homily 1 on the Gospel of Matthew}.

\textsuperscript{44} Ambrose, \textit{De officiis ministrorum} [“On the duties of ministers”], I, § 28.

\textsuperscript{45} Bullinger’s original Latin designated Exuperius (St Exupery) as bishop of \textit{Tolosanum}, which was actually the city of Toulouse (in France), not Toledo (in Spain). The reference is to Jerome’s \textit{Letter 95}, to
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who carried the Lord’s body in a basket of wicker and the blood in a glass, and had expelled covetousness out of the church. And truly that canon of the Triburean council, which is yet extant in the pope’s decrees, forbidding that no priest should minister this holy mystery in wooden vessels, doth prove sufficiently that certain churches, more than eight hundred years since Christ’s passion, used to drink the blood of Christ in wooden vessels – wherefore, wooden cups in the supper be of all most ancient. Bonifacius [Boniface] the archbishop – which example although I have alleged elsewhere, yet am I enforced to repeat it here again, for that it agreeeth so fitly with this present matter – being asked long since whether it were lawful to minister the sacraments in vessels of wood, answered: “In old times,” saith he, “golden priests used wooden cups, but now contrariwise, wooden priests use golden cups.” But if any man bring vessels made of any other stuff, without excess and superstition, I would not greatly strive with him, so that he will also acknowledge that they do not offend which use the wooden. For, as touching the form and matter of the cups, all are free and lawful for the faithful church to use.

Moreover, it is evident that the Lord in the first Supper – yea, and the apostles also in celebrating the same Supper – used their usual and decent apparel. And therefore it is not disagreeable from the first institution if the minister come unto the Lord’s table covered with his own garment, so that it be comely and honest. Surely the communicants do wear on them their own usual apparel. We must take heed, then, that there creep in no superstition. Our forefathers, as it seemed, did wear a cloak cast over their common garments, which they did not after the example of Christ or the apostles but according to man’s tradition. At the length, that stuff which is used at this day was taken up according to the imitation of the priest’s garments of the old Law [of Moses], and appointed to be worn by the ministers that would celebrate the Supper. Neither doth Innocentius, the 3rd of that

Rusticus. Jerome also dedicated his commentary on the prophet Zechariah to Exuperius, who died ca. 410.

46 The council of Tribur (modern Triberg, in southwestern Germany) was held in 1076.

47 Bullinger’s logic here is not only faulty; it is silly. One simply cannot conclude from the fact that some churches in eleventh-century Germany were using wooden vessels in the celebration of Mass, that the custom therefore “be of all most ancient”.

48 At the length: i.e. In due course.
name, dissemble this matter in the 4th chapter and 4th book of his work *De sac. altar. mysterio*. As for us, we have learned of late that all levitical matters are not only put away but not to be brought again into the church by any. Forasmuch therefore as we remain in the light of the gospel and not in the shadow of the Law, we do upon good cause reject that levitical massing-apparel.

I have also declared in another place that it hath been the manner in old time that every nation hath used their own native and vulgar tongue in ministering the sacraments. Of the gestures which the ministers do use in celebrating the Lord’s Supper, we can say none other thing out of the gospel than what we have learned: *The Lord took the bread, blessed it, brake it, distributed it, &c.* If the minister do follow these things, he needs not to be careful of other gestures. Those which at this day are by the invention of men received into the celebration of the Mass are so far off from giving any majesty to the mysteries that they bring them rather the more into contempt. I will say nothing else that may seem more grievous.

The matter is indifferent whether the church take the Supper sitting down or going to the table; whet her a man take the holy mysteries in his own hand or receive it into his mouth at the hands of him that ministereth. It is most agreeable with the first simplicity and institution of the Supper to sit, and to receive the sacraments in a man’s own hands of him that ministereth and afterwards to break it, eat it, and divide it unto others. For as the Lord sat at table with his disciples, so he reached forth the mysteries, saying: *Take, and divide it among you.* Moreover, as there is more quietness and less stir in sitting at the Supper while the ministers carry the holy mysteries about the congregation, so it is well known by histories of antiquity that the sacrament hath been delivered into the hands of the communicants. It is mere superstition and repugnant to the doctrine of the apostles to scrape the hands of the lay-people that

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49 “It must be acknowledged that the Church has not discarded all the usages of the old Law, but by prudent consideration has retained some of them…. The Church still has… vestments, vessels, pontiffs, and levites [deacons].” Innocent III, *De sacro altaris mysterio* [“On the holy Mystery of the Altar”], IV, § 4. Innocent (born Lotario de’ Conti di Segna) was pope 1198-1216.

50 levitical matters: matters pertaining to the levitical priesthood. So described because Aaron (and, of course, Moses) belonged to the tribe of Levi.

51 Bullinger, *De origine erroris circa coenam Domini et Missam papisticam* (1539), chapter VI.
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have touched the holy sacrament of the Supper. Why do they not also by the same law scrape the lips, tongue, and jaws of the communicants?

Of these things before handled springeth another question: What is to be thought of the remnants and leavings of the Lord’s Supper? and whether there ought any part of it to be reserved? and whether that which is reserved or shut up ought to be adored? This question seemeth to have no godliness at all in it but to be altogether superstitious and very hurtful. For who knoweth not that the bread and wine, out of the holy and lawful use appointed, are not a sacrament? Shall we proceed to demand with these sophisters what that is which the mouse gnaweth when he gnaweth the Lord’s bread? These questions are most unworthy to be demanded and to be raked up in holy oblivion.

Touching the shutting-up of the sacrament the Lord teacheth us not one word in the gospel, much less of worshipping it. *Take, saith he, eat, and divide it among you. He saith not, “Lay it up and worship it” – for the true worshipper worship in the Father in spirit and truth.* Moreover, we read how the Lord hath plainly said in the gospel: *If they say unto you, “Behold where he is in the desert,” go not forth; “Behold where he is in the innermost parts of the house,” do not believe.* He setteth down the cause of this his commandment: *For like as the lightning goeth forth of the east and appeareth in the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.* The coming again of the Son of Man, saith he, shall be glorious and not obscure, neither shall he come again but to judge the quick and the dead. And therefore St Paul the Apostle, teaching us true religion, willeth us to worship Christ not upon the earth but with our minds lifted up unto heaven, where he sitteth at the right hand of his Father. And who will be so frantic, I beseech you, to worship the holy sign for the holy thing itself? It appeareth by the decrees made of late that these things were invented by man’s device. For it is certain that the feast of Christ’s body, commonly called *Corpus Christi*, was instituted but of late years under Pope

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52 **the shutting-up of the sacrament**: i.e. reservation.

53 John 4.23.

54 Matthew 24.26-27.

55 Colossians 3.1-2: “So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth....”
Urban in the year of our Lord 1264, as it may appear in Clement, the 3rd Book, title 16, the chapter beginning Si Dominum. It remaineth that we discuss the question concerning the time of celebrating the Lord’s Supper and what season is meetest for the same, the morning or evening; whether we ought to sup together; whether we must receive it fasting, or when we have dined; also, how often we must celebrate the Supper – once, or often, or seldom.

It is evidently enough known that Christ sat down at the table with his disciples in the evening. But it followeth not hereof that the Supper cannot be rightly celebrated at any other time but at evening. The Lord, upon the occasion of the feast of Passover, and because he should be betrayed that night, did both eat the Supper that evening with his disciples and instituted also the Supper us. Notwithstanding, he left the liberty to remove this mystery unto the morning – for that, when we be sober, then are we most meet to deal in all matters, especially in religion, for which we be then fitter that when our bellies be full of good cheer.

Wherefore this banquet requireth fasting and empty guests – but yet not so fasting that a man may not taste of somewhat beforehand for his health’s sake. For St Paul saith: If any man be hungry, let him eat at home. The same Apostle also will not have any other feast to be received together with the Lord’s mystical Supper. And therefore we say that we ought not to receive that [Supper] with other meat. Tertullian writeth that Christians have used often-times to eat other meat with it – which kind of supper, as he writeth, was called αγάπη [agapē], that is to say, “mutual love” or “charity,” borrowing the name from love, for that there the poor were refreshed with the feasting of the richer sort. Howbeit, provision of meat, drink, and other necessaries might we enough be made for them without the church. Paul will not permit that in one place both public feasts should be made and also the mystical Supper of the Lord celebrated.

Furthermore, how many times in a year the faithful ought to receive the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, the apostles have given

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56 The reference here is to a collection of papal decrees put together by Pope Clement V and formally added to the Corpus Iuris Canonici (“Body of Canon Law,” the definitive collection of papal legislation) by his successor, John XXII, in 1317. This whole Corpus was superceded in 1917 by the Codex Iuris Canonici.

57 1 Corinthians 11.34.

58 Tertullian, Apologeticum 39.
forth no commandment but have left it indifferent unto every church’s discretion. For what is more plain than that which St Paul hath said: *As often as you shall eat of this bread and drink of the cup, you shall declare the Lord’s death until he come* \(^{59}\) For the Lord – as the same Apostle setteth it down – first commanding, said: *Do this, as oft as you shall drink it, in remembrance of me.* Howbeit, let no man think that the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is left so freely unto him that he need never to receive it – for that were no lawful liberty but more unlawful licentiousness. They that celebrate the Supper of the Lord upon certain and ordinary times of the year would not have it brought into contempt or loathed by reason of the daily frequenting. For they have some consideration of their own people, and they would have the Supper to be celebrated worthily and that the people may have a desire unto it. But they that celebrate it very oft, they suppose it an unmeet thing that good things, by often frequenting them, should be despised. For the better the thing is, the oftener (they say) it is to be used. Both these sorts desire to serve the Lord and would have that to be done to great and good effect which the Lord hath left free. Between these, if St Augustine be made umpire and judge, doubtless he would pronounce none other judgement than that which he hath already pronounced of the same cause, writing unto Januarius and saying: “He shall best decide this strife between them, who so advised them especially to abide in the peace of Christ, and that every man do that which according to his faith he is persuaded to be good and godly. For neither of them dishonoureth the body and blood of our Lord. Only that meat must not be contemned.” \(^{60}\)

Now, for whom this holy Supper is instituted, and to whom it is to be ministered, we have also to consider. It seemeth that it is instituted and to be given unto all faithful Christian people, of what sex soever, mean and women, high and low. Wherefore so great a mystery is not to be cast unto swine and dogs to be contemned and trodden under foot. \(^{61}\) Before it be ministered, all men are earnestly and effectually to be admonished unto whom this meat appertaineth – namely, to them that acknowledge their

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\(^{59}\) 1 Corinthians 11.26.

\(^{60}\) Augustine, Letter 54, § 4. (Letter 54 was actually the first of two consecutive letters that Augustine wrote to Januarius.) *Contemned:* held in contempt, despised.

\(^{61}\) Cf. Matthew 7.6: “Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.”
sins, that are sorry for their faults and believe in Christ. All are to be admonished that every man, descending into himself, do prove\textsuperscript{62} himself and afterward so eat of this holy bread and drink of this holy drink that he eat not and drink not thereof unworthily unto his condemnation.\textsuperscript{63} But after this severe admonition, if any approach unto the table and sit down, and by their sitting down do as it were openly profess both that they are and also desire to remain true worshippers of Christ, by whom they trust to have remission of their sins – surely such are not to be put back by the ministers, neither are the holy mysteries to be denied them. For the Lord himself, who is the searcher of hearts, severely, diligently, plainly, and in many words in his last supper, before he distributed the mysteries, admonished Judas, being an hypocrite, a thief, a traitor, a murderer, yea, a parricide, a blasphemer, and a forsaker of his Master. But being admonished, when notwithstanding he departed not from the table but tarried among the saints, the Lord did not violently put him away, nor bade him openly to depart, neither withheld he the Lord’s bread from him, but gave it unto him as he did unto others, although he knew assuredly what he was – which thing the ministers of the church do not always know of them that sit down at the table. Neither did the Lord offend any whit at all in so doing, neither did he cast that which was holy to the dogs. For the Lord warned him diligently of all matters whereof he was to be warned – and he [Judas], hearing and understanding them all, remaineth notwithstanding among the saints, vaunteth himself for one of the faithful, not for an hog, and as one of the faithful taketh part of the bread and of the cup.\textsuperscript{64} By which hypocrisy, notwithstanding, he provoked the heavy judgement of God against him, even as also at this day this holy meat and this holy drink turneth to the destruction both of the body and soul of all hypocrites. Neither did the presence of the hypocrite at the Lord’s supper defile the other faithful disciples of Christ which sat at the table – like as neither at this day are the faithful polluted, although they see many hypocrites sit down at

\textsuperscript{62} prove: examine or test.

\textsuperscript{63} Cf. 1 Corinthians 11.27-29: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves.”

\textsuperscript{64} taketh part of: takes part in, participates in.
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the table with them, for they sup not with them as with hypocrites but, as it were, with the faithful. In the meanwhile the hypocrite hurtesth himself and not others; he falleth and periseth to his own destruction; he eateth and drinketh his own damnation. But the faithful liveth by his own faith – of which thing we have entreated in other sermons.

And although that infants are reputed to be of the church and in the number of the faithful, yet are they not capable of the Supper. In this point the ancient Fathers shamefully erred. Infants were not deprived of everlasting life although they depart out of this world without receiving this mystical meat. This was instituted for them that are of lawful years and not for infants. *Let a man examine himself, saith the Apostle, and let him so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.* And the Lord saith: *Do this in the remembrance of me.* And again: *Shew forth the Lord’s death until he come.* All which sayings take place in people of lawful years, not in infants. Our children must be diligently instructed from their infancy that they may rightly understand those mysteries and frequent them – which thing the Lord commanded the children of Israel, saying: *If your children shall say unto you, “What manner of worshipping is this?” you shall answer, “It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel when he struck the Egyptians and delivered our houses.*

Surely we must not shew ourselves to be more slack in informing our children than they were, since we have received a more noble benefit than they have.

Of like nature unto this question are these other: Whether the Supper be to be celebrated privately for every cause or necessity? whether it be to be carried unto the sick and those that keep their beds? whether it be to be applied to the dead, that is to say, to be offered for the dead to obtain rest for them? Touching these matters, I know what is commonly said and done. There happeneth some pestilence, famine, war, or tempest, and by and by the Supper is commanded to be celebrated that as it were by this sacrifice the present calamity may be taken away. Again, there is one sick, another perisheth with hunger and afflicted for want of all manner of necessaries; the same requireth of the priest to have the Lord’s Supper ministered unto him that thereby the disease may be cured as by a present and most approved remedy, and his hunger and poverty released.

But this is not the due celebration of the Supper but a filthy profanation thereof. For the Lord hath not instituted it to be a cleansing sacrifice against all calamities, whereby he would be pleased, but to be a memorial of his death and a dutiful

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thanksgiving. For when we be at the Supper, we offer nothing unto him for which he should be favourable unto us, and turn away such an evil from us and give us such good thing as we desire of him; but we give thanks for the benefits which we have received. It is lawful otherwise for them that are oppressed with troubles to offer up their vows — that is to say, their prayers — to the Lord; but it is not lawful to convert his holy mysteries to any other purpose than he hath appointed. Neither have we any examples to prove that any holy man did ever use the Lord’s Supper to any such end as these men do. The children of Israel received the feast of the paschal lamb in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt, and that they should continue thankful unto so beneficial a Lord. How great an offence had they committed, if they had so oftentimes eaten their banquet as, being oppressed with calamities, they desired to be delivered, and desired it by doing that deed! They received the ark of the covenant from the Lord in token of his divine presence and assured help; but when, contrary to the end whereunto it was appointed, they bare it into the camp to the intent they might obtain victory thereby, they themselves were put to flight and slain, and the ark carried away by the Philistines into captivity.

Again, if the Lord’s Supper be a public holy feast of the whole church gathered together in one, in the which there ought to be breaking, distributing, eating, and drinking, and thereby the communion of the body and blood of Christ be declared and sealed, — it followeth that the Lord’s Supper ought not to be ordained neither for any in health or sickness, neither for any lying sick in his bed or at the point of death, be it privately either at home or at church; neither can the godly require the Lord’s Supper unto any such private uses. For the institution of Christ our Lord must not be altered by any human authority or custom. Verily, St Paul requireth a public assembly of the church and a general meeting for the due celebrating of the Supper. When you meet together therefore in one place, this is not to take the Supper of the Lord — that is to say, ye do not eat the Lord’s Supper. The reason is: For everyone, when they should eat, taketh his own supper, &c. Wherefore he will not that anything be done therein

66 The clause whereby he would be pleased is intended to modify cleansing sacrifice, not calamities.

67 these men: the “papists,” i.e. Roman Catholics.

68 See 1 Samuel 4.1-11.

69 1 Corinthians 11.20-21.
privately. Likewise in the same place he saith that they meet together and eat the Lord's Supper to their own damnation, [they] which make haste to the Supper, not tarrying for the congregation until they do all meet and they eat and drink together. For he saith: Wherefore, my brethren, when you meet to eat and drink, tarry for one another; if any man be hungry, let him eat at home. – to wit, that he be not constrained to eat before the residue, – that ye meet not together to your condemnation. Wherefore the Lord's Supper is not a private but a public supper, to be given to no man privately.

And forasmuch as that assembly is not public or general when four or five do communicate with the sick, their saying is nothing which say that the Supper may be ordained for the sick, if so be that others do sup with them. Moreover, who will deny that the example of Christ and the apostles is perpetually to be followed in this matter? But it is evident enough that Christ celebrate his supper in a common dining place, having gathered the church unto him as well as it might at that time be gathered. St Paul saith that in that point he followed the example of the Lord, and that he hath delivered no other thing to the church than that which he received from the Lord. Neither read we in any place of the Scriptures that the other apostles of Christ carried the sacrament to the sick, and that they ordained the holy Supper privately for everyone to appease his tentation. But all the apostles command us in every place to confirm and strengthen the sick and the afflicted in conscience with the Lord's word. They teach us also to succour the distressed with diligent prayer. St James hath diligently set down in writing how the faithful shall behave themselves towards the sick and them that are departing out of this world — but as touching the celebrating or carrying the sacrament unto them, he speaketh not one word. Neither is it likely that the apostles, the most faithful doctors of the church, would dissemble the matter, if so be they

70 1 Corinthians 11.33-34.

71 1 Corinthians 11.23.

72 tentation: trial, trying circumstance.

73 James 5.13-16: “Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.”
had though that it had appertained chiefly to our salvation. They have warned us often of things of far less importance. And certain it is that they have taught the church all things that belong to true godliness and salvation – but as for this matter, they have not mentioned one word of it.

They⁷⁴ object out of the Acts of the Apostles this authority: And breaking bread from house to house, they ate meat together with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God.⁷⁵ But that place is to be understood of the bodily and nourishing meat, not of the mystical food. For it followeth: They received meat (or sustenance) together. And therefore, as it is read in the 58th chapter of Esay [Isaiah], to break bread is as much to say as to feed⁷⁶ – and so it signifieth here also. For the richer sort gave food to the poorer, which they did with a cheerful, not with a sorrowful, heart; and they that received the benefit praised God. But if any man do stubbornly contend that the apostles did sup in private houses, we answer that it maketh nothing to the present matter of the sick and of private communion. For, as I have said before, at that time they used private houses instead of churches. And therefore they supped in private houses, not to feed the sick with the bread of the sacrament, but because the universal church of that place was gathered together in them – as it appeareth in the 20th chapter of the Acts⁷⁷ – as the manner is in [times of] persecutions.

They object, moreover, that the ancient Fathers sent the sacrament unto them that were bound in prison and to them that were departing, to feed on upon the way. But I have declared in place elsewhere⁷⁸ wherefore the ancient Fathers did so. Hereunto also we add that man’s custom cannot prejudice the word of God. The blessed martyr Irenæus writeth that the bishops of Rome were wont to send the sacrament to other bishops which came to Rome from other places, in token of concord and agreement.⁷⁹ But that custom was not used by all bishops, neither is it used in the church

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⁷⁴ They: the “papists,” i.e. Roman Catholics.

⁷⁵ Acts 2.46-47a.

⁷⁶ Isaiah 58.7: “Is not this the fast that I choose:… to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house…..?”

⁷⁷ Acts 20.7-8.

⁷⁸ In De origine erroris circa cœnam Domini et Missam papisticam (1539), chapter IV.

at this present [time]. Hereof it followeth that many things were used by the ancient Fathers – as that whereof we spake before, which was, in giving the sacraments to children – which notwithstanding are no law unto us. Good men also at this day may suffer a private Supper for a time, for them that do not yet understand the full use of the Supper. But who will gather hereof that every man ought of duty to do that which is permitted unto some upon sufferance? But if we continue contentiously to affirm it to be a relief for us in our travel, it will grow to this – which we have seen received already certain hundred years ago – that there shall be hope and confidence put in the receiving of the sacrament as though that in respect thereof we were acceptable unto God, and when we depart out of this life we should fly straightways up into heaven but without receiving the sacrament be thrown directly down to hell. There must also needs arise sundry other errors. Neither is there any necessity to constrain us to minister the sacrament to the sick. For as prisoners are absent from receiving the Lord’s Supper without danger of salvation, so likewise are the sick and those that are ready to die. For being nevertheless by perfect faith gathered to the body of Christ, and although they be absent in body yet being in mind present with the congregation, they be also made partakers of all spiritual good things. And it is sufficient for them that, as long as they have been in health, they have been always present at the holy mysteries. The feast of Passover was not celebrated everywhere, but at Hierusalem [Jerusalem], in one place. But how many were there, think we, that by reason of their bodily health impaired with sickness, and for old age, could not travel to Hierusalem from so large and wide a kingdom? And although no man brought them home a piece of the paschal lamb in their pockets, notwithstanding they did communicate with the whole church of Israel. And who doubteth but that by the coming of Christ the condition of the Christians is not impaired? 

Our Lord Christ did not institute his mystical Supper for the dead but for the living only. Wherefore, it is not to be celebrated for the dead and applied to their redemption. They that die without faith immediately fall under the judgement of damnation; but they that are dead in Christ are already joined unto the company of the elders and stand before the Lamb, singing “Hallelujah!” for evermore. For I have declared in my sermon of the soul that the salvation of the faithful souls which are departed by corporal death, is most undoubted. And where some object that the ancient Fathers have made mention of offering for the dead, 

81 In Bullinger’s Third Decade of Sermons.
we suppose that it appertaineth not unto us. For we believe the canonical Scriptures without contradiction. We believe not the Fathers further than they can prove their own sayings by the canonical Scriptures, neither would they have them-selves otherwise believed. And therefore if the Fathers think that the Supper is a sacrifice, and that it is to be offered to procure rest to the souls departed, we do not receive that opinion, as not agreeing with the canonical Scriptures, which teach that the Lord instituted not his Supper for that purpose – and therefore, by such abuse of the Supper, God is rather displeased than pleased. Yea, [the canonical Scriptures teach] that there is no work of man, be it ever so good, much less if it be against God’s word, that can sanctify, since that prerogative belongeth only to the merit of the Son of God. And moreover, [the canonical Scriptures teach] that the souls departed are not in any such state in that other world that they can or ought to be holpen by any works in this world. But if the ancient Fathers by “oblation” or “offering” do understand the sacrifice of praise or thanksgiving, we will not strive against them but that there may be made oblations for the dead – that is to say, that thanks be given to God and his goodness praised, who hath called out of this miserable world such as were endued with true faith and hath joined them unto the companies of angels and all the blessed saints in that everlasting kingdom of all joy and felicity. But surely there is no truth nor godliness that willeth us to celebrate the Supper for the dead.

And we make a distinction in sacrifice or oblation. For there is a sacrifice of expiation, and there is a sacrifice of confession or praise. The sacrifice of expiation is offered to cleanse or purge sins, and also for satisfaction for sins. This cannot be accomplished without death and blood – as St. Paul the Apostle sheweth plainly in the 9th chapter [of the Letter] to the Hebrews. The sacrifice of Christ was such a one, the figures of which were all the sacrifices of all the holy fathers of the Old Testament – [Christ] who, being both priest and sacrifice, offered up himself once to God the Father while he suffered upon the cross and, shedding his most innocent blood, there gave up the ghost. The Supper at this day is no such sacrifice, but a commemoration of the death or of the sacrifice once offered

82 satisfaction for sins: This means that sinful actions offend the majesty or honour of God, such that the sinner is bound to “satisfy,” make amends to or appease, the divine honour.

83 Hebrews 9.22: “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”
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upon the cross. For neither ought or can Christ be sacrificed again – who, being once offered, is sufficient to cleanse all the sins of all ages. Why, then, should he be sacrificed again? Neither can the Son of God be sacrificed by any man, since that for the same cause he offered up himself once to God, as being a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.\(^84\) Therefore, the minister of the church doth not in the church sacrifice the body and blood of Christ in the Supper for the living, but together with the whole church doth celebrate the remembrance of the sacrifice which was once offered upon the cross. Of which, as I have written else-where,\(^85\) the Supper may also be called a sacrifice, because it is a sacrament or sign of the sacrifice which was once offered by Christ, as Augustine also hath left written.

The sacrifice of confession is of praise and thanksgiving, which we offer to God for the redemption and benefits of God freely bestowed upon his church. And since we offer the same always unto God in prayer, but chiefly when we are joined in the sacrament of the eucharist or celebrating the Supper, therefore the ancient Fathers called it a sacrifice – because in the same we give thanks unto God for our deliverance from death and for the inheritance of everlasting life which is given unto us. And that this sacrifice is generally offered by the universal church in celebrating the Supper, and not by the minister alone for those that live in the church, we told you before.

Now, forasmuch as we have hitherto discussed certain circumstances or questions which are wont to be moved about the Lord’s Supper, so far forth as the necessity of the matter seemed to require and as much as our small ability was able to perform it, it remaineth that we descend further to declare for what cause the Lord’s Supper was by the Lord instituted – which place is not rashly

\(^84\) Cf. Hebrews 5.5-10: “So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’ [Ps. 2.7]; as he says also in another place, ‘You are a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchizedek’ [Ps. 110.4]. In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.”

\(^85\) In *De origine erroris circa cœnam Domini et Missam papisticam* (1539), chapter IV.
reckoned among the chiefest. For we made mention of the same immediately upon the beginning of this sermon. For the Lord, by setting bread and wine before us in the holy banquet, would have his promise and communion testified unto us, and his gifts represented unto us and made manifest to our senses; – and would also gather us visibly into one body and retain the memory of his death in the hearts of the faithful; – and finally, put us in mind of our duty, chiefly of praise and thanksgiving. All these things have we severally expounded, having discoursed upon them at large in the general consideration and treatise of the sacraments. And therefore at this present [time] we will do no more but touch them briefly for memory’s sake, meaning to handle those things somewhat more largely which shall by occasion arise as they are entreated upon.

But by this word communion I mean the society, conjunction, or partaking of the Lord Christ, by the which through his Spirit he doth wholly knit and join himself to us, and we are made partakers of him by faith and are coupled unto him – so that, being by him delivered from sin and death, we may live in him, being made heirs of everlasting life; and that he may live in us and be wholly ours, as we be wholly his. Neither do we say that the communion of the Lord’s body and blood is anything else. For by his body which was delivered over to death for us, and by his blood which was shed for remission of our sins, it is come to pass that we, being purged from our sins, are made his members. And he now quickeneth us and sustaineth us as food which giveth life – whereupon we are also said to eat and drink him as the meat and drink of life. The promise, therefore, whereof we made mention even now, is none other than the word of God, which declareth unto us that life is in Christ only. For Christ delivered his body to the death and shed his blood for the remission of sins, that we, believing in him, may have life everlasting.

But this promise and communion of Christ is not now first of all given in the Supper or by the Supper. For the Lord our God, immediately after the creation of the world, promised life and remission of sins unto Adam and his seed through Christ, and afterward reneweth the same promise with Noe [Noah], Abraham, Moses, and David, and the other fathers. And that the fathers did communicate with Christ and were partakers of his goodness, Paul the Apostle, with the whole Scripture, is a witness. But this so

86 In the Seventh Sermon of this Fifth Decade of Sermons.
87 Cf. 1 Corinthians 10.1-4: “Our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all
great goodness happened not to the fathers only. For the promise was made unto us also, and the communion of Christ was conveyed unto us, and is conveyed particularly unto every one of us in holy baptism and also in the manifest preaching of the gospel. Moreover, we receive the same by faith, by which we are joined to Christ and are made his members. Therefore, as we are not void and without Christ before the Supper but are quickened by him and made his members or partners, so in the very action or celebration of the Supper the promise is renewed unto us, and we renew and continue that fellowship which we have in Christ by the body and blood of Christ spiritually, truly participating his life and all his good gifts through faith. And by this means we eat the Lord’s body and drink his blood. Moreover, the Lord doth visibly declare and seal unto us that spiritual communion and promise of life, made through Christ, by visible signs – to wit, the banquet of bread and wine joined to his word or promise, namely, that it is a quickening bread and drink; and that we, having received the signs by faith and obedience, do bear the promise and communion of Christ sealed upon us by imprinting or transferring into our bodies the seal or sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. Of which thing the Apostle hath also entreated in the first [Epistle] to the Corinthians, chapter 10, and also [the Epistle] to the Romans, chapter 4; and we also have said more thereof in the general treatise of the sacraments.  

But before I entreat further of the other ends of the Supper, consisting in the description thereof, I will recite what other some allege of the promise and communion of Christ. They condemn our doctrine as heretical. For they contend that the Lord promised that he would give unto the faithful his very body and blood to be eaten and drunken under the form of bread and wine – therefore it must by all means and without all contradiction be believed that the bread is the Lord’s natural body and the wine his blood, and that these ought to be eaten and drunken not only spiritually but also corporally, unto life everlasting. And that Christ is bodily present in the Supper, and that bread is his body and the wine his blood, thus they prove: – That which the Lord speaketh cannot be false, for he is the truth itself; but he saith that the bread is his body and the wine his blood; therefore the bread and wine of the sacrament are verily, really, and essentially the body and blood of Christ. Which truth, they say, must simply be believed although reason itself, the whole world, and nature itself be against it. We drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.”

88 In the Seventh Sermon of this Fifth Decade of Sermons.
answer that indeed all things are very true which the Lord hath spoken, who is truth itself – but in that sense which he himself said and understood, not in that meaning which we will enforce upon his words. Wherefore before all things we must search out the true sense of the Lord’s words in the Supper, *This is my body, This is my blood, &c.*

These men cry out, saying that the Lord’s words ought to be expounded simply and according to the letter, for they are the words of a testament – and that permitteth not his words to be expounded by a trope or figure. But we say that all the evangelical and apostolical books are numbered under the title of the testament, and therefore throughout all and every place of the Scripture nothing must be corrupted, nothing added, nothing diminished, unless we will be subject to the curse of God. And yet we are also con-strained to confess that there be infinite sentences in the holy Scriptures which if we will proceed to expound simply according to the letter, we shall overthrow the whole Scripture and the true faith or we shall seem to charge the Scriptures with lies and contradiction. I will bring forth one or two examples of this sort.

The evangelist St John writeth: *The Word became flesh.* Now, if we will cleave to the very words, then we must say that God was changed into man. But forasmuch as this sense is contrary to the faith and the Scriptures, for God is immutable; and Christ is true God and true man, and therefore without all mixture or conversion of natures, but remaining still in their own properties.

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89 These men: Not only “the papists” (Roman Catholics) but also, in this case, Lutherans.

90 trope: “a figure of speech which consists in the use of a word or phrase in a sense other than that which is proper to it” (*OED*).

91 the evangelical and apostolical books: i.e. the four gospels and the letters of the apostles Paul, James, Peter, and John. are numbered under the title of the testament: that is to say, these writings are collectively counted as the testament (as in “last will and testament”) of the Lord.


93 Bullinger here endorses the Dogmatic Decree of the Council of Chalcedon (451), which states: “One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten is to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. The difference between the natures is in no way removed because of the Union, but rather the qualities of each nature are preserved.” Bullinger paraphrases this portion of the Decree (though it is, of
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And so do we admit that exposition which declareth that the Word took flesh and that God was made man. And this sense is not against Scripture. For Paul saith that the Son of God in no sort took upon him the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham.  

Moreover, the catholic Fathers, together with the Apostle, do expound this word *est* [“is”] by this word *assumpsit*, “took upon him” – whereof Theodoret hath entreated at large in his *Polymorphus*, Dialogue 1.  

Again, the Lord saith in the same John: *The Father is greater than I.* We should enforce an inequality upon the holy Trinity if we should contend that the Lord’s words are simply to be understood, without interpretation. But by conference of other places and taking advice of faith, we say that the Son is equal with the Father touching his divinity, but inferior unto him in respect of his humanity – according to that saying of the prophet which is alleged by the Apostle to that purpose: *Thou hast made him little inferior to the angels.*

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94 Cf. Hebrews 2.14, 16: “Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things…. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham.”

95 Theodoret of Cyrus, *Eranistes seu Polymorphus*, Dialogue 1. Theodoret (ca. 393-ca. 466) was born and educated in Antioch; he became bishop of Cyrus, a town near Antioch, in 423. Very active as a spokesman for the Antiochene ethos during the christological controversy which led to the councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451).

96 John 14.28.

97 Hebrews 2.5-9: “Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. But someone has testified somewhere, *What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them? You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honour, subjecting all things under their feet* [Ps. 8.5-7]. Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”
We read in the gospel that Christ our Lord had brethren, and that St John the Apostle was called the son of Mary and Mary called the mother of John. But who – unless he were infected with the heresy of Helvidius – will stand herein that these places are to be expounded according to the letter? – specially since other places of the Scripture do manifestly prove that they were called brethren which were indeed [i.e., in fact, really] brothers’ and sisters’ children, cousin-germans, kinsmen, or near of blood. Also, the circumstances of the place in the 19th chapter of St John prove that Mary was committed to John as a mother to her son.

Wherefore, if they have a desire still to wrangle – as hitherto at their own pleasures we have by proof found them to do – crying out and reiterating in their cries, This is my body, This is my blood – “This is, This is, This is, This is; Is, Is, Is,” – we will also repeat: “The Word WAS MADE, WAS MADE, WAS MADE flesh – The Father IS, IS, IS greater than I – Christ hath brethren, I say, HE HATH BRETHREN, HE HATH BRETHREN. The Scripture hath so. The truth saith so.” But tell me now, what commodity shall there redound to the church by these troublesome and odious outcries and most froward contentions? How shall the hearers be edified? How shall the glory of God be enlarged? How shall the truth be set forth? Necessity therefore constraineth us to confess that in some places we must forsake the letter, but not the sense – and that sense is to be

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98 Cf. John 19.25-27: “Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.”

99 Helvidius was a fourth-century Latin Christian who attacked Jerome for his promotion of virginity as inherently superior to marriage (and sexual relations). As part of his campaign, Helvidius contested Jerome’s claim that Mary remained a virgin throughout her life. Jerome, of course, denounced Helvidius as a heretic; but Augustine agreed with Jerome on the point of “the perpetual virginity of the B.V.M.” and included Helvidius in his late (and unfinished) catalogue of heresies, De haeresibus, § 84.

100 cousin-germans: first cousins – from the Latin germanus, ”genuine, real”.

101 commodity: advantage, profit.

102 froward: perversely stubborn, obstinate to the point of stupidity.
allowed, which faith itself, with other places of Scripture conferred [compared] with it and, finally, the circumstances of the place, the first being compared with the last, do yield as it were of their own accord.

Howbeit, we also cry out, and repeat again and again, that we ought not without great cause to go from the simplicity of the word. But when as the absurdity not of reason but of piety, and the repugnancy of the Scriptures and contrariety of the articles of our faith do enforce us,—then we say, affirm, and content that it is godly, yea, necessary to depart from the letter and from the simplicity of the words. And that these places which we alleged even now do constrain us to depart from the letter in these words of the Lord. *This is my body, This is my blood*, we will prove by most sound arguments taken out of the Scriptures, when I have first briefly declared the true and ancient sense and meaning of those usual and solemn words.

The Lord, sitting at the self-same table with his disciples, reached the bread unto them with his own hand. And he, having only one true human and natural body, with the very same body of his delivered *bread* unto his disciples— and not a body either of any other man’s or that of his own. Neither doth that trouble us which St Augustine reciteth of David in expounding the 33rd Psalm, *And he was borne in his own hands*. Whereunto he [Augustine] addeth immediately: “Who is borne in his own hands? A man may be borne in the hands of other men, but none can be borne in his own. This is therefore meant of David, not of Christ. For Christ was borne in his own hands when as, commending his very body unto them, he said, *This is my body*. For that body was borne in his own hands.”

For by these words St Augustine doth not feign that Christ hath two human bodies, but he meaneth that the human body bare *[bore]* in his hands the sacramental body— that is to say, the bread which is the sacrament of the true body. For he speaketh plainly, saying: “He, commending his body, bare that body in his own hands.” For in the second sermon, almost in the same words (being but a little changed), he saith: “How was he borne in his own hands? For when he had commended his body and blood, he took that in his hands which the faithful know: and

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103 when as ... the repugnancy of the Scriptures and contrariety of the articles of our faith: when a statement contradicts (or seems to contradict) another statement in the Scriptures and is contrary (or seems to be contrary) to a statement made either in the Apostles’ Creed or in the Nicene Creed.

104 Augustine, *Enarratio 1 in Psalmum 33*, § 10.
after a sort he bare [bore] himself when he said, *This is my body.* By which words he [Augustine] manifestly declared that he meant not that Christ in his natural body delivered his natural body to his disciples, but “that which the faithful know” – to wit, the sacrament or mystery. For it followeth: “And he bare [bore] himself after a sort” – I pray you, mark this saying, “AFTER A SORT” – “when he said, *This is my body.*” Wherefore those solemn words, *This is my body which is broken for you* – and likewise, *This is my blood which is shed for you* – can have none other sense but this: “This is a commemoration, memorial, or remembrance, sign or sacrament of my body which is given for you. This cup, or rather the wine in the cup, signifieth or representeth unto you my blood which was once shed for you.” For there followeth in the Lord’s solemn words that which notably confirmeth this meaning: *Do this in the remembrance of me.* As if he [Christ] should say: “Now I am present with you before your eyes; I shall die and ascend up into heaven, and then shall this holy bread and wine be a memorial or token of my body given and of my blood shed for you. Then break the bread and eat it, distribute the cup and drink it – and *do this in the remembrance of me,* praising my benefits bestowed on you in redeeming you and giving you life.”

Although this interpretation be most slanderously reviled and become abominable in the sight of many, yet it is manifest to be the true, proper, and most ancient interpretation of all other. Tertullian, Lib. IV *contra Mart.*, saith: “Christ, taking the bread and distributing it to his disciples, made it his body, saying, *This is my body* – that is to say, the figure of my body.” Hierome [Jerome] upon St Matthew’s gospel saith that “like as in the prefiguring of Christ Melchizedek the priest of almighty God had done in bring forth bread and wine, so he might represent the truth of his body.” Chrysostom also in his eighty-third homily on Matthew: “If Jesus be not dead,” saith he, “whose token or sign is this sacrifice?” Ambrose upon the first [Epistle] to the Corinthians, chap. 11: “Because we be delivered by the Lord’s death,” saith he, “being mindful thereof, in eating and drinking we do signify the flesh and the blood which were offered for us.”

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105 Ibid.
106 Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* [“Against Marcion”] IV, 40, § 3.
108 Ambrosiaster, *Commentarium in duas epistolae paulinas ad Corinthios*, in 11.26. The author of this commentary was a Latin
also in many places heapeth up many speeches like to this same kind of speech: *The blood is the soul,* \[109\] *The rock was Christ,* \[110\] and *This is my body.* Let us hear, then, what he saith of these speeches, that we may understand what he thinketh of the true interpretation of this text, *This is my body.* In the 3rd book of *Questions,* in the 57th Question upon Leviticus, he saith: “It remaineth that that be called the soul which signifieth the soul. For the thing that signifieth is wont to be called by the name of that things which it signifieth – as it is written, *The seven ears of wheat are seven years* (he said not, “Do signify seven years”), and *Seven oxen are seven years.* \[111\] and many such like. In like sort it is said: *The rock was Christ.* He said not, “The rock *signifieth Christ*” – but as though it were so indeed which is not the same in substance, but by signification. So likewise the blood, because through a certain vital substance it signifieth the soul, in the sacraments is called the soul.” \[112\] Thus far he. The same Augustine also, *Against Adimantus,* chap. 12, saith: “So is the blood the soul, like as the rock was Christ.” And again in the same place: “I may also expound that that precept of the blood and soul of the beast &c. consisteth in the sign. For the Lord doubted not to say, *This is my body,* when he gave the sign of his body.” \[113\] Thus much Augustine. There is no fool so doltish that will say that these words of Augustine are dark or doubtful. Whoso list \[114\] may add hereunto that which the same

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109 Leviticus 17.11, 14: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood.... For the life of every creature – its blood is its life; therefore I have said to the people of Israel: You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.”

110 1 Corinthians 10.4.

111 Genesis 41.26.

112 Augustine, *Quæstiones in Heptateuchum* [“Questions on the Heptateuch” (the first seven books of the OT)], III, 57.

113 Augustine, *Contra Adimantum Manichæi discipulum* [“Against Adimantus the disciple of Mani”], 12.

114 Whoso list: Those who wish, desire, care to.
author hath plainly written concerning figurative speech libro II. contra Advers. Legis, cap. 2.\textsuperscript{115}

But let us leave off to cite men’s testimonies concerning the proper and most ancient exposition of Christ’s words, This is my body. Let us rather proceed to allege sound arguments out of the Scriptures, as we promised to do – thereby to prove that we must sometime of necessity depart from the letter, and that Christ’s words are accordingly (as I have said) to be expounded by a figure.

First, it is evident that the Lord at this present instituted a sacrament. Whereby it is manifest that the Lord spake after the same manner as the Scripture is wont to speak in other places concerning sacraments – as when it saith that circumcision is the Lord’s covenant; the lamb [is] the Lord’s passover; that sacrifices are sins and sanctifications; baptism [is] the water of regeneration. But wee declared in the Sixth Sermon of this Decade that all these kinds of speeches remain to be expounded. This saying or speech therefore is to be expounded. This is my body, This is my blood, because it is sacramental.\textsuperscript{116} For it received the common interpretation which most truly and for certainty was used and received by the catholic church ever since the time of the apostles – yea, and ever since the time of the patriarchs to this day: – to wit, that signs do receive the terms and names of those things that are signified, so that thereby they receive no part of their substance but do still continue and remain in their own proper nature.

Add to this that our Lord Christ, in the gospel written by St Luke, did join the banquet of the Passover with this our Lord’s Supper in such sort that he substituted this [Supper] in the place of the other, that it should not seem strange if he had said in this our Supper, This is my body, for in the solemnising of the feast of Passover it is thus said, “The lamb is the Lord’s passover.” Which kind of speech was not dark to be understood by the apostles, who understood that this lamb was a remembrance of the passage once past. By that means also they understood that the Lord’s bread,

\textsuperscript{115} Augustine, Contra adversarium legis et prophetarum ["Against an Adversary of the Law and the Prophets"], II, 9: “In all the holy Scriptures, according to the rule of a sound faith, something is said or done figuratively if the explanation of any of the things or words contained in the sacred pages leads us to listen not scornfully but wisely.”

\textsuperscript{116} This saying or speech therefore is to be expounded... because it is sacramental: I.e., The sayings in question are a form of sacramental (=figurative, symbolic) speech. As such, they cannot be taken literally but must have their symbolic meanings unpacked, explained, and interpreted.
given unto them by the Lord, is a remembrance of his body. For in other matters of much less weight they diligently questioned and inquired of the Lord touching the proper sense and signification of the words – but of these words they never once doubted or asked any question. For all sacramental speeches were to the holy fathers very well known.

Moreover, if we continue to understand the words of the Supper simply, according to the letter, it followeth that the Lord hath delivered unto us his body and blood corporally to be received. And, I pray you, to what end should he deliver them but that we, receiving them corporally, might live? But the universal canonical Scripture teacheth that our life or salvation and our justification consisteth in faith only, which we repose in the body which was given and the blood shed for us – which is the spiritual eating, – not in any work of ours, much less in the bodily eating of Christ’s body, which he showeth in another place to be nothing available. Then, since there is but one means (and that most simple) whereby to obtain life and justification – to wit, by faith only, not by the work of our eating, – neither is the Scripture repugnant to itself. Surely the Lord hath not instituted any such work of eating – and therefore, the solemn words of the Supper admit some other exposition.

If the bread were the Lord’s true and natural body, it must needs follow that even the wicked, being partakers of this bread, should eat Christ’s body – and that verily his flesh should be meat to feed the belly, since they that eat it lack both minds and faith. But all holy men abhor that thought as absurd and unworthy – of which matter I will entreat more hereafter. Therefore, the saying of Christ, This is my body, admitteth an exposition.

The whole universal canonical Scripture witnesseth that our Lord Jesus Christ took a body of the undefiled Virgin, consubstantial in all points unto our bodies, that is to say, an human body – yea, that he was made like unto us in all respects, except sin. Now, it is manifest that he spake of his true sensible body when he saith, This is my body, for he addeth: which is

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117 Cf. John 6.63: “63‘It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless’” (NRSV); 63‘It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth [or availeth] nothing’” (KJV).

118 Cf. Hebrews 2.14: “Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things....” Hebrews 4.15: “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.”
broken (or given) for you. But the true, natural, sensible, or human body was delivered and died for us. But this appeareth not in the bread or under the bread. Wherefore the Lord’s words must be expounded.

Surely, if it had been the Lord’s will to make his body of bread and his blood of wine, according to the power whereby he made all things with his word, [then] as soon as ever he had said, This is my body, the bread had been the body of Christ – and that very body whereof he spake, mortal, passible, to be felt and seen. For he spake the word, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created. He said, Let there be light, and light was made – and such kind of light as might be perceived and did shine. But in the Supper we see nothing in Christ’s hands but bread, no body. And therefore it was not our Saviour’s meaning by these words, This is my body, to create or make his body of the bread. For if he had meant to do so, surely it had been done.

Neither is there any cause why they should here – as it were, casting their mists before our eyes – apply their coloured interpretation unto a rotten construction, using words [such as] “unspeakably, supernaturally, invisibly, not qualitively, not quantitatively, not as in a place”. For by these terms they, intending in the meanwhile to bring some other thing to pass, do by the wonderful judgement of God quite subvert and overthrow all that is their own. For if this their mystery be unspeakable, why then do they use these terms: “essentially,” “substantially,” “really,” “corporally”? For they that speak so do utter truly and set down the manner of his presence. If the bread be supernaturally the body of Christ, why then do they add “naturally”? And if the bread be Christ’s body invisibly, then can it not be “corporally,” neither it can it be a true body, whose property is to be visible. Who would not laugh if he should hear that fire burnt and gave no heat, and that light did shine and gave no light? If he be not present in quality, quantity, and as in a place, then is he not corporally present. For, I pray you, are not qualities, quantities, and place belonging to the body? Hearken what Augustine saith unto Dardanus touching the presence of God. “Take,” saith he, “space of place from bodies, and they shall be nowhere – and because they shall be nowhere, they shall not be at all. Take the bodies themselves from the qualities of bodies, and they shall be nowhere;
and therefore it must needs be that cannot be at all.” Let not us therefore rob or spoil the Lord’s body of the properties thereof and so deny the truth of his body. Again, that we bring not so many contraries and absurd things into one and the same opinion, we interpret the words of the Lord, *This is my body*: “This is a memorial or remembrance of my body,” or else, “This signifieth my body.”

Moreover, if this word *est*, 122 “is,” be to be understood substantively in the Lord’s words, *This is my body*, it followeth then that the bread is changed into Christ’s body. But that this is not so, all our senses do witness – the very substance remaining, not only the accidents of the bread. It is necessary therefore that our adversaries do understand that in *this*, with *this*, or under *this* is Christ’s body. But so are they gone from the simplicity of the Lord’s words, who said, *This is my body* – and not, “Under **THIS** is my body.”

Again, if we be so tied to the words above recited that upon pain of sacrilege we may not start from them an hair’s breadth, I beseech you, then – how durst Luke and Paul recite the words which belong to the cup far otherwise than Matthew and Mark? For these two [Luke and Paul] do set down the words belonging to the cup in this sort: *This is my blood which is of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*. But they two [Matthew and Mark] recite them thus: *This cup being the new testament through my blood, which is shed for you*, and *This cup is the new testament in my blood*. But shall we think that there is no difference between the blood of Christ and the new testament? St Paul defineth the new testament, after Jeremy [Jeremiah], 123 to be a full remission of sins; and the self-same [Paul] saith that this remission of sins is obtained through the blood of Christ. But who will so impudently contend as will dare to affirm that the very cup, or the wine in the cup, is really and substantially the remission of sins? What cause is there, if we hold on and stick precisely to the letter, why we should be forced to confess that the cup, not the wine nor the drink, is either the blood of Christ, either the new testament, or the remission of sins? For the Lord saith not, *This wine*, but: *This CUP*. Howbeit in this place, to avoid absurdity, we willingly admit a trope – wherefore are we more rigid in a matter of equal importance? Therefore, like as the cup or the wine is the testament or remission of sins, so likewise the cup or the wine is

122 In the Latin version of the words over the bread: *Hoc est enim corpus meum.*

123 Cf. Jeremiah 31.31: “The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.”
Christ’s blood – and in like manner also the bread is Christ’s body. But the cup is not substantially the remission of sins or blood, but the sacrament of Christ’s blood whereby the new testament was dedicated and full remission of sins obtained for us. Therefore, the bread is the body of Christ because it is the sacrament of the body of Christ.

Surely it is a strong and firm argument that we have brought forth – and of no less force and strength, we hope, is that behind which we will now bring forth. The Lord at the celebrating of the holy Supper saith: Do ye this in remembrance of me. These words do not import that we should determine them to be really present, whom we ought to remember. For who shall be said to remember those things which he beholdeth before him in presence? But we must go from the simple signification of remembrance or memory, specially since Paul saith: Declare the Lord’s death until he come. For thus we gather thereby: – He whose remembrance is repeated until he come or return, he surely is not counted to be present, but is looked for to come. Therefore, the Lord’s body which was given for us, the remembrance whereof is celebrated in the mystical Supper, is not present, but is looked for to come.

Now, those places touching Christ’s leaving the world and departing hence do not simply admit the interpretation of the words of the Supper. It is expedient for you, saith he [Christ], that I depart; for if I go not away, the Comforter shall not come unto you. But if I do depart from you, then will I send him unto you. Also: I went from the Father and came into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father. And again: And henceforth I am not in the world; but these are in the world, and I come unto thee. These saying truly are repugnant – [on the one hand,] that he went hence, that he is no longer in the world, that he left the world, and [on the other hand,] that his natural body is in the world, and that verily it is given and received really and substantially in the Supper. Neither is it lawful figuratively to interpret the testimonies which are brought forth of St John’s gospel concerning Christ’s departure. For the apostles do confess

124 John 16.7.
125 John 16.28.
126 John 17.11.
127 repugnant: mutually exclusive.
that the Lord spake plainly or simply, without any parable.\footnote{Cf. John 16.29: “His disciples said, ‘Yes, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure of speech!’ ”}

Insomuch therefore as the apostles do testify that this speech of the Lord was simple and simply pronounced, it is needful that those other words which are contrary unto these [in John 16-17], \textit{This is my body}, be expounded by a figure, that the Scripture be not repugnant to itself.

Moreover, those places which bear record that Christ’s body after the resurrection was circumscribed by place, seen and felt, which also do make a difference between Christ’s body clarified\footnote{clarified: Latin, \textit{clarificatum}, “glorified”.} and the angelical spirits – where, by the way, we may see that here is no place left for the device of the definitive mean\footnote{the device of the definitive mean (\textit{modi definitivi}): A reference to discussions in mediæval scholastic theology concerning the \textit{modus definitivus}, the mode or manner in which a particular reality’s existence is “defined,” that is, circumscribed and limited. Scholastics, interpreting the doctrine of transubstantiation, argued that the body of Christ was present under or behind the veil of the accidents of bread, but was not “defined” – circumscribed or limited – by those accidents.} – [such records] do not admit the bare interpretation of the solemn words of the Lord. The angels say: \textit{He is risen, he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. Also: He shall go before you into Galilee; there you shall see him.}\footnote{Mark 16.6-7.} And again, he himself saith to his disciples: \textit{Feel me, and see: a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have.}\footnote{Luke 24.39.} These sayings concerning the clarified body, which is that which ascended and sitteth at the right hand of the Father, repugn wholly with ubiquity or being in every place\footnote{A reference to Martin Luther’s doctrine of the Real Presence. Luther argued that, thanks to the \textit{communicatio idomatum} (the mutual exchange of characteristics between the two natures of Christ), Christ’s human body now shares the Word’s divine ubiquity, the quality of being in every place (or in many places) simultaneously. Hence, Christ’s body and blood could be – and were – really present “in, under, and with” the consecrated bread and wine.} and the insensibility of Christ’s body – which notwithstanding must needs be granted, if we proceed to enforce the real presence of Christ’s body out of the words of the Supper simply under-stood.
Whereunto belongeth that which the Apostle [Paul], disputing of the resurrection of the dead, saith: *If the dead do not rise, neither is Christ risen; but Christ is risen, being the firstfruits of them that sleep* – and therefore shall we rise also. Wherefore, by our own bodies being raised again, it appear-eth what manner of body Christ’s glorious body was, or is, whereunto our bodies are made like. But our bodies shall be true bodies, consisting of sinews, veins, flesh, skin, and bones, visible, not invisible, and remaining in some certain place in heaven, not everywhere. Whereupon it followeth that the Lord’s body is not invisible and everywhere. But if any man think that to be no good argument which is fetched from our raised bodies to the Lord’s raised body (or contrariwise), let him accuse St Paul, who hath taught us this by his example. Therefore, the catholic and right ancient faith constraineth us to expound the words of the Supper by a trope or figure.

Finally, when as the Capernaites had heard the Lord dispute touching the eating of his body and drinking of his blood, and did think and imagine of a carnal eating and drinking, he said that he would ascend into heaven – to wit, that they should not think on the eating of his natural body, since in the selfsame body he would ascend into heaven. Neither is there left here any place for the new and frivolous device of certain men, which feign that to ascend into heaven is nothing else than to lay down the weak state and condition thereof and to receive a supernatural [state or condition]. For St Luke – whom altogether we must rather believe than such subtle devices (or rather follies) – saith that the Lord was lifted up on high and carried up into heaven from the sight of his disciples – moreover, that his body was received by a cloud, and that his disciples looked up into heaven after him, until they heard the angels say unto them that he would return again in the very same manner altogether as they saw him depart away. But who

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1 Corinthians 15.16, 20.

135 Capernaites: people at Capernaum – John 6.24: “So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.”

136 A reference to Johann Brenz (1499-1570), a disciple of Luther and the leading reformer in Württemberg. He vigorously supported Luther’s doctrine of the real Presence against his former teacher and colleague Oecolampadius; he later engaged Bullinger himself in controversy.

137 Acts 1.9-11.
knoweth not that he shall come again in the clouds of heaven? Therefore heaven, into which the Lord ascended, is the name of a place, not of a state or condition. Also, in the gospel he promiseth us a place with himself, saying: If I go to prepare you a place, I will come again and take you unto me, that where I am, there you may be also. Yea, he laid down all the conditions and infirmities of a mortal body in his resurrection, so that he had no need to lay them down at his ascension.

I suppose that there is none of the faithful that will deny that the Lord instituted nothing to us in vain or without some singular and special commodity to us. But when the Lord said in the gospel that his flesh being corporally eaten availed nothing, where he speaketh of none other body than of that very same whereof he spake in the words of the Supper – to wit, [the body] which he gave for us: – it followeth, without all contradiction, that the Lord delivered nothing unto us in the Supper but that would profit us. But he should have delivered that which would not have profited us if he had given us his body to be eaten corporally. It is evident, therefore, that it is very necessary the words of the Supper should be expounded.

Hereunto belongeth the notable prophecy and manifest commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying in the gospel: Then if they shall say unto you, “Lo, here is Christ,” or “There is Christ,” do not believe. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and they shall work great signs and wonders so that, if it were possible, the very elect shall be brought into error. Behold, I have told you before. If therefore they shall say unto you, “Behold where he is in the wilderness,” go not forth; “Behold where he is in the innermost parts of the house – “in the closets” or “coffers,” I say; for this word εν ταµειοις signifieth the most secret and innermost parts of all the house wherein we use to lay up those things which we would have safest kept; which in Dutch we call Schryn, schloss, und gehalt – do not believe. For like as the lightning goeth out of the east and appeareth even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

But although this place is used

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138 John 14.3.

139 commodity: advantage, profit.

140 in Dutch: i.e. auf Deutsch, in German.

141 Matthew 24.23-27.
to be expounded by many of the calamities of the Jews, yet that cannot be denied which St Hierome [Jerome] also himself confesseth, that in the same [passage from Matthew’s gospel] likewise the destiny of all the world is prophesied of, even unto the end thereof. Wherefore this place which we have alleged is concluded with the saying concerning Christ’s last coming into the world at the day of judgement. And moreover it cannot be denied that the Lord doth absolutely condemn that doctrine that defendeth that Christ remaineth or is present in divers places of the world, in boxes or close places – which not only the books of the teachers of transubstantiation are seen to do, but also tabernacles which are erected unto Christ’s body (which they call “meat-tents” [ciboria]), also chapels with famous temples and monasteries. In all and every one of these places, I say, they shew us Christ, saying, “Lo, here is Christ, and there is Christ. Behold the bread of angels! Christ is wholly in all these sacrifices, and he is fully and wholly in every part of them, even in such sort as he was when he was born of the Virgin Mary and [when he] hung upon the cross.” Which thing they by-and-bye confirm by miracles and wonders. They also set it forth with circumstance of words, saying that so great mysteries are not to be inquired of but simply to be believed, and that these things were wrought unspeakably and invisibly by the omnipotency of God. Neither did the Lord dissemble how much this error should increase. There shall be plenty, such great numbers of people that receive this error and running after Christ into the deserts and innermost places of the houses, that the very elect shall be in danger. But in the meanwhile, in so great peril and danger of things, what doth Christ teach his elect to do? Immediately he addeth: Do not believe. What, do not believe that Christ is here or there upon earth, in the wilderness, or innermost parts of the house, or even in the midst of the cities, or in the fields? He addeth moreover: Go not forth. Follow not the multitude which by distance of place seeketh for Christ as if he were yet conversant upon the earth. Therefore now, if so be the whole world and all the councils in the world, all the kings and princes – yea, if the

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142 expounded by many of the calamities of the Jews: i.e. Many expounded this passage as referring to the calamities which befell the Jews (e.g. the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans in 70 C.E.).

143 Jerome, In Mattheum IV, on 24.3: “The disciples ask three questions: at what time Jerusalem is to be destroyed, when Christ is to come, and when the end of the age is to be.”

144 boxes: small compartments or shelters.
angels and saints – should command us to believe that Christ is here or there corporally, yet the commandment of our only Redeemer Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the wisdom of the Father, by whom all things were made, who forbiddeth us to believe the same, ought to be of that authority among all the godly, that they may know that they must not believe as creatures command them but as the Creator hath commanded them.

Yea moreover, the Lord vouchsafeth in this very same place of the gospel [Matthew 24.23-27] to give us a reason of [for] his doctrine. For why must we not believe that Christ is conversant or bodily present upon the earth, but invisibly? Because like as the lightning goeth forth of the east and appeareth in the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Which is as much as if he had said: The Son of God came once humbly into the earth to redeem us through his humility and death on the cross – which thing being finished, he forsook the earth and ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; from thence he shall not return into these our regions but to judgement. But then shall he appear glorious, noble, to be seen of all men, as it were the most clear sin – yea, rather, like a lightning, right terrible to all the wicked. And therefore there is no cause why, from the time of his ascension until his coming to judgement, we should look for him to come invisibly and to remain with us corporally present. St Hierome [Jerome], expounding the same place, saith: “This also must be said – that the second coming of our Saviour shall not be shewed in humility, as before, but in glory. It were a foolish part, therefore, to seek him in a little corner or in some secret place, who is the light of the whole world.”

Thus far he. But lest I may seem to stay myself upon some human authority, I will rehearse that which St Paul teacheth us in his Epistle to the Hebrews, saying: Christ appeared once before the end of the world to put away sin by offering up of himself. And forasmuch as it is appointed to men once to die, and after this cometh the judgement, even so Christ, being once offered up to take away the sins of many, shall the second time be seen of them without sin, who look for him to their salvation.

Because therefore our Lord came once into the world, he was once offered up; but [because] he shall come again

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145 Jerome, In Mattheum IV, on 24.3.

146 Hebrews 9.26b-28. Cf. NRSV rendering of these verses: “But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgement, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”
(or the second time) at the end of the world, truly he cometh not again every day into the world. And because he hath forbidden us to believe, if any man should shew him present here or there unto in the world, it must needs follow that he may be shewed present here or there, yea, in all places where the sacrament of thanksgiving is celebrated, if we will understand the words of the Supper according to the letter. Therefore, it followeth without all contradiction, by conference of places,\textsuperscript{147} that the words of the Lord’s Supper ought not to be expounded according to the letter.

I think herewith I have satisfied such as be not of contentious disposition. For undoubtedly their meaning\textsuperscript{148} is that we should speak of the sacraments sacramentally, and that sacramental speeches ought to be expounded sacramentally. Besides that, we ought to believe nothing that is repugnant to the rule of belief. But the miracles and omnipotency of God, brought forth and alleged in this place for the setting out and persuading of an evil matter, do no good at all after so many and manifest arguments of truth. Miracles are joined unto the word as it were seals – which thing the Lord God himself testifieth in St Mark. If then they be repugnant to the word and affirm that which the word altogether denieth, who will not perceive them to be of that kind of miracles whereof the Apostle speaketh in the second chapter of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians,\textsuperscript{149} and whereof we have heard now that the Lord gave us warning in the gospel, that we should in no case believe them? The Lord can do all things, but therefore he doth not all things. The prophet saith: \textit{Whatsoever the Lord would do, that he did, both in heaven and in earth.}\textsuperscript{150} Moreover, he will not do such things as are contrary to his word and his faith; therefore, he cannot do that [which] he will not do. Theodoretus, in his third dialogue entitled \textit{Polymorphus}, saith: “The Lord God will not do anything that is not in him of his own nature, but he can do whatever he will – but he will do such things as are fit and

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\item \textsuperscript{147} by conference of places: by comparison of scriptural texts.
\item \textsuperscript{148} their meaning. The meaning of the texts cited.
\item \textsuperscript{149} 2 Thessalonians 2.9-12: “The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned.”
\item \textsuperscript{150} Psalm 135.6.
\end{itemize}
agreeing to his nature. Therefore, sith [=since] God of his own nature is true, he cannot do that which is contrary to his word."  

Other sound writers do add: Not that he cannot do all things, but that he will not do that which is contrary to his nature – and because it doth not become him to do against himself.

In the mean season, I do expressly profess that I condemn not or flatly am against all manner of Christ’s presence in the church, and in the action also of the Supper. For I am flat against that bodily presence of Christ in the bread, which the papists defend and enforce upon the church of God. But I confess and acknowledge with open mouth and sincere heart that spiritual, divine, and quickening presence of our Lord Christ both in the Supper and also out of the Supper, whereby he continueth to pour himself into us – not by signs lacking life but by his Holy Spirit – to make us partakers of all his good graces, to justify, quicken, nourish, sustain, and satisfy us. Which presence we do also feel in ourselves through faith, by the which we are both sustained, nourished, and satisfied. For Christ is the head of his church, and we have fellowship with him. But how should a living body be without his head? How should we be partakers of Christ if we should not feel him present, yea, living and working in us?

Some there are, I know well enough, who otherwise are not injurious to the truth, which gainsay these things, crying out that by this reason the manner of Christ’s presence in the Supper is not fully enough expressed – especially since he himself also hath said elsewhere, Behold, I am with you continually unto the world’s end.  

"I," saith he, “wholly” – not “my power” or “divinity,” not “my spirit,” nor “my strength”. Moreover, it is a hazard lest we should seem to tear Christ in pieces, seeing that he cannot be wholly with us unless he be present with us as well in body as in divinity. But we wonder what is in their heads. Do they not understand that the Lord in that divine talk, spoken both in the very Supper and also immediately after the Supper, did beat upon nothing so much as that very same thing against which they set shoulder – to wit, that Christ would be absent in body but present in spirit, and that this presence would be more profitable to the church than his bodily presence? Do they not also understand wherefore he took flesh and was nailed on the cross? that is to say, what the effect and use is of Christ’s body – to wit, that the sacrifice of his body being once offered for us upon the earth, he might carry the same up into heaven in token that both our bodies

\[\text{151} \text{ Theodoret of Cyrus, Eranistes seu Polymorphus, Dialogue III.}\]

\[\text{152} \text{ Matthew 28.20.}\]
and souls after our death shall through his merit be also carried thither. Therefore, after that the Lord’s body had fulfilled on earth that which it came to fulfil, there is no cause why it should do anything else upon earth. He now sitteth, and ought to sit, at the right hand of the Father, that he may draw all us thither unto him.

If there be any that doth not yet fully believe that which we say, let him read the doctrine of St Paul the Apostle in the ninth and tenth chapters of his Epistle to the Hebrews. Let him also read the fourteenth and sixteenth chapters of St John’s gospel. But if it be a pleasure to them to hale at the gable of contention  and to stick precisely as well to these words of the Lord, *I am with you unto the world’s end*, as to these, *This is my body, This is my blood*, let them expound to me these holy testimonies of the holy Scripture.

Paul saith that Christ dwelleth in our hearts,  and that Christ liveth in him and he in Christ.  The Lord saith to the thief: *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise*.  And the evangelist saith of the Lord being dead: *They laid him into the sepulchre*.  The Scripture saith not, “They laid flesh and bones into the sepulchre,” but: *They laid him into the sepulchre*. The Lord said not to the thief, “Thy soul shall be with my spirit (or soul) in paradise,” but: *Verily I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise*. Neither doth St Paul say that Christ’s Spirit and life doth live in him or dwell in our hearts, but he saith simply that Christ doth dwell in our hearts. But who is so foolish and given to contention, that for these words and places of the Scripture will contend that Christ’s divinity was buried with his body, – that Christ’s body was with his soul that same day in paradise in which either of them departed this life, – that Christ’s body together with his Spirit dwelleth in the hearts of the faithful and liveth in Paul, and that Paul liveth in Christ’s flesh? All men do willingly admit the catholic sense of the catholic church, gathered out of the word of God – namely, that Christ in his Spirit is present

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153 to hale at the gable of contention [contentionis funem trahere, “to tug on the cable of contention”]. In 16th-century English, *gable* was a variant of *cable*.

154 Ephesians 3.16-17: “I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.”

155 Galatians 2.19b-20a: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.”

156 Luke 23.43.

in his church even to the world’s end, but absent in body; and that the thief’s soul was that day present in paradise with Christ’s soul, not with his body. So judgeth it [sc. the catholic church] also of the residue. But if any man mistrust mine interpretation, let him hear St Augustine in his treatise upon John when he saith: “He [sc. Christ] speaketh of the presence of his body when he saith, The poor you shall always have with you, but me shall you not have always.”\(^{158}\) For in respect of his majesty, of his providence, and of his unspeakable grace is that fulfilled which he spake, Behold, I am with you always, even to the world’s end. But in respect of the flesh which the Word took upon it, in respect that he was born of the Virgin, that he was taken by the Jews, that he was nailed to the cross, that he was taken down from the cross, that he was wound in a sheet, that he was laid into the sepulchre, that he was manifested in the resurrection - [in that respect] you shall not have me with you always. And why so? Because he was conversant, as touching his bodily presence, forty days with his disciples; and they accompanying him but not following him, he ascended into heaven and is not here. For there he sitteth at the right hand of the Father – and he is here, for he is not gone hence in respect of the presence of his majesty.”\(^{159}\) Thus far St Augustine.

But if they yet proceed, not regarding all this that we have said, to urge that saying of the Lord out of Matthew, Behold, I – even I, I say – αμεθ’ υμων [meth’ humôn], with you, we will also object against them this saying of the Lord, and the same out of the gospel: It is expedient for you that – lo, here they have also this word I – do depart.\(^{160}\) We object also against them this testimony of the angels out of Luke: This Jesus, which is taken up απ’ υμων [aph’ humôn], from you, into heaven, &c. They shall be at length constrained, whether they will or no, to reconcile such places as seem to be repugnant and to admit the general understanding which we have alleged and defended hitherto.

Neither is there here any danger of dividing Christ; neither divide we Christ’s person with Nestorius, since we defend the propriety of both natures in Christ against the Eutychians.\(^{161}\) While

\(^{158}\) John 12.8.

\(^{159}\) Discourses on the Gospel of John 50, § 13.

\(^{160}\) John 16.7.

\(^{161}\) Nestorius. Bishop of Constantinople 428-431, d. ca. 451. Accused of maintaining that the divine and human natures of Christ were so utterly separated from one another, each in its respective integrity, that they had no real communion with one another. He seems, in
Christ our Lord in body was yet conversant upon the earth, he himself witnesseth in the gospel that nevertheless he was or is also in the heavens. And indeed Christ, who was both God and man all at one time, was then in heaven when he was crucified and conversant upon earth – although his body was not crucified in the heavens. But as Christ divided not himself – although, being in heaven, he was notwithstanding conversant and crucified in body upon earth, not in heaven: – so neither do we divide Christ, who is both God and man. Although we say he is present with us when we celebrate the Supper, and that we communicate with him, yet nevertheless we affirm that in his body he remaineth in heaven, where he sitteth at the right hand of the Father. And so let us keep ourselves within the compass of the Scripture.

Hitherto have I spoken of the natural meaning of the words of the Lord’s Supper as briefly and plainly as possibly I could. Touching the place of Paul in the first [Epistle] to the Corinthians, chapter 10: The cup of blessing which we bless, &c., with such other texts which are alleged to prove bodily presence [of Christ], I shall not need to use many words, for we have handled that place already once or twice.

It remaineth therefore that we examine and weigh what they [sc. “the papists” and the Lutherans] deliver unto us touching the eating of Christ’s body – and also what the canonical Scriptures do teach to be thought of that eating. “What,” say they, “the Lord hath promised, the same most surely and fully he performeth.” They add: “But he promised that he would give us his true body and very blood to be eaten and drunken in the form of bread and wine unto everlasting life.” They gather [from this premise]: “Therefore, he hath given his very body and blood to the faithful, under the form of bread and wine, for meat and drink to everlasting life – whereupon it must be eaten corporally, as it is corporal.” To the confirmation whereof they allege the Lord’s words, as they are written in the sixth chapter of John’s gospel.

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fact, to have taught no such thing; his great opponent, Cyril of Alexandria, nonetheless managed to identify him with such a doctrine, so that it was condemned, and Nestorius himself deposed, at the council of Ephesus (431). **Eutychians.** Named after Eutyches (d. ca. 454), a monk of Constantinople who was condemned at the council of Chalcedon (451) for teaching the opposite extreme. Eutyches maintained that, before the Incarnation, the Son of God had two distinct natures, divine and human, but that when he became incarnate these two natures became so blended, or “confused,” as to constitute one (possibly a third kind of) nature.

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162 Cf. John 3.13: “No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.”
We answer: – God most perfectly and fully performeth that which he hath promised. But we add that he performeth not according to that meaning that we devise, but as his word truly importeth.

We must therefore see, first of all, in what sense the Lord promised to give his flesh for bread and his blood for drink to the faithful – and next, how we eat his flesh and how we drink his blood. These things truly which the Lord promiseth here are well nigh all parables and allegories. The Lord promiseth that he will give us his flesh for bread or meat and his blood for drink. But because meat and drink are given unto men to preserve their bodily life – and the Lord in the sixth chapter of John speaketh not of the life of the body but of the soul – there is a passage made from bodily things to spiritual things. When therefore the Lord promised that he would give us his flesh for bread or meat and his blood for drink, what other thing did he promise us than that he would give his body to the death and shed his blood for the remission of sins? For by the death of Christ we are, as it were by meat, preserved and delivered from death. By Christ’s blood we are washed from sin and our souls are, as it were with drink, spiritually drunken. Therefore the Lord speaketh nothing here of the bread of the Lord’s Supper, neither doth he promise that at the Supper he will make of bread his flesh or that he would give his body in form of bread. Then let this mine exposition of Christ’s words concerning the giving of Christ’s body or flesh in the form of bread, &c. be false and feigned unless I confirm the same by the words of Christ.

The Lord said in the gospel: Seek for the meat that perisheth not but remaineth to life everlasting, which the Son of Man shall give unto you. A little after, by [way of] interpretation, he addeth: And the bread which I will give unto you is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. [This means:] “I said that I would give you bread or meat” – for this word “bread” is, after the Hebrew manner, used by the Lord for meat and all manner of sustenance; – “but,” saith he, “this bread or this meat is my flesh.

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163 he performeth ... as his word truly importeth. God performs his promise in accordance with the meaning that his word actually intends to communicate.

164 our souls are... spiritually drunken. made drunk with the Spirit, spiritually inebriated.

165 John 6.27.

166 John 6.51b.
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and therefore I promise to give you my flesh when I promise to give you *the bread of life.* Here hast thou expressly to understand that the Lord by “bread” did not mean bodily bread or the bread of the Supper. But how doth he promise to give his flesh for bread – that is to say, to be meat for us, or to quicken us? The Lord repeateth this word, *I will give,* and saith: *Which I will give for the life of the world* – [meaning,] “I will give it, that is to say, even to the death, that through my death I may quicken you. By dying, therefore, my flesh shall feed, that is to say, shall quicken.” Thus much concerning the promise of his flesh for bread. Hereafter followeth of the eating thereof.

Like as the holy Scripture setteth down in every place, without trope or allegory, that we are made partakers of Christ’s death – or of his body which was given for the world unto life – through faith, so also in this present place [John 6.51b], by a trope or allegory, he [Christ] biddeth us to eat and drink the flesh and blood of Christ unto everlasting life. Therefore, to eat Christ’s flesh and drink his blood is nothing else but to believe that Christ’s body was given for us and his blood shed for us to the remission of sins – and consequently, that we remain in Christ and have Christ remaining in us. For the faith whereof we spake is not only an imagination or thought concerning things past and exceeding our capacity, but a most certain assurance and a feeling of heavenly things received within us to our great commodity. For therefore not only faith but also the virtue and force of faith is by the Lord signified in John by the allegory both of eating and drinking. Meat passeth not into the substance of our body without delight – so also by faith, through a great desire of the spirit, we are joined with Christ, that he may live in us, and we may live in Christ and be partakers of all his good gifts. This is the spiritual eating of Christ, who never thought – no, not so much as once dreamed in this place – of that gross and bodily eating which is indeed unprofitable. But forasmuch as the whole point of the controversy consisteth in these word of eating and drinking the flesh and blood of the Lord – they [sc. “the papists” and the Lutherans] interpreting the same words bodily, and we spiritually – it seemeth good to be shewed that by the words of eating and drinking the Lord meant no other thing than to believe, and consequently to abide in Christ and to have Christ abiding in us. We will therefore, by conference of places of the Scripture, bring forth six evident testimonies in confirmation of our assertion.

| Q 1. I am, saith the Lord, that bread of life. Whoso cometh to me shall not hunger, and whoso believeth in me shall not thirst for ever. | 167 But who will deny that there is relation between *to eat* and *not to hunger,* *to drink* and *not to thirst? Because therefore the * |

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167 John 6.35.
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(1551)

Lord said, *He shall not hunger*, he should first have said, “Whoso *eateth* me”. But he rather used the word of *coming* and said: *Whoso cometh to me shall not hunger*. To eat, therefore, is to come – and to come is to eat. And what it is to come to him, he expoundeth immediately, saying: *Whosoever hath heard from the Father and hath learned, he is that cometh to me* 168 – that is to say, “receiveth me, and believeth in me”. For Paul also saith: *Whosoever will come to God must believe*. 169 These testimonies without contradiction do prove that TO EAT is nothing else but TO BELIEVE. Yet that followeth which is more manifest: *And whoso believeth in me shall never thirst.* Whoso drinketh doth not thirst. Therefore, for TO DRINK he hath put TO BELIEVE. Therefore to drink is to believe, for faith satisfieth and pacifieth our minds. Here they have an answer that make this objection, Whether the Lord himself had not words whereby he might declare his mind, if so be by EATING AND DRINKING he had meant BELIEVING? They have, I say, an open testimony whereby he useth the one [term] for the other.  

¶ 2. Again, in the same treatise [=discourse] the Lord saith: *Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life; and I will raise him at the latter day*. And again in the same treatise he saith: *This is the will of him that sent me, that whosoever shall see the Son and believe in him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him at the latter day*. 170 Lo, here thou hast again these words TO EAT CHRIST’S FLESH, TO DRINK HIS BLOOD, and TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST, all in one sense.  

¶ 3. Again, the Lord saith: *I am the lively [=living] bread which came down from heaven*. And again he saith: *Verily I say unto you, he that believeth in me hath life everlasting. Whosoever shall eat of this bread shall live for ever*. 171 Then to eat Christ, and to believe in Christ, are all one.  

¶ 4. And again he saith: *Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him*. 172 Moreover, John in his canonical Epistle saith: *Whosoever shall confess* – that is to say,  

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168 John 6.45b.  
169 Cf. Hebrews 11.6: “And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”  
171 John 6.51a, 47.  
172 John 6.56.
“shall believe” – that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God.\textsuperscript{173}

\textbf{Q 5.} Again: Verily, verily I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you can have no life in you.\textsuperscript{174} And the same Lord saith also in the eighth chapter of John: \textit{If you do not believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.} And again: \textit{Verily, verily I say unto you, whoso keepeth my sayings, he shall never see death.}\textsuperscript{175}

\textbf{Q 6.} Again the Lord saith: \textit{Like as the living Father hath sent me, and I live by means of the Father, so likewise whoso eateth me shall also live by means of me.}\textsuperscript{176} And John in the fifth chapter saith: \textit{Like as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.}\textsuperscript{177} And likewise in his canonical Epistle he saith: \textit{Whoso believeth in the Son of God hath a testimony in him.} And: \textit{Whoso hath the Son hath life.}\textsuperscript{178}

Unto these most evident testimonies of God we will now join the testimonies of men which do say the very same – that to eat Christ is nothing else but to believe in Christ and to abide in Christ. St Augustine in his 25th treatise upon John, expounding these words of the Lord [which] saith, \textit{This is the work of God, that you should believe in him whom he sent},\textsuperscript{179} as he [Augustine] left written: “This is therefore to eat \textit{the meat that perisheth not but remaineth unto everlasting life.} Why then dost thou prepare thy teeth and thy belly? Believe, and thou hast eaten.”\textsuperscript{180} The same again, in his 26th treatise, saith: “To believe in him, this is to eat the bread of life. Whoso believeth in him, eateth invisibly and is filled, because he is born invisible.”\textsuperscript{181} Again in the same treatise he

\begin{itemize}
\item 173 I John 4.15.
\item 174 John 6.53.
\item 175 John 8.24, 51.
\item 176 John 6.57.
\item 177 John 5.26.
\item 178 I John 5.10, 12.
\item 179 John 6.29.
\item 180 \textit{In iohannis evangelium tractatus} 25, § 12.
\item 181 Ibid., 26, § 1. The original Latin text of the second sentence quoted here reads: “Qui credit in eum manducat, invisibiliter saginatur, quia invisibiliter renascitur” – “The person who believes, eats: he is nourished invisibly, because he is reborn invisibly.”
\end{itemize}
saith: This is to eat that meat and drink that drink – to abide in Christ and to have Christ abiding in him. And by this means, whoso abideth not in Christ, and in whom Christ doth not abide, doubtless he neither eateth spiritually his flesh,” &c.\(^{182}\) The same Augustine, \textit{Lib[er]. de Doctrina Christiana [Book on Christian Teaching]}, cap. 16, shewing when a figurative speech is to be admitted and when not, saith: “If it be an enjoining speech, or [an utterance] for-bidding some heinous offence or trespass, or commanding some profit or good to be done, it is not figurative. But if it seem to command some heinous offence or trespass, or to forbid some profit or good deed, then is it figurative. \textit{Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you can have no life in you.} This seemeth to command an heinous offence or trespass – therefore it is figurative, willing us to be partakers of the Lord’s passion and sweetly and profitably to keep in memory that his flesh was crucified and wounded for us.”\(^{183}\) Thus said Augustine, who doubtless set down not only his own meaning herein but also the meaning of the whole catholic church which was at that time. Let our adversaries therefore take heed what they do, who will drive all the faithful to this wickedness and offence – to wit, that we should corporally eat Christ’s body.

Furthermore, hereunto is to be added that which by reason of the perspicuity and plainness thereof doth almost surpass all that we have alleged before, which the Lord himself answered to those that wondered (or rather, murmured), saying, \textit{How can he give us that his flesh to eat?}\(^{184}\) after that he had declared the sum of the true faith. \textit{Doth this offend you,}\(^{185}\) saith he, “that I said I would give you bread which came down from heaven, even my flesh, to be meat to all believers? I suppose that offence shall take no just place when you shall see me ascend into heaven, from whence I came down unto you and where I was with my Father before all beginning. Then shall ye perceive by my divine ascension that I am the heavenly bread, the natural Son of God, and the life of the world. Ye shall perceive, moreover, that my flesh is not to be eaten bodily and to be consumed and torn in morsels, but is carried up into heaven for a pledge of the salvation of mankind.” And shortly after this he saith further: \textit{It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh}\n
\(^{182}\) Ibid., 26. § 18.


\(^{184}\) John 6.51.

\(^{185}\) John 6.61.
availeth nothing. And yet more manifestly he speaketh: The words which I speak unto you are spirit and life.\textsuperscript{186} Certain it is that Christ’s flesh availeth very much and is more profitable to the world than any tongue – yea, the most eloquent – can express. Yea, the Lord hath warned us beforehand that we shall have no life unless we eat his flesh. Then doth the Lord deny that his flesh availeth us anything at all – if so be it eaten as the Capernaites\textsuperscript{187} understood, that is to say, bodily. For being bodily eaten it availeth nothing, but being spiritually eaten it quickeneth – and the Lord hath plainly professed that he spake of the spiritual eating in which consisteth life.

These things being declared and confirmed after this manner, we gather such things into a short summary wherein we think sufficient answer is made unto our adversaries’ objection. The proposition is true which holdeth that the Lord doth certainly perform that which he promised. But the second proposition is false, which saith that the Lord, by his words in the sixth chapter of John, by bread meant the material bread of the sacrament, and that he promised that he would convert the same into his flesh. For by bread he meant not the material bread of the sacrament, but meat to live withal, according to the propriety of the Hebrew tongue – yea, his very flesh which was delivered to the death, to be meat. I say, that we might live through Christ’s death. Thus, therefore, should the argument have been framed: – That which God promiseth he performeth; but he promiseth that he will give us his flesh for bread – that is to say, to be meat and life for us: – therefore hath he given his flesh to be meat – that is to say, he hath given over himself to the death that by his death we might live. Which being so, surely the meat whereof the Lord speaketh is no bodily meat – although the Lord himself have a true, human, and natural body of like substance to ours – but spiritual. Not that the flesh is converted into the spirit, but for that it ought to be received spiritually, not bodily. But it is eaten spiritually by faith, not with the bodily mouth. For as chewing or eating maketh us partakers of the meat, so are we made partakers of the body and blood of Christ through faith.

But thou wilt say: “How cometh it to pass that – seeing bread, whereof mention is made in the sixth chapter of John, doth not signify the bread of the Supper – almost all the doctors, interpreters, and ministers of the church do apply these words to the Lord’s Supper?” I answer that these words of the Lord may be understood, that is to say, bodily. For being bodily eaten it availeth nothing, but being spiritually eaten it quickeneth – and the Lord hath plainly professed that he spake of the spiritual eating in which consisteth life.

\textsuperscript{186} John 6.63.

\textsuperscript{187} See page 47, footnote 131.
applied to the matter of the Lord’s Supper for other causes, although the [word] bread signify not the bread of the sacrament. Yea, I confess that these words of the Lord of [=concerning] the eating his flesh and drinking his blood do bring great light to the matter of the Lord’s Supper. St Augustine, lib[ro]. De consensu evan-gelistarum tertio, capite primo [in the third book On the Agreement of the Evangelists, in the first chapter], saith: “John said nothing in this place” – John, the thirteenth [chapter] – “of the body and blood of the Lord, but plainly witnesseth that the Lord hath spoken more at large thereof in another place.”188 This much saith he, speaking undoubtedly of the sixth [chapter] of John. Since therefore it is one and the same flesh and the same body of our Lord whereof he speaketh in both places, in the sixth [chapter] of John and the twenty-sixth [chapter] of Matthew; and [since] the self-same [body] is said in both places to have been delivered to the death for us or for our life; and likewise, because there is but one means to be partaker of Christ, which is by faith in his body which was delivered and his blood shed; and finally, because it is the catholic or universal and undoubted doctrine that Christ’s flesh being bodily eaten availeth nothing; – surely the things before written in the sixth [chapter] of John are agreeable and do fully open the matter of the Lord’s Supper.

And to the intent that this yet may be the better under-stood, I will recite what testimonies have been always alleged in the church out of the holy Scriptures concerning the two kinds of eating of Christ. Christ’s body is eaten and his blood drunken SPIRITUALLY; it is also eaten and drunken SACRAMENTALLY. The spiritual manner [is] accomplished by faith, whereby being united to Christ we be made partakers of all his goodness. The sacramental manner is only performed in celebrating the Lord’s Supper. The spiritual eating is perpetual unto the godly because faith is to them perpetual. They communicate with Christ both without [=outside] the Supper and in the Supper, and by it they do more increase and continue their new beginnings, as we have already shewed before; and now, by adjoining of the holy action, all things are done more manifestly and plainly. As for the unbelievers and hypocrites with their captain Judas, they never communicate with Christ, neither before the Supper, nor in the Supper, nor after the Supper, inasmuch as they continue in their unbelief. But they [partake] of the Lord’s sacraments to their own judgement and condemnation.

188 De consensu evangelistarum III.1, § 2. Augustine is alluding to John 13.1-11, where John mentions that it was “during supper” that Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, but says nothing at all about the supper itself.
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I know here what some do teach and how they devise a certain third kind of eating Christ, which is neither spiritual nor yet sacramental but altogether compounded of sacramental and corporal. For they hold opinion also that the true and natural body of Christ is received bodily by the un-believers in the forms of the sacrament. Howbeit, it shall easily appear by certain sound arguments of the Scripture that this is but a device of man. Which arguments we will apply to the traitor Judas, that by this one example all the ungodly may learn what they eat and drink at the Lord's supper – for that [=so that] the judgement which is made of the head being revealed unto us, it shall be easier for us to pronounce of the members.

Some truly do make a doubt whether Judas were present at the Supper when the Lord distributed the holy mysteries – among whom is St Hilary. 189 Howbeit, the evangelical history saith plainly that the Lord sat down to meat with the twelve. Yea, Luke so handled his narration that we cannot doubt but that Judas did communicate of the mysteries with the rest of the apostles. Which St Augustine also avoucheth lib[ro]. De consensu evangelistarum tertio, capitolo primo [in the third book On the Agreement of the Evangelists, in the first chapter], and likewise in the sixty-second treatise upon John, and upon the tenth Psalm, and in his 163rd epistle. Yea, moreover, Aquinas also, answering in this point to St Hilary, approveth the same with us, Parte tertio Quæsti. 81, art. 2. 190

Now, therefore, [it] being manifest that Judas was at supper with the rest of the apostles, it seemeth needful that it were known what he received of [=from] the Lord. He received the sacrament of Christ’s body – but because he had not faith, as the other[s] had, he partaked not of Christ, neither did he eat and drink the Lord’s body and blood. For as many as eat the Lord’s body and drink his blood do not hunger nor thirst, for they dwell in Christ and Christ in them: they are Christ’s members, and they never die. The contrary altogether appeareth in Judas and all his fellows. Wherefore the unbelievers do neither eat the Lord’s body nor drink his blood. Moreover, it is out of all doubt that there is no agreement between Christ and Belial; for this hath the Apostle

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189 In Mattheum [Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew], 30. Hilary was bishop of Poitiers ca. 353-367. He became an ardent defender of Nicene theology, and endured a four-year exile in Asia Minor for his pains. Memorial, January 13th.

190 I.e, In the Third Part [of the Summa theologæ], Question 81, article 2.
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[Paul] pronounced out of the general consent of the Scriptures. But Judas is by Christ himself called Satan – therefore, Judas did not communicate with Christ. Now, if we will contend absolutely that Judas did eat the Lord’s body, truly we shall be constrained wickedly to affirm that it is not only an unprofitable but also an hurtful meat. Howbeit, godliness teacheth us that Christ is a wholesome meat always to all them that eat him truly. St Augustine also denieth that Judas did eat the Lord’s body or drink his blood. In the fifty-ninth treatise upon St John, “The apostles,” saith he, “did eat the bread which was the Lord, but Judas did eat the Lord’s bread against the Lord. They did eat life, but he punishment.”

Again, in the twenty-sixth treatise: “Whoso dwelleth not in Christ nor Christ in him, doubtless he neither eateth his flesh spiritually nor drinketh his blood, although carnally and visibly he break in his teeth the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. But he rather eateth and drinketh the sacrament of so great a matter to his condemnation,” &c. The like also, and almost plainer, doth he write in the twenty-first book and twenty-fifth chapter *De civitate Dei.*

Against these [statements] they object the authority of Paul, saying that they which eat unworthily are not guilty of the bread and cup which they have eaten and drunk of, but of the Lord’s body and blood, and also that they do eat and drink their own damnation, for that they make no difference of the Lord’s body – whereby it followeth necessarily that they have eaten and drunken the Lord’s body unworthily, and not only the sacraments of the body and blood of Christ.

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191 Cf. 2 Corinthians 6.14-15: “Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Belial [Gk: Beliar]? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever?”


193 Ibid., 26, § 18.

194 *On the City of God* 21, 25: “Someone who is not in the body of Christ cannot not be said to eat the body of Christ.”

195 Cf. 1 Corinthians 11.27, 29: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord…. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves.”
We answer that Paul saith thus in plain words: *Whosoever eateth of THIS BREAD and drinketh of the Lord’s CUP,* &c. Mark this: he saith, *Who eateth THIS BREAD and drinketh of THIS CUP unworthily—* he saith not, “*Whoso eateth the flesh and drinketh the blood unworthily.”* For they which eat the Lord are not without faith, and Christ dwelleth in them and they in him.

If thou yet marvel how the unbelievers can be guilty of the Lord’s body and blood, being eaten but sacramentally – learn this out of other places of the Scripture. The Lord saith in John: *Verily, verily I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and whoso receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.*  

196 Wherefore, whoso receiveth not an apostle, trespasseth not against the apostle but against God himself, although in the meanwhile he hath not seen God nor will not seem to have repelled him. We read how the Judge will say to them that are on his left hand: *Depart from me, you wicked, into everlasting fire. For I was hungry, and you gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink,* &c. But hearken now how the reprobate will make exceptions against this sentence of the Judge: *Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty and ministered not unto thee?* Then hear again what the Judge will answer: *Verily I say unto you, in that ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*  

197 Wherefore, like as he that sinneth against a minister or a beggar sinneth against Christ himself, although in the meanwhile he hath not hurt Christ’s person in any point, so is he also guilty of the body and blood of Christ, whosoever receiveth the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ unworthily, although in the mean season he have not received the very body and blood of the Lord. Paul saith in another place that revolters do crucify again unto themselves the Son of God.  

198 He also denieth in another place, by all manner of means, that it is possible for Christ to be crucified or to die any more.  

Therefore, Christ cannot be crucified again by

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196 John 13.20.

197 Matthew 25.31-45.

198 Cf. Hebrews 6.4-6: “For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, since on their own they are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt.”

199 Cf. Romans 6.9-10: “We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.”
the apostates or revolters – howbeit, their shameful falling away from him is so esteemed of as if they had crucified the Son of God. Although, therefore, the wicked do not eat the Lord’s very body nor drink his blood, nevertheless they are guilty of betraying the Lord’s body and blood as far as in them lieth. If as rebel tread under his foot the seal or letters of the prince or magistrate, although he touch not the magistrate himself nor tread him under his foot, yet is he said to trodden the magistrate under his foot and is accused not for hurting the seal or defiling the letters, but he is charged of treason and accused for treading the prince under his feet. What marvel, then, if we hear it said that they which do eat the Lord’s bread unworthily are guilty of the body and blood of Christ? For the bread and the mystical cup are a sacrament and seal of it.

Hitherto have we disputed of the eating of the body of Christ and of drinking of his blood, handling every one point thereof with as much brevity as we could. Now we go to knit up the other ends of the Lord’s Supper, being placed in the description of the Supper. We said that the Supper was instituted by the Lord that it might represent visibly the gifts of God unto the church and lay them forth before the eyes of all men. But we have learned by the whole discourse of this matter that Christ himself is a most full and rich treasure of all the gifts of God – as, namely, from whom, being delivered for us unto death, we have all things belonging to life, remission of sins, and life everlasting. Since these thing be invisible and gotten by faith, they be also visibly—that is to say, by sacraments – represented almost unto all the senses – to the sight, to hearing, to tasting, and to feeling – to the intent that man, being wholly therewith moved both in body and soul, may celebrate this most comfortable mystery with great rejoicing in heart. Hereunto now appertaineth that analogy whereof I have spoken before in the Seventh Sermon of this Decade, whereby I would have these things to be better learned.

Furthermore, we have said that the Supper was instituted of the Lord that he might visibly gather together into one body all his members which were otherwise dispersed throughout all parts of the world. Whereupon we have said that the holy men somewhere else did call the Supper a league or confederacy. We are knit invisibly with Christ and all his members by unity of faith and participation of one Spirit; but in the Supper we are joined together even by a visible conjunction. For now not by words but by deeds also, but by mystery, but by sacrament we are very nearly

The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God."
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knit and joined together, opening and declaring to all men, by celebrating the Supper, that we are also of the number of them that believe that they are redeemed by Christ and that they are Christ’s members and people. But we bind our-selves together unto Christ and the church both that we will keep the sincere faith and promising that we will use good deeds and charity towards all men. Hereupon truly did St Paul prove that it was not lawful for them which receive together at the Lord’s table to eat of meat offered to idols and to take part of profane sacrifices. Which thing if at this day many would rightly weigh and consider, they would not seem to be seen so busy in strange and foreign sacrifices.

We said also that the Lord instituted the Supper, that thereby he might keep his death in memory, so that it should never be blotted out with oblivion. For Christ’s death is the summary of all God’s benefits. He would have us therefore to keep in memory the benefit of his incarnation, passion, redemption, and of his love. And although the remembrance of a thing that is past be celebrated – to wit, of his death, – yet the same belongeth greatly unto us and quickeneth us. Neither must we think that this is the least end, for there is none so diligently expressed as this is. For the Lord repeateth this saying: *Do this in remembrance of me.* But that holy rite or holy action, being joined with the word or with the preaching of Christ’s death and the redemption of mankind – how marvellously doth it renew from time to time that benefit, and suffereth it not to be forgotten!

Last of all, we said that the Supper was ordained of the Lord, that thereby we might be admonished of our duty, praise and thanksgiving. It is our duty to be sincere in the faith of Christ, and to embrace all our brethren with Christian charity for the Lord’s sake, and to beware that we defile not our bodies with the filth of the world, since we be cleansed with the blood of Christ. Paul the Apostle saith: *So often as ye shall eat of this bread and drink of the Lord’s cup, declare the Lord’s death until he come.* But to *declare the Lord’s death* is to praise the goodness of God and to give thanks for our redemption obtained through his death. For the Apostle Peter saith: *Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people set at liberty, that ye should shew forth virtues of him that hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

Thus much I thought good in a few words to repeat touching the ends of the Supper, which every godly man being instructed by the Holy Ghost doth diligently consider. I would not let you go, dearly beloved brethren, but that I see it will be a common

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200 1 Peter 2.9.
commodity\textsuperscript{201} to teach in a few words how every one should prepare himself to the Lord’s Supper, that he come not to it unworthily.

But it were not lost labour first of all the search out, who do worthily or unworthily eat and drink of the Lord’s bread and cup. There is no man that can deny that there are degrees in our worthiness and unworthiness – if he rightly examine the judgements of God and, looking narrowly into the nature of our religion, is able to give judgement thereof. The chiefest degree of unworthiness is, to come to the holy mysteries of faith \textit{without faith}. He cometh worthily, that cometh with faith; unworthily, he that cometh without faith. These works are said to be seemly for such as are penitent or for such as profess repentance. But what is more beseeming, more meet and just, than that he who is to celebrate the Lord’s Supper do believe that he is redeemed by Christ’s death, who was offered up as a price for the whole world – and that, for that cause, is desirous to give thanks to Christ his Redeemer? Contrariwise, what is more unseemly and unjust than to receive that pledge of Christ’s body and in the meanwhile to have no communion or fellowship with Christ – to come to thanksgiving, and yet not to give thanks from the bottom of his heart? For what uniteth us to Christ, or what maketh us partakers of all his benefits and therewith also to be thankful, but faith? Therefore faith or unbelief maketh us partakers of the Lord’s table worthily or unworthily. Paul the Apostle, in the \textit{book of Acts}, saith to the Jews who through unbelief did reject or set at nought the preaching of the gospel: \textit{The word of God ought first to be preached unto you; but because you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life – behold, we turn unto the Gentiles}.\textsuperscript{202}

How did the Jews pronounce against themselves that they were unworthy of everlasting life and, like judges, gave sentence against themselves? In setting themselves against God’s word through unbelief, neither apprehending Christ by faith, who is the life and righteousness of the world. St Peter witnesseth that our hearts are purified by faith;\textsuperscript{203} true faith, therefore, is the cleanness of

\textsuperscript{201} \textit{it will be a common commodity} = it will serve the common good, it will profit us all.

\textsuperscript{202} \textit{Acts 13.46}.

\textsuperscript{203} Cf. Acts 15.8-9: “And God, who knows the human heart, testified to [the Gentiles] by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us.”
Christians. Whereupon St Augustine saith: “The unbeliever eateth not the flesh of Christ spiritually but rather eateth and drinketh the sacrament of so great a thing to his own condemnation, because, being unclean, he hath presumed to come to Christ’s sacraments – which no man receiveth worthily but he that is clean, of whom it is said, Blessed be the clean in heart, for they shall see God;” &c.  

Moreover, they eat and drink of the Lord’s Supper un-worthily, who although they be not destitute of faith, yet by their abusing of it do pervert the right institution of the Lord. Such seemeth to have been the error of the church of Corinth, which mingled the private and profane with the ecclesiastical and mystical banquet and did put no difference [did not distinguish] between the Lord’s bread, which is called the body of Christ, and common meat. For Paul saith: Whoso eateth and drinketh unworthily, he eateth and drinketh his own damnation, making no difference of the Lord’s body. Therefore, to make no difference of the Lord’s body is unworthily to eat the Lord’s bread and to drink of his cup. For this word διακρίνειν [diakrinein], “to judge” or “to make a difference,” is to weigh and consider of a matter exactly with judgement to the uttermost of a man’s power, to judge of it and make such a difference as is proper between that and all other things. Furthermore, the Lord’s body is not only that spiritual body of the Lord – to wit, the church of the faithful – but that very body which the Lord took of the Virgin and offered up for our redemption and that now sitteth at the right hand of the Father. To be short, the bread of the sacrament in the Supper is the Lord’s body – it is, I say, the sacrament of the true body which was given for us. Whosoever, therefore, putteth no difference between this, the Lord’s mystical bread, and profane meat, but cometh to Christ’s table as he would to a table of common and gross meat, and acknowledgeth not that this heavenly meat differeth far from other human meat, neither cometh after that sort as the Lord hath instituted but followeth his own reason – surely he maketh no difference of the Lord’s body but eateth and drinketh his own damnation.

204 Discourses on the Gospel of John 26, § 18. The concluding quote is Matthew 5.8.

205 διακρίνειν [diakrinein]. The original Greek of 1 Corinthians 11.29 reads: ό γαρ εσθίων και πίνων κρίμα έαυτο εσθίει και πίνει μη διακρίνειν το σώµα (“For the one who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgement against himself”).

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Paul again expoundeth himself, saying: *Therefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another, that ye meet not to condemnation.*\(^{206}\) Whoso therefore preventeth\(^{207}\) the public supper by eating his own private supper – that is to say, whoso suppeth not as the Lord hath appointed, – the same eateth and drinketh unworthily. For before, unworthy eaters and drinkers are said to eat and drink their own damnation; and here, they are said to meet together to their condemnation that make haste to the Supper, not tarrying for their brethren – and they make no difference of the Lord’s body. St Augustine in his sixty-second treatise upon John saith: “The Apostle speaketh of those which received the Lord’s body without difference and carelessly, as if it had been any other kind of meat whatsoever. Here, therefore, if he be reproved which maketh no difference of the Lord’s body – that is to say, doth not discern the Lord’s body from other meats, – how then should Judas not be damned, who came to the Lord’s table feigning that he was a friend but was an enemy?”\(^{208}\) How much more grievously do they seem to sin at this day, who, perverting the lawful and first use that was instituted by the Lord, do establish their own abuse with great contention – yea, and grievously persecute them that cry out against it and will not receive it!

Furthermore, since by experience we find every day that there are many things wanting unto our faith, by means whereof divers vices spring up among us – whence proceedeth our unworthiness, although it be the lightest of all, being such as the Lord of his grace easily washeth away and almost wipeth away by sending his cross upon us, not imputing such infirmities to us to our condemnation. For the Apostle in another place saith that *there is no condemnation for them which are grafted into Christ Jesus and walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.*\(^{209}\)

Neither with equal punishment doth our most just Lord punish these sundry sorts of unworthiness. Let us therefore see what the blessed Apostle [Paul] teacheth us concerning the punishment of those that eat unworthily. Therefore he saith: *Whoso eateth this bread or drinketh of the Lord’s cup unworthily, the same shall be guilty of the Lord’s body and blood.* By which words verily he

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\(^{206}\) 1 Corinthians 11.33, 34b.

\(^{207}\) *preventeth,* = usurps, expropriates.

\(^{208}\) *Discourses on the Gospel of John* 62, § 1.

\(^{209}\) Romans 8.1, 4b.
meaneth that chief and most foul unworthiness of all other – to wit, unbelief. For he is guilty of the Lord’s body and blood, to whom the fault of the Lord’s death is imputed – that is to say, to whom Christ’s death becometh death and not life. As it also happened unto them who through unbelief and wickedness did crucify Christ; for unto them Christ’s blood seemed profane, as if it had been the blood of some beast, murderer, or wicked person as being worthily shed for his offences. And, I pray you, what else doth he think than that Christ’s blood is profane, who believeth not that the same was shed for the sins of the world? And yet he dareth take part of the Lord’s Supper, that he may worthily be said to be guilty of the Lord’s body and blood. It is a very great offence to eat the Lord’s bread and to drink of his cup unworthily, through unbelief – which thing by the example of Judas is laid before our eyes. He believed not in the Lord Jesus – yea, he invented how to deliver him into the hands of thieves and murderers, – yet nevertheless he sat down to meat and took part of the Lord’s Supper; therefore in the end the devil worthily challenged him wholly unto him. For St John witnesseth that about the end of the Supper the devil entered into Judas. Not that he was not in him before that he came to the Supper – for he had begun before to dwell in him and to stir him forward – but for that, after so admonitions of our Lord Christ and, after that, he had profaned the mysteries of Christ and, as it were, trodden them under foot, he wholly entered into him and fully possessed him.

The same Apostle Paul threateneth damnation to them that make no difference of the Lord’s body – who are placed, as it were, in another degree of unworthiness, saying, For whoso eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh his own damnation. The reason hereof he setteth down in this sentence – to wit, why we ought not rashly and carelessly to come to the Lord’s table – for that we approach then to our condemnation. But condemnation or judgement is the pain or punishment which the Lord layeth upon his faithful people when they sin – not in another world truly, as he doth upon the unbelievers, but in this world. For it followeth in the words of the Apostle, which ministereth unto us the same sense: For this cause many are weak and feeble among you, and many sleep. For if we had judged ourselves, we should

210 challenged him wholly unto him. The devil claimed Judas entirely for himself.

211 John 13.27: “After he [Judas] received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him.”
not have been judged. But when we are judged, we are corrected by the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.\(^{212}\)

The Apostle plainly distinguisheth between the unworthy eaters that are subject to God’s correction and worldly men – that is to say, unbelievers – whose punishment the Lord deferrith to that other world. But upon his faithful people who yet offend through negligence and come to the Supper not sufficiently instructed, he layeth diverse and sundry afflictions, as pestilence, famine, sickness, and such like, to shake off their drowsiness. For it followeth: If we had judged ourselves – that is, if we ourselves had restrained our vices and separated from evil – we had not been judged – that is to say, punished and corrected. For immediately he addeth: But when we are judged, we are chastised of the Lord. To be judged, therefore, is to be chastised. But hereby we learn from whence there do flow so many mischiefs into the church – to wit, by the unworthy use of the Lord’s Supper.

But some man will answer here: “If the matter be so, it were better wholly to abstain from the Lord’s Supper!” But if any abstain wholly, he also thereby sinneth against the Lord, and that grievously. For he setteth at nought the Lord’s commandment, who saith, Do this – yea, he setteth at nought both the Lord’s death and all the gifts of God. Wherefore he hath not escaped danger, who hath omitted to celebrate the Supper – which thing also we have said before. Thou must go another way to work, if thou desire to avoid both danger and sin. Hear the counsel of Paul, very compendiously saying: Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. And we must mark that in this examination he sendeth no man to another, but every man to himself. The papists bid thee, “Go to an auricular confessor, there to confess thyself, to receive absolution, and to make satisfaction for thy sins according to the form that is commanded thee” – and so they bid thee, as sufficiently cleansed, to go to the Lord’s table. But Paul, the doctor [=teacher] of the Gentiles and the vessel of election, speaketh not a word of those things, but saith simply: Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For like as God is the searcher of the hearts and requireth the affection of the mind and hateth hypocrisy, so none knoweth what is in the heart of man or what affections we bear to God-ward but we ourselves do. Therefore he [Paul] willeth us ourselves to examine everything in ourselves – that is to say, he willeth every man to descend into himself and to examine himself. This examination cannot be made without faith and the light of God’s word. But the faithful man, having the light of God’s word

\(^{212}\) 1 Corinthians 11.30-32.
shining before him, and faith extending her force and power, inquireth of himself whether he doth acknowledge all his sins which he hath manifoldly committed against God, and whether he be sorry for them being committed; and whether with sincere faith of heart he believe that Christ hath washed away and forgiven all his sins; and whether he confess freely with his mouth, as he believeth in his heart, that life and salvation consisteth in Jesus Christ only, and in none other; and whether he have determined with himself to die in this confession; and whether he mean diligently and earnestly to apply himself to innocency and holiness of life; and whether he be ready to love and help all the members of Christ's body, of whom he is also a member, and be ready to spend his life for them according to the example of Christ; and whether he have remitted or pardoned all anger and enmity; and whether he be desirous to call to mind Christ's passion and the whole mystery of our redemption, and to give thanks to God for our redemption and for all other gifts of God already received and to be received. This is the right examining which agreeth with the receiving of the mystical Supper. And when we have done so, we may – although in humbleness and fear of the Lord, yet with gladness – approach to the Supper of our Lord Christ.

But here the faithful do tremble, who are (as it were) privy to their own imperfection and infirmity. For they do not find these things to be so perfect in their minds as otherwise they know a just perfection requireth. Satan cometh, and he casteth in many and great stays to the intent he may draw us back from the celebration of the Supper. Therefore we say: If any man suppose that none is to be admitted to the Supper but he that is purged from all sin and infirmity, surely he shall drive away and exclude all men, how many soever live in this world – nay, he shall altogether deprive them of the Lord's Supper, as not to be any longer for sinful men but for angels. We must remember that this examination resteth within his own bounds, and that God here also – as everywhere else – doth use his clemency and mercy towards us. He knoweth our weakness and corruption, and with us can bear our infirmities. The Israelites under King Ezechias [Hezekiah], being not full cleansed, took part of the paschal lamb; but the king prayed and said: The Lord who is good will have mercy upon all men that with all their heart seek after the God of the fathers, and will not impute it unto them that they are not sanctified. And hereunto is added in the holy history, in 2 Chronicles 30: And the Lord heard Ezechias, and he was pleased with the people. The worthiness which is inquired for by exact examination is no absolute perfection but a will and mind instructed by God, which humbly acknowledgeth its own unworthiness, and therefore humbly prayeth for increase of faith and charity and seeketh all perfection.
in Christ only. At that first supper the apostles were Christ’s guests, and among these was Judas. But because he lacked faith and was a traitor – yea, a murderer – he was made guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. The other apostles were also sinners themselves – but not wicked; they believed in Christ, they loved Christ, and one of them loved another like brethren. Therefore they did not eat of the Lord’s Supper unworthily, as Judas did – although in the meantime at the same table they shewed tokens of great imperfection. For Peter, not without great contempt and reproach of his brethren, preferreth himself before them all. Moreover, they contend among themselves for honour, which of them should seem to be greater than another. I will not now recite that, straightway after they rose from the table, they shamefully forsook their master and ran away and behaved themselves unworthily. But all these things were easily washed away, for that faith had taken very deep root within them.

Neither will I here stick to recite word for word the comfort of Master John Calvin – a godly and learned man, who with great commendation teacheth in the church at this day, my fellow-minister and most well-beloved and dear brother – which he hath set down for the afflicted in this case. “Let us call to remembrance,” saith he, “that this holy banquet is a medicine for the sick, a comfort for the sinful, a largesse to the poor; which to the whole, righteous, and rich – if there could any such be found – would bring small advantage. For seeing that in this banquet Christ is given unto us to be eaten, we understand that without him we faint, fail, and are forsaken. Moreover, seeing he is given to us to be our life, we understand that without him we are but dead. Wherefore this is the greatest and only worthiness which we can give unto God, if we lay before him our own vileness and unworthiness, that through his mercy he may make us worthy of himself; if we despair in ourselves, that we may be comforted in him; if we humble ourselves, that we may be lifted up by him; if we accuse ourselves, that we may be justified by him. Moreover, if we attain unto that unity which he commendeth unto us in the Supper; and like as he maketh us all to dwell in him, so that we may wish likewise there were one soul, one heart, and one tongue in us all – if we well weigh and meditate these things, then shall these thoughts never trouble us: ‘We that are naked and destitute of all goodness, we that are stained with spots of sin, we that are half dead – how should we worthily eat the Lord’s body?’ Let us rather think that we, being poor, do come to a plentiful giver; we that are sick come to a physician; we that are sinful come to a Saviour – [let us think] that the worthiness which is commanded by God consisteth in faith chiefly, which reposeth all in God and nothing in ourselves; secondly, in charity – and such charity as it is
sufficient if we offer it unto God unperfect, that he may increase it to the better, seeing that we cannot perform it absolute as it ought to be.”

Thus much have I said hitherto of the most holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, the most excellent and wholesome sacrament of Christians – for which even from the very beginning and while the apostles were yet living, Satan, the most deadly enemy to our salvation, lying in wait, hath gone about to overthrow by many corruptions and defilings; from which being now for a time faithfully cleansed, yet doth he not so leave it but intermingles and throws an heap of contentions into it, being made unto the church the token of a covenant never to be broken. Whereupon the thing itself and our salvation requireth that we be circumspect and give no place to the tempter, but agreeing together in Christ, and being joined into one body by faithful celebrating of the Supper, we may love one another and give everlasting thanks to our Redeemer and Lord Jesus Christ – to whom be praise and glory, now and for ever. Amen. Amen.

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V, 4

John Calvin

*Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of our Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ*
Introduction

Of all the major figures of the Protestant Reformation, only one has come to be regarded as the equal of Martin Luther in authority and influence – John Calvin. It may be a surprise, then, to learn that Calvin was twenty-six years younger than Luther and really belonged to the second generation of Protestant reformers, those who consolidated and developed the religious breakthroughs accomplished by Luther, Zwingli, and others of the movement’s first generation. But that in no way undercuts Calvin’s importance; he was, in breadth and in detail, the single most influential Protestant theologian of the sixteenth century.

French by birth, Calvin (1509-1564) had been slated by his father to become a master of canon law, and had even received a benefice at the age of twelve. A series of obscure challenges and conversions led him to study theology, then to think that he had been called to purify the Church. His personality was somewhat less than charismatic; but his mind possessed another charisma, hitherto lacking among Protestant writers, that of the systematic thinker. He published the first edition of his Institutes of the Christian Religion in 1533, at the awesomely young age of twenty-four; he continued to revise, refine, and expand this work throughout the rest of his life. It is a masterful work of systematic theology – the only such work to come out of the Reformation, which can be compared with Thomas Aquinas’s Summa theologiae in sweep and methodological integrity. The most immediate effect of this work’s first edition, however, was to earn its young author unfriendly attention from Catholic authorities in his native France. Three years later, Calvin found it advisable to take an indefinitely extended leave of absence. He planned on going to Strassburg, then the premier Reformed city in Germany, where he hoped to settle down and devote himself entirely to theological reflection and biblical exegesis. On his way there, Calvin stopped in the French-speaking Swiss city of Geneva. He intended to stay no longer than overnight, but he received a visit from Guillaume Farel (1489-1565), who only recently had succeeded in turning Geneva to the Reformed confession. Farel convinced Calvin to remain in the city and help to consolidate the Reformation there.

The two reformers had a difficult time, in large part because Farel could not see the usefulness of accommodating less strenuous Christians on what he regarded as matters of principle. The city council of Geneva eventually bridled, and in 1538 Farel and Calvin were actively encouraged to leave. They found refuge at Strassburg. Three years later, however, a variety of circumstances
led the Genevans to recall them. On their return Calvin soon emerged with the greater authority and influence. He became chief pastor of Geneva; and although his programme of reform suffered many vicissitudes, by 1555 he had managed to establish a virtual dictatorship over the church, the city, and its people which remained unchallenged until his death nine years later.

Calvin’s theology is normally associated with an –ism – that Reformed ideology known (and loved or loathed) as Calvinism. It needs to be pointed out, however, that the two are not in every respect the same.

Calvinism is indeed an ideology, one which is fixated on the doctrine of double predestination. According to this doctrine, God from all eternity had elected (chosen) by name certain humans to enjoy salvation, and had positively destined them to receive it; by the same token, and in the same decree, God eternally appointed all other humans by name for damnation, and no less positively destined them to suffer everlasting death. If you were one of the elect, you were (so to speak) condemned to salvation, it was your fated joy, and nothing you did could ever negate the eternal decree. If you were one of the reprobates (reprobati, “the condemned”), it was your fate to be damned to everlasting death, and nothing you did could ever alter what God had decreed. The issue for Calvinist spirituality then became “assurance” – assuming that you were one of the elect, how you could know and be sure that you were?

Calvin did indeed teach double predestination, even as he conceded that the notion of an eternal decree of reprobation was “dreadful”.1 But though he had (or claimed to have) God’s own assurance that he himself was one of the elect, the doctrine of double predestination did not preoccupy his theology, nor was it the linchpin of his system, as it became in Calvinism. Indeed, Calvin did not so much as broach the doctrine until he turned to discuss “the way in which we receive the grace of Christ” in the third book of his Institutes. So, if a Calvinist is someone who makes predestination the central article of theology and spirituality, it would seem that Calvin himself was not a Calvinist.

Nevertheless, Calvin’s teaching about predestination did have consequences for his teaching about the sacraments of Christ, particularly the eucharist. Only the elect, Calvin taught, could receive the saving benefits of Christ’s passion, death, resurrection and ascension. It therefore followed that only the elect could

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receive what the Lord’s Supper signified and offered. As it was stated in Consensus Tigurinus, the Agreed Statement on the Sacraments drafted by Heinrich Bullinger and ratified by Calvin in 1549: “As [God] enlightens unto faith none but those whom he hath foreordained to life, so by the secret agency of his Spirit he makes the elect receive what the sacraments offer.”

But what exactly was it that the eucharistic sacrament offers? Calvin sided with the Reformed churches in their battle against Luther. He thought Luther’s position in his controversy with Zwingli – that all of Christ becomes so totally present “in, under, and with” the consecrated bread and wine that none of him remains in heaven – was not only untenable but downright impious. Nevertheless, his own position on the eucharist was far more “realist” in general orientation than Zwingli’s or Bullinger’s. This comes out in the many tracts he devoted to the question of the Lord’s Supper – nowhere more subtly than in his Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of our Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ. He published this work in 1540, a year after producing the second (and in many ways definitive) edition of his Institutes.


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FURTHER READING


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2 “Mutual Consent in regard to the Sacraments; between the Ministers of the Church of Zurich and John Calvin, Minister of the Church of Geneva”; in Calvin’s Tracts, trans. Henry Beveridge, Calvin Translation Society, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1844-1851), 2:217.
BECAUSE the holy sacrament of the Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ has been for so long entangled in several major errors, and during these past years involved anew in diverse opinions and contentious disputes, it is no wonder if weak consciences are unable rightly to resolve what view they ought to hold, but remain in doubt and perplexity, waiting until, all contentions being laid aside, the servants of God come to some agreement in the matter. However, since it is a very perilous matter not to have any certainty concerning this ordinance, knowledge of which is so needful for our salvation, I have thought that it would be a very useful labour to try briefly and yet clearly to extract the chief substance of what it is necessary to know of the matter. It should be added that I have been asked to do this by certain worthy persons, who realized the need for it, and whom I could not refuse without violating my duty.

But in order to be rid of all difficulty, it is expedient to note the order which I propose to follow. First, then, we shall expound to what end and for what reason the Lord instituted this holy sacrament for us. Second, what fruit and benefit we obtain from it, when it will likewise be shown how the body of Jesus Christ is given to us. After this, what is its legitimate use. Fourth, we shall detail with what errors and superstitions it has been contaminated, where, too, it will be shown how different should be the servants of God from the papists. And last, we shall mention what has been the source of the dispute, which has been so sharply conducted, even among those who in our time have brought back the gospel into the light, and employed themselves in rightly edifying the Church in sound doctrine.

I.
REASON FOR THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY SUPPER

As to the first article: Since it pleased our loving God to receive us by Baptism into his Church, which is his house, and which he will maintain and govern, and since he has received us not only to keep us as servants, but as his own children, it remains that, to discharge the office of a loving father, he nourish us, and provide
all that is necessary to life. For as to bodily nourishment, since it is common to all, and the bad have part in it like the good, it is not peculiar to his family. It is very true that we have it as evidence of his fatherly goodness in maintaining us as far as the body is concerned, seeing that we participate in all the good things which with his blessing he gives us. But as the life into which he has regenerated us is spiritual, so the food for preserving and confirming us in it must be spiritual. For we ought to understand that he has not only called us to possess one day his heavenly inheritance, but that by hope he has already in a measure installed us in its possession; that not only has he promised life to us, but has already translated us into it, delivering us from death. And this when, adopting us as children, he begot us again by the seed of immortality, which is his Word imprinted in our hearts by his Holy Spirit.

To maintain us in this life, then, what is required is not to feed our bodies with corruptible and transitory provisions, but to nourish our souls on better and more precious diet. Now all Scripture tells us that the spiritual bread by which our souls are maintained is the same Word by which our Lord regenerated us. But it often adds the ground of this, that in it Jesus Christ, who alone is our life, is given and administered to us. For we must not think that there is life anywhere else but in God. But just as God has set all fullness of life in Jesus, in order to communicate it to us by means of him, so he has ordained his Word as instrument by which Jesus Christ, with all his benefits, is dispensed to us. Yet it always remains true that our souls have no other pasture than Jesus Christ. Therefore the heavenly Father, in his care to nourish us, gives us nothing else, but rather recommends us to take our fill there, as from a refreshment manifestly sufficient, with which we cannot dispense, and beyond which it is impossible to find any other.

We have already seen how Jesus Christ is the only provision by which our souls are nourished. But because it is distributed by the Word of the Lord, which he has appointed as instrument to this end, it is also called bread and water. Now what is said of the Word fitly belongs also to the sacrament of the Supper, by means of which our Lord leads us to communion with Jesus Christ. For seeing we are so foolish that we cannot receive him with true confidence of heart when he is presented by simple teaching and

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1 [By “the Word” Calvin here and elsewhere means the word that God has spoken to humankind and has caused to be “written for our learning” in the holy Scriptures; Calvin does not mean God the Word, the second person of the Trinity, who became flesh as Jesus of Nazareth. – SR.]
preaching, the Father, of his mercy, not at all disdaining to con-
descend in this matter to our infirmity, has desired to attach to his
Word a visible sign, by which he represents the substance of his
promises, to confirm and fortify us, and to deliver us from all
doubt and uncertainty. Since then it is a mystery so high and
incomprehensible, when we say that we have communion with the
body and blood of Jesus Christ, and since we on our side are so
rude and gross that we cannot understand the smallest things
concerning God, it was of consequence that he give us to under-
stand, according as our capacity can bear it. For this reason the
Lord instituted for us his Supper, in order to sign and seal in our
consciences the promises contained in his gospel concerning our
being made partakers of his body and blood; and to give us
certainty and assurance that in this consists our true spiritual
nourishment; so that, having such an earnest,² we might entertain a
right assurance about salvation. Second, for the purpose of inciting
us to recognise his great goodness towards us, so that we praise
and magnify it more fully. Third, to exhort us to all sanctity and
innocence, seeing that we are members of Jesus Christ, and
particularly to unity and brotherly charity, as is specially
recommended to us. When we have noted well these three
reasons, which our Lord imposed in ordaining his Supper for us, we
shall be in a position to understand both what benefits accrue to us
from it, and what is our duty in its right use.

II.

BENEFITS OF THE HOLY SUPPER

It is now time to come to the second point, namely, to show
how profitable the Supper of our Lord is to us, on condition that
we make profitable use of it. Now we shall understand its utility by
reflecting on our indigence, to which it is an aid. It is necessary that
we be in great trouble and distress of conscience, when we
consider who we are and what is in us. For there is none of us who
can find a single grain of righteousness in himself, but on the
contrary we are all full of sin and iniquity — so much so, that no
other party is needed to accuse us, no other judge to condemn us,
but our own conscience. It follows then that the wrath of God is
kindled against us, and there is no one able to escape eternal
death. If we are not indolent and stupid, this awful thought must
be a kind of perpetual hell to vex and torment us. For the

² [an earnest. A portion of what has been promised in a bargain, given in
advance as a surety that the whole of the promised goods will be
delivered. – SR]
judgement of God cannot occur to our recollection without our seeing that our condemnation follows as a consequence. We are then already in the abyss of death, unless our loving God draw us out. Moreover, what hope of resurrection can we have, considering our flesh which is nothing but rotten-ness and corruption? So, as regards the soul, as well as the body, we are more than miserable, if we remain within our selves; and it can only be that we have great sadness and anguish from the feeling of such misery. Now our heavenly Father, to succour us from it, gives us the Supper as a mirror in which we contemplate our Lord Jesus Christ crucified to abolish our faults and offences, and raised to deliver us from corruption and death, and restoring us to a heavenly immortality. Here, then, is the peculiar consolation we receive from the Supper, that it directs and conducts us to the cross of Jesus Christ and to his resurrection, in order to assure us that, whatever iniquity there may be in us, the Lord does not cease to regard and accept us as righteous; whatever material of death may be in us, he does not cease to vivify us; whatever the wretchedness we may have, yet he does not cease to fill us with all felicity.

Or to explain the matter more simply: – As we in ourselves are lacking in all good and have not a particle of what might help us to salvation, the Supper is attestation that, being made par-takers of the death and passion of Jesus Christ, we have every-thing that is useful and salutary for us. Therefore we can say that the Lord here displays to us all the treasures of his spiritual grace, seeing that he makes us associates of all the blessings and riches of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us remember, then, that the Supper is given us as a mirror in which we may contemplate our Lord Jesus Christ crucified to deliver us from damnation, and risen again to procure righteousness and eternal life for us. It is indeed true that this same grace is offered us by the gospel; yet as in the Supper we have a more ample certainty and fuller enjoyment, it is with good reason that we recognise such a fruit as coming from it.

But because the blessings of Jesus Christ do not at all belong to us unless he first be ours, it is necessary in the first place that he be given us in the Supper, so that the things which we have mentioned be really accomplished in us. For this reason I am accustomed to say that the nature and substance of the sacra-ments is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the efficacy of them are the gifts and

3 [Cf. Romans 6.3-5: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”]
blessings which we have by means of him. Now the effect of the Supper is to confirm for us the reconciliation which we have with God through his death and passion; the washing of our souls which we have by the shedding of his blood; the righteousness we have in his obedience – in short, the hope of salvation which we have from all that he has done for us. It is necessary, then, that the substance should be joined with these, otherwise nothing would be firm or certain. Hence we must conclude that two things are presented to us in the Supper: Jesus Christ as source and substance of all good; and second, the fruit and efficacy of his death and passion. This is implied also by the words which are there used. For in commanding us to eat his body and drink his blood, he added that his body was delivered for us, and his blood shed for the remission of our sins. Hereby he declares, first, that we ought not simply to communicate in his body and blood, without further consideration, but to receive the fruit which comes to us from his death and passion; and second, that we can only attain to the enjoyment of such fruit by participating in his body and blood, of which it is the product.

We begin now to enter into the question so much contested both in ancient and in present days: how these words are to be understood, in which the bread is called the body of Jesus Christ, and the wine his blood. This can be disposed of without great difficulty, if we remember carefully the principle which I have laid down. It is that all benefit which we ought to seek from the Supper is annulled, unless Jesus Christ be there given to us as substance and foundation of all. This agreed, we shall confess without doubt that to deny the true communication of Jesus Christ to be offered us in this Supper is to render this holy sacrament frivolous and useless – a blasphemy execrable and unworthy of attention. Moreover, if the reason for communicating with Jesus Christ is in order that we have part and portion in all the gifts which he has procured for us by his death, it is not only a matter of being partakers of his Spirit; it is necessary also to partake of his humanity, in which he rendered complete obedience to God his Father, to satisfy our debts; though rightly speaking, the one cannot be without the other. For when he gives himself to us, it is in order that we possess him entirely. For this reason, as it is said that his Spirit is our life, so he himself with his own mouth declares that his flesh is truly food, and his blood truly drink. If these words are not spoken in vain, it follows that to have our life in Christ our souls should be fed on his body and his blood, as their proper food. This, then, we expressly testify in the Supper, when we are told of the bread, that we take and eat it and that it is his body; and that we drink of the chalice and that it is his blood. It is said expressly of the body and the
blood, in order that we learn to seek in them the substance of our spiritual life.

Now, if it be asked nevertheless whether the bread is the body of Christ, and the wine his blood, we should reply that the bread and wine are visible signs which represent to us the body and the blood; but that the name and title of body and blood is attributed to them, because they are as instruments by which our Lord Jesus Christ distributes them to us. This form and manner of speaking is in principle very appropriate. For though it may be that the communion we have with the body of Christ is something incomprehensible, not only to the eye but also to our natural sense, it is there visibly shown to us. Of this we have a very apposite example in a similar case. Our Lord, wishing at his baptism to give visible appearance to his Spirit, represented it under the form of a dove. John the Baptist, relating this story, says that he saw the Holy Spirit descending.\footnote{John 1.32-34: "And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.' "} If we enquire more closely, we find that he saw only the dove, for the Holy Spirit is essentially invisible. Yet knowing that this vision is not an empty figure, but a certain sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit, he does not hesitate to say that he saw it, because it is represented to him according to his capacity. It is like this with the communion which we have with the body and blood of our Lord. It is a spiritual mystery which cannot be seen by the eye nor comprehended by the human understanding. It is therefore symbolised by visible signs, as our infirmity requires, but in such a way that it is not a bare figure, but joined to its reality and substance. It is therefore with good reason that the bread is called “body,” since not only does it represent it to us but also presents it to us. Hence we shall readily concede that the name “body of Jesus Christ” is transferred to the bread, as it is the sacrament and figure of it. But we likewise add that the sacraments of the Lord ought not and cannot at all be separated from their reality and substance. To distinguish them so that they be not confused is not only good and reasonable but wholly necessary. But to divide them so as to set them up the one without the other is absurd. Therefore when we see the visible sign, we ought to regard what representation it carries and by whom it is given us. The bread is given to symbolise the body of Jesus Christ, with command that we eat it; and it is given us by God who is certain and immutable truth. If God cannot deceive or
lie, it follows that he performs all that it signifies. We must then really receive in the Supper the body and blood of Jesus Christ, since the Lord there represents to us the communion of both. For otherwise what would it mean that we eat the bread and drink the wine as a sign that his flesh is our food and his blood our drink, if he gave only bread and wine and left the spiritual reality behind? Would it not be under false colours that he had instituted this mystery? We have then to confess that if the representation which God grants in the Supper is veracious, the internal substance of the sacrament is joined with the visible signs; and as the bread is distributed by hand, so the body of Christ is communicated to us, so that we are made partakers of it. If there were nothing more, we have good reason to be satisfied when we realise that Jesus Christ gives us in the Supper the real substance of his body and blood, so that we may possess him fully and, possessing him, have part in all his blessings. For since we have him, all the riches of God which are comprehended in him are proffered to us in order that they may be ours. Thus, as a brief definition of this benefit of the Supper, we may say that Jesus Christ is there offered to us that we may possess him, and in him all the fullness of his gifts which we can desire; and that in this we have great assistance in confirming our conscience in the faith which we ought to have in him.

The second benefit which the Supper yields us is, that it urges and incites us the better to recognise the blessings which we have received, and daily receive, from the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may render him such offering of praise as is his due. For of ourselves we are so negligent that it is unusual for us to meditate on the goodness of God, unless he rouse us from our indolence and impel us to do our duty. Now we cannot conceive having a spur to prick us more sharply into life than when he makes us, so to speak, see with the eye and touch with the hand and manifestly feel a blessing so inestimable, that we feed upon his own substance. He will signify this by commanding that we show forth his death until he come. If it is, then, a thing so necessary to salvation not to overlook the gifts which God has made us, but to hold them diligently in mind and extol them to others for mutual edification, in this we see another outstanding benefit of the Supper, that it turns us from ingratitude and does not allow us to forget the good our Lord did us in dying for us, but rather induces us to render thanks to him and, as it were, by public confession, protest how much we are indebted to him.

The third benefit consists in our having a vehement incitement to holy living, and above all to observe charity and brotherly love among us. For since we are there made members of Jesus Christ,
being incorporated into him and united to him as to our Head, this is good reason, first, that we be conformed to his purity and innocence, and especially that we have to one another such charity and concord as members of the same body ought to have. To understand properly this benefit, we must not suppose that our Lord only warns, incites, and inflames our hearts with the external sign. For the chief thing is that he cares for us internally by his Holy Spirit, so as to give efficacy to his ordinance, which he has destined for this purpose, as an instrument by which he will do his work in us. Therefore seeing that the virtue of the Holy Spirit is joined to the sacraments when they are duly received, we have reason to hope they will afford a good means and assistance for our growth and advance in sanctity of life and especially in charity.

III.
THE RIGHT USE OF THE SACRAMENT

Let us come to the third chief head which we proposed at the beginning of this treatise – that is, to the right use [of the sacrament] which consists in observing the institution of our Lord with reverence. For whoever approaches this holy sacrament with contempt or indifference, not caring much about following where our Lord calls him, perversely misuses it and thus contaminates it. Now to pollute and contaminate what God has so sanctified is intolerable sacrilege. It is, then, not without reason that Paul passes such grave condemnation on those who take it unworthily. 6 For if there is nothing in heaven or earth of greater value and dignity than the body and blood of our Lord, it is no small fault to take it inconsiderately and without being well prepared. Therefore he exhorts us to examine ourselves well, in order to use it properly. When we understand what kind of examination this should be, we shall know the use for which we seek.

Now we must here be well on our guard. For, as we cannot take too great diligence in examining ourselves, as our Lord commands, so on the other hand doctors of sophistry have brought poor consciences into perilous perplexity, or rather into an awful hell, by demanding I know not what kind of examination, which they cannot possibly get through. To rid ourselves of all

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6 [1 Corinthians 11.27-30: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.”]
these troubles, we must reduce the whole, as I have already said, to the ordinance of our Lord, as to a rule which will not permit us to err if we follow it. In following it, we have to examine whether we have a true repentance in ourselves and a true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. These things are so joined that the one cannot stand without the other. For if we think our life to be located in Christ, we must acknowledge that in ourselves we are dead. If we seek in him our strength, we must understand that in ourselves we are weak. If we judge all our felicity to be in his grace, we ought to understand how great is our misery with out. If we have our rest in him, we must by ourselves feel tormented and unquiet. Now such feeling cannot exist without producing, first, a distaste of all our life; then anxiety and fear; and finally, a desire and love of righteousness. For he who knows the baseness of his sin and the unhappiness of his state and condition while alienated from God, is so ashamed of it, that he is constrained to discontent with himself, to self-condemnation, and to groaning and sighing with a great sadness. Moreover, the judgement of God presents itself forthwith, to oppress the sinful conscience with remarkable anxiety, since it has no way of escape and nothing to answer in its defence. When, with such a realisation of our misery, we can taste the goodness of God, then we desire to order our life by his will, and to renounce all our earlier life, in order to be made new creatures in him.

If we wish, then, to communicate worthily in the sacred Supper of our Lord, we must hold in firm and hearty confidence the Lord Jesus Christ as our sole righteousness, life, and salvation, receiving and accepting the promises which are given us by him as certain and assured; renouncing on the other hand all other confidence, in order that, distrusting ourselves and all other creatures, we may rest fully in him and content ourselves with his grace alone. Now because this cannot be, unless we recognise the need for him to assist us, it is of importance that we be also sharply touched to the very heart with a true feeling of our misery, to make us hunger and thirst after him. In fact, what a mockery it would be to come without appetite to look for food. Now to have a good appetite, it is not enough that the stomach be empty; it is necessary that it be in good order and capable of receiving nourishment. Hence then it follows that our souls ought to be oppressed by famine and to have desire and ardent longing to be fed, in order to find their proper nourishment in the Supper of the Lord. Moreover, it is to be noted that we cannot desire Jesus Christ without aspiring to the righteousness of God, which consists in self-denial and obedience to his will. For it is absurd to pretend to be of the body of Christ while we abandon ourselves to all license and lead a dissolute life. Since in Christ there is nothing but chastity, benignity, sobriety, truth, humility, and all like virtues, if we desire to be his members,
all uncleanness, arrogance, intemperance, falsehood, pride, and like vices must be put far from us. For we cannot mingle these things with him, without doing him grave dishonour and affront. We must always remember that there is no more agreement between him and iniquity than between light and darkness. Here, then, is how we should come to him in true repentance, in the remembrance that our life is to be conformed to the example of Jesus Christ. While this should be general in all parts of our life, yet it has a special application to charity, which is above all recommended to us in this sacrament; for which reason it is called the bond of charity. For as the bread, which is there sanctified for the common use of us all, is made of many grains so mixed together that one cannot be discerned from the other, so ought we to be united among ourselves in one indissoluble friendship. What is more: we all receive there the same body of Christ, in order that we may be made members of it. If we have, then, dissensions and discords among us, it is not our fault if Jesus Christ is not rent in pieces; and we shall be guilty of a like sacrilege, as if we had done it. We must then not at all presume to approach, if we bear any hatred or rancour against living man, and especially any Christian who may be within the unity of the Church. To fulfil completely the order of our Lord, we must bring another disposition. It is to confess with the mouth and to testify how much we are indebted to our Saviour, and to render thanksgiving to him, not only that his name be glorified in us, but also that others be edified and instructed by our example, what they ought to do.

But because not a man will be found on earth, who has so advanced in faith and sanctity that he does not still have much infirmity in one or other, there might be a danger that some good consciences be troubled by what has been said, if one did not obviate it by moderating the commands which we have imposed concerning both faith and repentance. It is a perilous method of teaching that some adopt, to demand a perfect confidence of heart and a perfect penitence, and to exclude all who do not have them. For in so doing, all are excluded without exception. Were it so, who can boast of being untouched by all mistrust? or of being subject to no vice or infirmity? Truly the children of God have only such faith, that they have always need to pray that the Lord help their unbelief.7 For it is a malady so rooted in our nature that we are never quite cured until we are delivered from this prison of our body. Moreover, they walk in purity of life of such a kind that they need to pray daily both for remission of sins and for grace to make

7 Mark 9.23-24: “Jesus said to him, ‘All things can be done for the one who believes.’ Immediately the father of the child cried out, ‘I believe; help my unbelief!’”
better progress. Though some be more imperfect and others less, yet there is no one who does not fail in many respects. Hence the Supper would not only be useless to us all, but also pernicious, if we had to bring an integrity of faith or life in which there was nothing with which to find fault. This is contrary to the intention of our Lord, for there is nothing given to his Church that is more salutary. Therefore, when we feel our faith to be imperfect, and our conscience not so pure as not to accuse us of many vices, this must not hinder us from presenting ourselves at the Holy Table of our Lord – provided that, amid this infirmity, we feel in our heart that, without hypocrisy and deceit, we hope for salvation in Christ, and desire to live according to the rule of the gospel. I say expressly that there be no hypocrisy; for there are many who deceive themselves by vain flatteries, making themselves to believe that it is enough to condemn their vices, though they continue in them, or rather leave them for a time, in order to return immediately after. Now true repentance is firm and constant; therefore it makes us battle against the evil which is within us, not for a day or a week, but without end or intermission.

When we feel within us a strong distaste and hatred of all vices, proceeding from the fear of God, and a desire to live well in order to please our Lord, we are fit to partake of the Supper, notwithstanding the vestiges of infirmity which we carry in our flesh. If indeed we were not weak, subject to mistrust, and imperfect in life, the sacrament would be of no service to us, and it would have been superfluous to institute it. Since then it is a remedy which God has given us to assist our frailty, to fortify our faith, to augment our charity, and to further us in all sanctity of life, so far from this making us abstain, we ought the more to make use of it, the more we feel oppressed by the disease. For if we allege as pretext for not coming to the Supper, that we are still weak in faith or in integrity of life, it is as if a man excuse himself from taking medicine because he is sick. This then is how the frailty of the faith which we feel in our heart, and the im-perfections which persist in our life, ought to incite us to come to the Supper, as a remedy designed to correct them. Only let us not come without faith or repentance. Of these, the former is hidden in the heart, and therefore our conscience must testify concerning us before God. The second manifests itself in works, and therefore must be somehow apparent in our life.

As to the time of using it, there can be no certain rule for all. For there are certain particular impediments which excuse a man for absenting himself. And besides we have no express command constraining Christians to make use of it every day it is offered to them. However, if we have careful regard to the end for which our Lord intended it, we should realise that the use of it ought to be
more frequent than many make it. For the more infirmity oppresses us, the more frequently we need to have recourse to that which is able and ought to serve to confirm our faith and further us in purity of life. Therefore, the custom ought to be well established in all Churches, of celebrating the Supper as frequently as the capacity of the people will allow. And each individual in his own place ought to prepare himself to receive it whenever it is administered in the congregation, unless there be some grave hindrance which compels him to abstain. Though we have no express command defining the time and the day, it should be enough for us to know that the intention of our Lord is that we use it often; otherwise we shall not know well the benefit which it offers us. The excuses which some allege on the other hand, are very frivolous. Some say they feel themselves unworthy, and under cover of this abstain from it for a whole year. Others, not content with wondering about their worthiness, pretend that they cannot communicate with persons whom they see coming without good preparation. Some again think it is superfluous to use it often, since, if we have once received Jesus Christ, there is no need to return so often afterwards to receive him. – I ask the first, who make a cover of their unworthiness, how their conscience can allow them to remain more than a year in so poor a state, that they dare not invoke God directly. For they will confess that is audacity to invoke God as our Father, if we are not members of Jesus Christ. This we cannot be, unless the substance reality of the Supper be fulfilled in us. Now if we have the reality, we are, a fortiori, capable of receiving the sign. It is evident, then, that he who would exempt himself from receiving the Supper because of unworthiness, bars himself from praying to God. For the rest, I have no intention of forcing consciences that are tormented with certain scruples that suggest themselves, they know not how; I rather advise them to wait till the Lord deliver them. Similarly, if there is a legitimate cause of hindrance, I do not deny that it is lawful to defer coming. Only I would point out that no one ought to remain content for long to abstain from the Supper because of his unworthiness, seeing that to do so deprives him of the communion of the Church in which all our good consists. Rather let him strive to contend against all the impediments which the devil puts before him, in order not to be excluded from so great a benefit, and consequently from all the gifts of which absence would deprive him.

The second class have some plausibility, for they employ the following argument: – If it is not allowed to eat the common bread with those who call themselves brothers but lead a dissolute and wicked life, a fortiori, we ought to abstain from communicating with them in the bread of our Lord, which is sanctified to represent and dispense to us the body of Christ. – But the reply is not very
difficult. It is not the office of each individual to judge and
discriminate, in order to admit or reject as seems to him good;
seeing that this prerogative belongs generally to the Church as a
whole, or rather to the pastor with the elders whom he ought to
have assisting him in the government of the Church. For Paul does
not command us to examine others, but each is to examine
himself.\(^8\) It is very true that our duty is to admonish those whom
we see to live disorderly, and, if they will not listen, to advise the
pastor of them, in order that he may take proceedings on the
authority of the Church. But the right way of withdrawing from
the company of the wicked is not to quit the communion of the
Church. Moreover, it will most frequently happen that sins are not
so notorious as to justify going the length of excommunication.
For though the pastor in his heart judge some man unworthy, yet he
has not the power of pronouncing him to be so, or of interdicting
him from the Supper, unless he can prove by an ecclesiastical
judgement. In this case, we have no other remedy than to pray to
God, that he would deliver his Church more and more from all
scandals, and to await the Last Day when the chaff will be
manifestly separated from the good grain.\(^9\)

The third class have no semblance of plausibility. For this
spiritual bread is not given us in order that on the first occasion we
eat our fill of it; but rather that, having had some taste of its
sweetness, we may long for it the more, and use it when it is
offered us. This is what we have expounded above, that while we
remain in this mortal life, Jesus Christ is never communicated to us
in such a way that our souls are wholly satisfied with him, but he
desires to be our continual nourishment.

IV.
ERRORS CORRUPTING THE SACRAMENT

\(^8\) 1 Corinthians 11.28-29, 31-32 (KJV): “But let a man examine himself, and
so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth
and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not
discerning the Lord’s body.... For if we would judge ourselves, we
should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the
Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

\(^9\) Matthew 3.11-12 (KJV). John the Baptist is speaking: “I indeed baptize
you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is
mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize
you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and
he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner;
but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Cf. Luke 3.17.
To come to the fourth principal matter: The devil, knowing that our Lord left nothing more beneficial to the Church than this holy sacrament, according to his accustomed manner, exerted himself from the beginning to contaminate it with errors and superstitions, and to corrupt and destroy its fruit, and has not ceased to pursue this course, until he has almost wholly subverted the ordinance of the Lord and converted it into falsehood and vanity. My intention is not to indicate at what time each abuse took its rise, and at what time it has been increased. It will suffice to indicate under different heads what errors the devil has introduced, against which we must be on guard, if we wish to enjoy the Supper of our Lord in its entirety.

And to the first error: – While the Lord has given us his Supper in order that it be distributed among us to testify that in communicating in his body we have part in the sacrifice which he offered on the cross to God his Father, for the expiation and satisfaction of our sins; men have, on the contrary, out of their own head invented that it is a sacrifice by which we obtain the remission of our sins before God. This is a blasphemy which is intolerable. For if we do not acknowledge the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as a unique sacrifice by which he has reconciled us to the Father, effacing all the faults for which we are liable to his judgement, we destroy its virtue.\(^{10}\) If we do not confess Jesus Christ to be the sole sacrifice, or as we commonly call it Priest, by whose intercession we are restored to the Father’s favour, we despoil him of his honour and do him grave hurt. Since, then, this view of the Supper held by some, that it is a sacrifice for procuring the remission of sins, derogates from the true view, it must be condemned as pernicious. Now that it does so derogate is notorious. For how can we reconcile these two things, [1] that Jesus Christ in dying has offered a sacrifice to his Father by which he has once for all procured remission and pardon for all our faults,\(^ {11}\) and [2] that it is necessary every day to sacrifice in order to obtain that which we ought to seek in his death alone? This error was not from the beginning so extreme, but little by little has increased, until it came to what it is. It appears that the ancient Fathers called the Supper a sacrifice. But they offered the reason that the death of Jesus Christ is there represented. Hence what they say is this – that this name is attributed to it solely because it is a

\(^{10}\text{Virtue here means “merit” or “worth”.}\)

\(^{11}\text{Cf. EngBCP 1552-1662, Eucharistic Prayer: “Who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world...”.}\)
memorial of the unique sacrifice; at which we ought to stop short. Yet I cannot quite excuse the custom of the ancient Church. For by gestures and manner of acting, they outlined a kind of sacrifice, as if it [i.e. the Supper] were the same ceremony as there was in the Old Testament. Because this approaches too near to Judaism, I do not approve it. For in the Old Testament, in the time of symbols, the Lord had ordained such ceremonies, until the sacrifice was made in the flesh which is its fulfilment. Since it [i.e. Christ’s sacrifice] has been perfected, there remains nothing but for us to receive its communication. Hence it is superfluous to symbolise it any longer. This is the significance of the order which Jesus Christ left us, not that we offer or immolate but that we take and eat that which has been offered and immolated. However, though there was some weakness in such observance, there was not such impiety as later supervened. For what properly belongs to the death of Christ has been wholly transferred to the Mass, that is, to satisfy

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12 Calvin means that ancient Hebrew sacrifices were not “the real thing”; they were merely signs pointing toward the Real Thing, which is Jesus Christ’s “one oblation of himself once offered” on the cross. Cf. Hymn at Vespers for the feast of Corpus Christi (Pange lingua gloriosi): “… et antiquum documentum / novo cedat rite” (“Types and shadows have their ending, / For the newer rite is here” – trans. Edward Caswell).

13 Calvin means that the so-called Sacrifice of the Mass imitates the sacrificial rites of the Old Testament; and since they were mere symbols of the Sacrifice to come, now rendered totally “superfluous” by that Sacrifice, so is any Christian attempt to make a sacrifice out of the liturgical representation/memorial of that one all-availing Sacrifice.

14 It is worth noticing that Calvin does not recycle an accusation which other Protestant polemicists very commonly levelled against the Roman church, namely, that it thought it immolated (that is, slaughtered) Christ anew each and every time “the sacrifice of the Mass” was offered. This was a gross canard; the Catholic tradition taught no such thing. Instead, Catholic teaching maintained that, because the body and blood of the Priest-and-Victim become truly present in the Mass, his once, only once, and once-for-all sacrifice of himself becomes as truly present – and thus as truly avails for obtaining the intention for which the Mass is offered (not only remission of sins but also repose of the dead, healing of sickness, reconciliation of neighbours). What distinguishes Calvin’s teaching on this point from Catholic teaching is his insistence that we not only offer up the once-only perfected immolation of the crucified Christ but that “we take and eat that which has been offered and immolated”. As a consequence, one may be allowed to suspect that Calvin, in this as on so many other points, was not so far different from Catholic teaching as he wished to be.
God for our sins\textsuperscript{15} and by this means to reconcile us to him. Moreover, the office of Jesus Christ has been attributed to those who are called priests, that is, persons sacrificing to God and, by sacrificing interceding for us and so obtaining grace and pardon for our faults. I do not wish to dissimulate the explanations which the enemies of truth allege in this connexion. They say that the mass is not a new sacrifice, but only an application of the unique sacrifice of which we have spoken. Though they disguise their abomination a little by so speaking, yet it is no more than a mere quibble. For it is not simply affirmed [by papists] that the sacrifice of Christ is unique, but that it is not to be repeated, seeing that its efficacy endures always. It is not said [by papists] that Christ once offered himself to the Father, in order that others after him might make the same oblation, and thus apply to us the virtue of his intercession. What is said [in Scripture] is that he is entered into the heavenly sanctuary, and that he there appears for us to render the Father favourable by his intercession.\textsuperscript{16} As to applying the merit of his death to us, in order that we may perceive its benefit, this is effected not in the manner that the popish Church thinks, but when we receive the message of the Gospel as it is proclaimed to us by the preaching of the ministers, whom God has appointed as his ambassadors, and as it is sealed by the sacraments. The opinion of everyone [in the popish Church] has been approved by all their

\textsuperscript{15} “Satisfying God for our sins” is a notion which takes its cue from the feudal (and modern-day gang-culture) code of honour. Human sin offends the law of God, and therefore affronts the “honour” of God. Just as a feudal knight (or a modern gang) must “demand satisfaction” if his honour has been impugned – that is, must exact retribution for any slight against his dignity, standing, or rights (the three terms are virtually indistinguishable in the code) – so must God have “satisfaction” for the dishonour which human sin commits against him. Jesus Christ “gave satisfaction,” that is, “satisfied” the divine honour in the duel between us (and Satan) and God. This is the foundational analogy for the western Church’s classical doctrine of the Atonement, set forth by Anselm of Canterbury (ca. 1033-1109) in \textit{Cur Deus Homo} (“Why God Became Human”); it is encapsulated in the Anglican Prayer Book’s eucharistic prayer, when it has us give thanks that Christ crucified made “a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, \textit{and satisfaction}, for the sins of the whole world”. One may be permitted to ask whether the analogy is still viable outside of streets-gangs and the Mafia.

\textsuperscript{16} Cf. Hebrews 7.25-26 “Consequently he [Jesus] is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.”
doctors [i.e. teachers] and prelates, that in hearing mass or having it said, one merits, by this devotion, grace and righteousness before God. We say that to obtain any profit from the Supper, we need bring nothing of our own to merit what we seek; we have only to receive by faith the grace which is there presented to us, which indeed does not reside in the sacrament, but points us to the cross of Jesus Christ as its source. Thus, then, it is apparent that there is nothing more contrary to true understanding of the Supper, than to make such a sacrifice of it as diverts us from recognising the death of Christ as a sacrifice unique and with a virtue that lasts for ever. This being well understood, it will appear that all masses, in which there is no such communion as the Lord instituted, are nothing but abomination. For our Lord did not ordain that a single priest, after having made his sacrifice, should keep himself apart, but desired that the sacrament be distributed in the gathering, after the example of the first Supper which he made with his apostles. But after this evil opinion was forged, out of it, as from an abyss, has come the unhappy custom that the people, contenting themselves with being present to participate in the merit of what is being done, abstain from communicating, because the priest pretends to offer his host for all, and especially for those present. 17

I omit to speak of the abuses which are so stupid that they deserve no notice, such as attributing a mass to each saint, and transferring what is said of the Lord’s Supper to St William and St Walter, or making a common market of them for buying and selling or other such villainies, to which the word sacrifice has given rise.

The second error which the devil has sown to corrupt this holy mystery, has been to forge and invent that, after the words pronounced with the intention of consecration, the bread is transubstantiated into the body of Christ, and the wine into his blood. This lie first of all has no foundation in Scripture, nor any evidence from the ancient Church; and, what is more, cannot be reconciled or harmonised with the Word of God. When Jesus Christ, pointing to the bread, called it his body, is it not a too forced construction to say that the substance of the bread is annihilated, and in its place the body of Christ is substituted? But there is no need to consign the matter to dubiety, seeing that the truth is sufficiently evident to refute the absurdity. I leave alone the

17 Cf. Roman Canon IV (Memento Domine): “Remember, Lord, your servants and handmaids, and all who stand around [this altar], whose faith you know and whose devotion you recognise, for whom we offer you, or who offer you for themselves and for all their own, this sacrifice of praise for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their salvation and safety, and render their vows to you, the eternal God, living and true.”
numberless passages from both the Scriptures and the ancient Fathers where the sacrament is called bread. I only say that the nature of the sacrament requires that the material bread remain as visible sign of the body. For it is a general rule for all sacraments that the signs which we see have some correspondence with the spiritual things they symbolise. As then at Baptism we have assurance of internal washing when water is given us for attestation to cleanse our bodily defilements, so in the Supper there must be material bread, to testify to us that the body of Christ is our food. For otherwise what meaning could there be in whiteness symbolising it for us?\(^{18}\) We see clearly, then, how the whole representation, which our Lord wished to give in condescension to our infirmity, is lost, unless the true bread remain. For the meaning of the words which our Lord requires us to use is as if it were said: Just as man is sustained and maintained so far as the body is concerned by eating bread, so my flesh is the spiritual nourishment by which souls are vivified. Moreover, what would become of the other simile which Paul employs: As many grains of corn are mixed together to make one bread, so we must be united together, since we all partake of one bread.\(^{19}\) If there were whiteness only without substance, would it not be mockery to speak thus? Therefore without any doubt we conclude that this transubstantiation is an invention forged by the devil, to corrupt the truth of the Supper.

From this fantasy several other follies have sprung. And would to God that they were only follies, and not gross abominations! For a local presence of I know not what kind has been imagined, and Jesus Christ, in his divinity and his humanity, thought to be attached to this whiteness, without regard to all the absurdities which follow. Though the old doctors [i.e. professors of theology] of the Sorbonne\(^{20}\) dispute with great subtlety how the body and blood are joined to the signs [of bread and wine], yet it cannot be denied that this opinion has been received by great and small in the popish Church, and that it is cruelly maintained today by fire and sword, that Jesus Christ is contained under these signs, and

\(^{18}\) Calvin takes it for granted that the loaf used in the Supper will – or even must – be “bread... such as is usual to be eaten at the table with other meats, but the best and purest wheat bread that conveniently may be gotten” (EngBCP 1552). In other words, white bread. That’s important to Calvin, because the whiteness of the wheat bread symbolises Christ’s purity, his power to “bleach out” our sins.

\(^{19}\) Cf. 1 Corinthians 10.16b-17; also Augustine, Sermon 227 and Sermon 272.

\(^{20}\) The Sorbonne was the University of Paris, in Calvin’s day a centre of scholastic philosophy and theology.
that he must there be sought.\textsuperscript{21} Now to maintain this, it is necessary to confess either that the body of Christ is without limit or that it can be in different places. In saying so, we come at last to the point where it appears nothing but a phantom. Hence, to wish to establish such a presence — that the body of Christ is enclosed within the sign, or joined locally to it — is not only a dream but a damnable error, contradicting the glory of Christ, and destructive of what we ought to hold concerning his human nature. For Scripture teaches us everywhere that, as our Lord Jesus Christ on earth took our humanity, so he has exalted it to heaven, withdrawing it from its mortal condition, but not changing its nature. So we have two things to consider when we speak of our Lord’s humanity. We may not destroy the reality of his [human] nature, nor derogate at all from its glorious estate. To observe this rightly, we have always to raise our thoughts on high, to seek our Redeemer. For if we wish to abase him under the corruptible elements of this world, besides subverting what Scripture declares concerning his human nature, we annihilate the glory of his ascension. Because several others have treated this matter amply, I desist from saying more. I only wish to note in passing that to enclose Jesus Christ fantastically under bread and wine, or so to join him to them so as to amuse our understanding there instead of looking at him in heaven, is a pernicious fancy. We shall refer to this in another place.

Now this perverse opinion, having been once accepted, has given rise to many other superstitions. And first, this carnal adoration, which is nothing but idolatry. For to prostrate oneself before the bread of the Supper and to adore Christ in it as though he were there contained, is to make an idol displace the sacrament. We have no commandment to adore, but to take and eat. This, then, ought not to have been audaciously attempted. Moreover, the practice always observed in the ancient Church was that, before celebrating the Supper, the people were solemnly exhorted to lift their hearts on high, to show that we must not stop at the visible sign, to adore Christ rightly. But there is no need to battle at length over this point, when the presence and conjunction of reality and sign, of which we have spoken and shall speak again, is well understood. From the same source proceeded other superstitious practices. Such as carrying the sacrament in procession through the

\textsuperscript{21} Here Calvin misrepresents the doctrine of transubstantiation. As we saw in Thomas Aquinas’s discussion of the latter doctrine, he denied that the substance (precisely as \textit{substance}) of Christ’s flesh and blood could be present “as in a place,” i.e. have a “local presence”. Martin Luther was not so cautious or careful in his own teaching about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.
streets once a year, making another day a tabernacle for it, and all the year round keeping it in a cupboard to amuse the people, as if it were a god. Because all this has not only been contrived without the Word of God, but also is directly contrary to the institution of the Supper, it ought to be rejected by all Christians.

We have shown the source of the calamity which befell the popish Church, that the people abstained from communicating in the Supper for a whole year – and this because it is held to be a sacrifice which is offered by one in the name of all. But again, even when thus used only once a year, it is miserably wasted and rent in pieces. For instead of distributing the sacrament of the blood to the people, as the command of our Lord intends, they are made to believe that they must be content with the other portion [i.e. the sacrament of the body alone]. Thus poor believers are unhappily defrauded of the gift which our Lord had made to them. For if it is no little benefit to communicate in the blood of our Lord as our nourishment, it is a very great cruelty to steal it from those to whom it belongs. In this we can see with what audacity and boldness the pope tyrannised over the Church, when once he usurped dominion. Our Lord, having commanded his disciples to eat the bread sanctified in his body, when he came to the chalice does not say simply “Drink,” but adds expressly that all are to drink of it. Could we have anything clearer than this? He says that we are to eat the bread, without using a universal term. He says that we are all to drink of the cup. Whence this difference, unless he wished to anticipate this wickedness of the devil? Yet such is the pride of the pope that he dares to say, “All are not to drink.” And to show that he is wiser than God, he alleges that there is good reason that the priest have some privilege over the people, in honour of the sacerdotal dignity. As if our Lord had not at all considered how one ought to be distinguished from the other! Moreover, he [i.e. the pope] he objects to the dangers which might occur if the chalice were given to all. It could happen that some drop be occasionally spilled; as if our Lord had not foreseen this! Is this not to accuse God openly of confusing the order to be observed and putting his people in danger without purpose? To show that there is no great disadvantage in this change, they [i.e.

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22 From about the mid-tenth century onward, the chalice was reserved to the presiding celebrant alone; the laity, if they received at all, received only the consecrated host. For the most part the laity of the Roman Catholic church still do not receive communion in both kinds.

23 Calvin means that Jesus did not say, “Take, eat, all of you.” But the institution narrative of the Roman Canon says: “Accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes – Take and eat of this, all of you.” In the BAS, Eucharistic Prayer 5 also uses “the universal term” over the bread.
the papists] point out that under one kind all is contained so that
the body cannot be divided from the blood – as if our Lord had
foolishly divided them!24 For if we can leave one of the parts
behind as superfluous, it would have been folly to recommend
them separately. Some of his [i.e. the pope’s] supporters, seeing
that it was impudence to maintain this abomination, have wished
to excuse it otherwise. They say that Jesus Christ, in instituting
the sacrament, spoke only to his disciples whom he had elevated to
sacerdotal rank. But what will they answer to what Paul says, when
he delivered to all Christian people that which he had received
from the Lord, that each should eat of this bread and drink of this
cup?25 And in fact, who revealed to them that our Lord gave the
Supper to his apostles as priests? The words mean the opposite,
when he commands them to follow his example. He then delivers
to them the rule which he wished to be always observed in his
Church. Thus it was observed in the ancient Church until Antichrist,
having gained the upper hand, openly raised his horns against God
and his truth, to destroy it completely. We see then that is an
intolerable perversion to divide and dissect the sacrament thus,
separating the parts which God joined.

To come to an end, we comprehend under one article what
could be considered separately. The article is that the devil
introduced the manner of celebrating the Supper without any
doctrine, and in place of the doctrine substituted ceremonies,
partly unfitting and useless, and partly even dangerous, from which
much ill has followed – to such an extent that the mass, which
takes the place of the Supper in the popish church, when strictly
defined, is nothing but pure apishness and buffoonery. I call it
apishness because the Supper of our Lord is there [i.e. in popish
Christianity] counterfeited without reason, just as an ape,
capriciously and without discernment, follows what it sees done.
This being so, the chief thing which our Lord recommends to us, is
to celebrate this mystery with true intelligence. It follows, then,
that substance of it all consists in the doctrine. This taken away, it is
no more than a cold ceremony without efficacy. This is not only
shown in Scripture, but also attested in the canons of the pope, in a
sentence cited from Augustine where he asks: What is the water of

24 This is a reference to the doctrine of concomitance – that every
communicant receives both the body and the blood of Christ when he
or she receives the bread alone. The doctrine works on the assumption
that a body cannot be without blood. The doctrine also works in
reverse (fortunately for gluten-allergic communicants): blood cannot be
without the body, so that if a communicant receives of the chalice
alone, she or he also receives the whole body of Christ.

25 Cf. 1 Corinthians 11.23-25.
Baptism without the Word but a corruptible element? – and the Word not merely as uttered but as understood. He thereby means that the sacraments take their virtue\textsuperscript{26} from the Word, when it is preached intelligibly. Without this, they are unworthy to be called sacraments. Now intelligible doctrine of the mass is so lacking, that on the contrary the whole mystery is considered spoiled if everything is not done by stealth, so that nothing is understood. Therefore their consecration is nothing but a bit of sorcery, seeing that, by murmuring and gesticulating in the manner of sorcerers, they think to constrain Jesus Christ to descend into their hands. We see, then, how the mass being thus arranged, is a manifest profanation of the Supper of Christ rather than an observance of it. For the proper and chief substance of the Supper is lacking, that the mystery be well explained to the people, and the promises clearly recited, instead of the priest muttering to himself apart without sense of reason. I call it buffoonery because the mimicry and gesture made there suit rather a farce than such a mystery as the Supper of our Lord.

It is indeed true that the sacrifices of the Old Testament took place with much ornament and ceremony. But because there was a sound meaning, and the whole was suited to instruct and excite the people to piety, they are far from being similar to those now used, which serve no end but the amusement of the people without any advantage. As these mass-mongers allege the example of the Old Testament in defence of their ceremonies, we must observe what difference there is between what they do and what God commanded the people of Israel to do. If there were only this – that what was then practised was founded on the command of the Lord, while their frivolities have no foundation but men – there would be great enough dissimilarity. But we have more for which to reprove them. For it is not without reason that our Lord ordained such a form for a time, in order that it might some day come to an end and be abrogated. For as he had then not granted such clarity of doctrine, he desired that this people be more exercised in symbols to compensate them for what they lacked in another direction. But since Jesus Christ was manifested in the flesh, doctrine has been so much the more clarified and the symbols have been diminished. Since then we have the body, we should relinquish the shadows. For if we return to ceremonies which are abolished, we should repair the veil of the temple which Jesus Christ rent by his death and should thus obscure the clarity of the Gospel. Thus we see that such a multitude of ceremonies in the mass is a kind of Judaicism, manifestly contrary to Christianity. I do

\textsuperscript{26} “Virtue” here means \textit{power or efficacy}. 
not intend to disapprove ceremonies which contribute to decency and public order and increase reverence of the sacrament, provided they are sober and suitable. But such an abyss without end or measure is quite intolerable, seeing that it gave rise to a thousand superstitions and as it were stupefied the people without bringing any edification.

Hence we can see the difference there ought to be between the papists and those to whom God has given knowledge of his truth. To begin with, they will not doubt but that it is an abominable sacrilege to represent the mass as a sacrifice by which remission of sins is procured for us; or rather that the priest is mediator for the application of the merit of the death and passion of Christ to those who buy his mass, or attend it, or accord it devotion. But on the contrary, they [i.e. those to whom God has given knowledge of his truth] must conclude that the death and passion of our Lord is the unique sacrifice by which the wrath of God is satisfied and perpetual righteousness is procured for us; and then that the Lord Jesus is entered into the heavenly sanctuary, finally to appear for us and intercede with the virtue of his sacrifice. For the rest, they will readily grant that the fruit of this death is communicated to us in the Supper, not at all by the merit of the act, but by reasons of the promises which we are there given, provided we receive them by faith. Second, they should not at all allow that the bread is transubstantiate into the body of Jesus Christ, nor the wine into his blood; but must insist on this, that the visible signs retain their true substance to represent to us the spiritual truth of which we have spoken. Third, they must hold for certain that our Lord gives us in the Supper what he signifies by it, and we thus really receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Nonetheless they will not seek it as though it were enclosed under the bread or attached locally to the visible sign, so far are they from adoring the sacrament. But they will rather raise their understanding and their hearts on high, both to receive Jesus Christ and also to adore him. From this it will follow that they disapprove and condemn as idolatry all these superstitious fashions, such as carrying the sacrament in solemn procession, or constructing for it tabernacles for its adoration. For the promises of our Lord do not extend beyond the use he has left us. Next they will hold that to deprive the people of one of the parts of the sacrament – that is, of the chalice – is to violate and corrupt the ordinance of our Lord, and that for right observance both are to be distributed to all. Last, they will regard it as a superfluity – not only useless but also dangerous and ill-consorted with Christianity – to use so many ceremonies borrowed from the Jews, beyond the simplicity which the apostles left us; and that it is an even greater perversion to celebrate the Supper by mimicry and
I know not what buffoonery, without expounding the doctrine but rather burying it, as if the Supper were a kind of magical trick.

V.

THE PRESENT DISPUTE

As to the contention which has been so keenly debated our time – an unhappy business, which the devil no doubt stirred up to impede, or rather quite interrupt, the advance of the Gospel – I could wish that the memory of it be quite abolished, so far am I from desiring to relate it at length. Nonetheless, because I see many good consciences troubled, since they know not to which side to turn, I shall briefly state what seems to me necessary advice for showing them how they ought to decide.

First, I pray all the faithful, in the name of God, not to be too offended at the great difference which has risen between those who ought to be leaders in bringing back truth to the light of day. For it is no new thing for the Lord to leave his servants in some ignorance, and to permit them to dispute against each other. And this, not to leave them for ever but only for a time, to humble them. In fact, had all turned out as desired up till now, without any disturbance, men might possibly forgotten themselves, or the grace of God be less acknowledged then is proper. Thus our Lord was pleased to deprive men of all cause for glory in order that he alone be glorified. Moreover, if we consider in what an abyss of darkness the world was, when those who have shared in this controversy began to elicit the truth for us, we shall not wonder at all that they did not know everything at the outset. It is rather to be wondered at that our Lord in so short a time has so illumined them, that they themselves have escaped from the slime of error, and thus drawn others out of it who had been plunged in it for so long. But nothing could be better than to show how the thing came about, because this will make it evident that is not at all so great occasion to be offended as is commonly thought.

When Luther began to teach, he regarded the matter of the Supper in such a way that, with respect to the corporal presence of Christ, he appeared ready to leave it as the world generally conceived it. For while condemning transubstantiation, he said that the bread was the body of Christ, insofar as it was united with him. Further, he added some similes which were a little harsh and rude. But he did so as by constraint, because he could not otherwise

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27 As will become clear, the dispute in question was the bitter controversy between Reformed divines and Evangelical Lutheran divines over the Eucharistic presence (or absence) of the body and blood of Christ.
explain his meaning. For it is difficult to give an explanation of so high a matter, without using some impropriety of speech.

On the other hand there arose Zwingli and Oecolampadius, who, considering the abuse and deceit which the devil had employed to establish such a carnal presence of Christ as had been taught and held for more than six hundred years, thought it wrong to dissimulate; since this view implied an execrable idolatry, in that Jesus Christ was adored as if enclosed under the bread. Now because it was very difficult to remove this opinion, rooted so long in the hearts of men, they applied all their mind to decry it, remonstrating that it was a quite gross error not to acknowledge what is so clearly testified in Scripture concerning the ascension of Jesus Christ, that he was in his humanity received up into heaven, where he dwells until he descend to judge the world. While they were absorbed with this point, they forgot to define what is the presence of Christ in the Supper in which one ought to believe, and what communication of his body and his blood one there received. So Luther thought that they intended to leave nothing else but bare signs without any corresponding spiritual substance. Hence he began to resist and oppose them, even to the extent of denouncing them as heretics. Once the contention had begun, it became more inflamed with time, and so has continued too bitterly for a period of fifteen years or thereabouts, without either party listening to the other in a peaceful frame of mind. For though they once held a conference [at Marburg in 1529], yet there was such alienation that they parted without any agreement. Then, instead of meeting with goodwill, they have always retreated farther and farther from one another, thinking of nothing but to defend their own position and confute anything contrary.

Here we have the reason, then, why Luther failed on his side, and Oecolampadius and Zwingli on theirs. It was Luther’s duty, in the first place, to make it clear that he did not intend to set up such a local presence [of Christ’s body and blood] as the papists imagine; second, he should have protested that he did not mean the sacrament to be adored instead of God; and third, he should have abstained from the similes so harsh and difficult to conceive, or have used them with moderation, interpreting them so that they could not cause offence. Once the debate was taken up, he went beyond measure not only in declaring his opinion, but also in

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28 For Zwingli, see the Introduction to Bullinger’s Sermon of the Lord’s Holy Supper. Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531), whose birth name was actually Johannes Hussgen, based himself in Basle, in the Swiss canton of Bern, and organised both the city and its surrounding canton as a centre of Reformed Protestantism. He supported Zwingli against Luther at the Marburg Colloquy (1529).
blaming the other with a too sharp bitterness of speech. For instead
of explaining himself so that his opinion could be understood, with
his accustomed violence in attacking those who contradicted him,
he used exaggerated forms of speech which were certainly hard to
bear by those who otherwise were not very disposed to believe
what he said.

The others [namely, Zwingli and Oecolampadius] offended
also, by being so eager to decry the contrary opinion of the papists
concerning the local presence of the body of Jesus Christ as
superstitious and fantastic, and the adoration which followed from
it as perverse, that they laboured more to destroy the evil than to
build up the good. For though they did not deny the truth, yet
they did not teach it as clearly as they ought. I mean that in taking
too great pains to maintain that the bread and the wine are called
the body and blood of Christ because they are signs, they took no
care to make the reservation that they are such signs that the reality
is joined to them; or to protest that they did not at all intend to
obscure the true communion which our Lord gives us in his body
and blood by the sacrament.

Both parties failed altogether to have patience to listen to each
other, in order to follow truth without passion, wherever it might
be found. Nonetheless, we must not leave off thinking what is our
duty. It is not to forget the gifts which our Lord bestowed on them
[namely, Luther, Zwingli, Oecolampadius et al.] and the blessings
which he distributes to us at their hands and by means of them. For
if we are not quite ungrateful and forgetful of what we owe them,
we could well pardon them this and more than this, without
blaming or defaming them. In short, since we see that they were
and still are distinguished by holy life and excellent knowledge and
by conspicuous zeal to edify the Church, we ought always to judge
and speak with modesty and reverence – just because it has pleased
God at last, having humbled them thus, to bring to an end this
unhappy disputation, or at least to calm it, in anticipation of it
being quite resolved. I say this because there is not yet any
published formula in which agreement has been framed, as would
be expedient. But this will happen when God is pleased to bring
into one place all those who are to draw it up. Meanwhile, it must
content us that there is brotherliness and communion between the
churches, and that all agree in what is necessary for meeting
together, according to the command of God. We all confess, then,
with one mouth that, in receiving the sacrament in faith, according
to the ordinance of the Lord, we are truly made partakers of the
real substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. How this is
done, some may deduce better and explain more clearly than
others. But be this as it may, on the one hand we must – to shut
out all carnal fancies – raise our hearts on high to heaven, not
thinking that our Lord Jesus Christ is so abased as to be enclosed under any corruptible elements. On the other hand, not to diminish the efficacy of this sacred mystery, we must hold that it is accomplished by the secret and miraculous virtue of God, and that the Spirit of God is the bond of participation, for which reason it is called spiritual.

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John Calvin

The Order of the Holy Supper

from

The Form of Church Prayers and Hymns
Geneva, 1542
Introduction

The very terms and conditions of the Protestant Reformation made it necessary for the reformers to turn their hands to liturgy. They could not admit the old saw *Lex orandi legem statuat credendi*, “The law of praying constitutes the law of believing.” The established *lex orandi* was, after all, the Roman rite and its Canon; and the reformers, to a man, considered the Mass of the Roman rite to be corrupt, even the fount and source of all evil. So they had to invent new *leges orandi*, in the formulation of which they effectively reversed the old tag-line. The Protestant rule was, *Lex credendi legem statuat orandi*.

Calvin at Geneva did not escape liturgical issues, but he was not called to invent a Reformed liturgy from whole cloth. His colleague, Guillaume Farel (1489-1565), had already devised a “church order” for Geneva, *La manière et fasson qu’on tient en baillant le saint baptême en la sainte congrégation de Dieu… et à la sainte Cène de nostre seigneur* (“The Manner and Fashion to be used in performing holy baptism in the holy assembly of God… and for the holy Supper of our Lord”). Farel belonged to the first generation of reformers and had thrown his doctrinal lot in with Zwingli and Oecolampadius. As a result, his *Manière et fasson* was heavily indebted to Zwingli’s order for Zürich and Oecolampadius’s for Basle. In 1542, a few years after returning from his exile in Strassburg, Calvin overhauled Farel’s order and produced *La Forme des Prières et Chantz ecclésiastiques, avec la manière d’administrer les Sacrements, et consacrer le Mariage: selon la coustume de l’Église ancienne* (“The Form of Church Prayers and Hymns, with the manner of administering the Sacraments and blessing Marriage: According to the use of the ancient Church”). He revised this *Form* three years later for use at Strassburg, but without altering the structures of the orders.

Aside from rewriting the spoken texts of Farel’s order for the sake of making the doctrinal points more explicit, Calvin introduced one substantial change. He provided opportunities for congregational singing. This, of course, had been one of the most attractive features of Luther’s *Deutche Messe*, and Luther himself had taken great pains to compose hymns and hymn-tunes for just this purpose.¹ But the first generation of Reformed church-orders had been nude of music. Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Farel, and (later) Bullinger regarded music in worship as utterly inappropriate; they and their followers not only excluded hymnody from their services.

¹ The most famous of Luther’s hymns and tunes is *Ein fest’ Burg*, “A strong castle” (known in the English-speaking world as “A mighty fortress is our God”).
but made a point of smashing organs. The sole exception among Reformed churches was that of Strassburg, where Calvin first encountered congregational singing during his and Farel’s exile there in the 1530s. The experience had impressed his piety and delighted his mind.

Even so, *The Form of Church Prayers* may come across as an exercise in logorrhœa rather than as a liturgy. It is a trait that Calvin’s order shared with nearly every other Reformation rite, Lutheran or Reformed. The only genuine exceptions were the reformed English Mass of EngBCP 1549 and the Communion Order of EngBCP 1552, in which Protestantism’s incontinent lech for exhortation is held in check; each is unmistakably a liturgy – an act of communal worship, in which the whole community prays its prayers to God. By contrast, Calvin’s *Form of Church Prayers* (apart from the dauntingly long intercession) tends to exhort the members of the congregation to pray as individuals – as it were, “You in your small corner, and I in mine” – rather than actually engaging the whole community in prayer as a unit.

Whatever one may think of Calvin’s order as liturgy, he nevertheless envisioned “The Order of the Holy Supper” as an action which should take place weekly. As he wrote in the *Church Ordinances* of 1537:

> It were much to be desired that the administration of Jesus Christ’s holy Supper should take place at least every Sunday, when the multitude are assembled, in view of the great consolation which the faithful derive therefrom…. It was not instituted by Jesus in order that men might do this in remembrance of him two or three times a year, but for a continual exercise of our faith and our love, which the congregation of Christians should use as often as they meet together.²

Calvin recognised that such frequent celebrations of the Supper, given the spiritual preparation that he (in common with the whole Christian tradition) required communicants to undertake, was probably more than Genevan flesh and blood could stand. So he proposed that the Supper be celebrated at least once a month in one of the city’s three churches. The city councillors refused to endorse even this much frequency, and Calvin’s Geneva settled for a celebration of the Supper only four times in the year – Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and Harvest.

Introduction to Calvin’s *Order of the Holy Supper*

John Calvin

The Form of Church Prayers and Hymns:
The Order of the Holy Supper
Geneva, 1542

The Form of Church Prayers

1. On weekdays the Minister fashions the exhortation to prayer in the way that he thinks most suitable, adapting it to current affairs and to the topic of his sermon.

2. On Sunday morning, the following form is normally used.

Our help is in the name of the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth.3

CONFESSION

My brothers, let each of you present himself before the Lord and confess his faults and sins, following my words in his heart.

O Lord God, eternal and almighty Father, we confess and sincerely acknowledge before your divine Majesty that we are miserable sinners, conceived and born in iniquity and corruption, liable to do evil, powerless to do any good, and that in our depraved condition we violate your holy commandments ceaselessly and without end. Therefore, through your righteous judgement, we obtain ruin and damnation for ourselves. Yet we grieve for having offended you, and even as we condemn ourselves and our sins with true repentance, we implore your grace to relieve our sorrow. O God, Father most gracious and full of compassion, have mercy on us in the Name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And even as you wipe out our sins and stains, enlarge and increase in us day by day the grace of your Holy Spirit; that as we confess our unrighteousness with our whole heart, so may we be moved by that sorrow which produces true repentance in us, subjugating all our sins and bringing forth in us the fruits of righteousness and innocency which are pleasing in your sight; through the same Jesus Christ &c.

3 Psalm 124.8.
Now the assembly sings the first table of the Commandments, after which the Minister says.

The Lord be with us. Let us pray to the Lord.

HEAVENLY Father, full of goodness and grace, grant that, as you are pleased to make your holy will known to your wretched servants, and to instruct them in the righteousness of your law, so may it be written and sealed on our hearts in such a way that in all our living we may strive to serve and obey none but you. Do not hold us accountable for all the transgressions that we have committed against your law; so that we, recognizing your manifold grace poured out upon us in such abundance, we may have cause to praise and glorify you through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. So be it.

After this, a Psalm is sung by the assembly. Then the Minister again begins to pray, begging God for the grace of his Holy Spirit in order that his word may be faithfully expounded for the honour of his Name and for the upbuilding of the Church in faith, and may be received with the humility and obedience that it deserves. The form [of this prayer] is left to the Minister’s discretion.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION, SCRIPTURAL READING, AND SERMON

After the sermon the Minister, having exhorted the assembly to pray, begins in this way:

ALMIGHTY God, heavenly Father, you have promised to grant what we ask of you in the Name of your beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord. By his teaching, and that of his apostles, we have been instructed to assemble in his Name, with the promise that he will be in our midst, and will be our intercessor with you, to gain all those things for which we agree to ask on earth.

4 the first table of the Commandments: The first four of the Ten Commandments, those which have to do with the honour of God.

5 So be it: Ainsi soit il = Amen.

6 with the promise that he will be in our midst: Cf. Matthew 18.20: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

7 Cf. Hebrews 7.25.
First, we have your commandment to pray for those whom you have set over us as rulers and governors; and then for all the needs of your people, and indeed of the whole human race. Therefore, with confidence in your holy teachings and promises, and especially now that we are gathered here in your presence in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus, we fervently implore you, our gracious God and Father, in the name of our only Saviour and Mediator, to grant us, through your infinite mercy, full and free pardon for our offences, and to draw and lift up our thoughts and desires to you in such a way that we may be able to call upon you with all our heart, in accordance with your good pleasure and only-reasonable will.

And so we pray to you, O heavenly Father, for all princes and lords, your servants, to whom you have entrusted the administration of your justice, and especially for the magistrates of this city. May it please you to grant them your Spirit, who alone is good and truly sovereign, and daily root them in him, that with true faith they may acknowledge Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord, to be the King of kings and Lord of Lords, seeing that you have given him all power in heaven and earth. May they endeavour to serve him and to exalt his kingdom in their government, guiding and ruling their subjects, who are the work of your hands and the sheep of your pasture, in accordance with your good pleasure. So may we all, both here and throughout the world, being kept in perfect peace and quietness, serve you in all godliness and virtue; and being delivered and protected from the fear of our enemies, give you praise all the days of our life. Amen.

8 to gain all those things for which we agree to ask on earth: Cf. Matthew 18.19: “Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.”
9 Cf. 1 Timothy 2.1.

10 King of kings and Lord of Lords: Revelation 19.16.

11 you have given him all power in heaven and earth: Cf. Matthew 28.18.

12 the work of your hands and the sheep of your pasture: Cf. Psalm 100.3.

13 being kept in perfect peace and quietness: Cf. Isaiah 26.3. serve you in all godliness and virtue; and being delivered and protected from the fear of our enemies, give you praise all the days of our life: Cf. Luke 1.74-75 (Song of Zechariah).

455
We also pray to you, O faithful Father and Saviour, for all whom you have ordained to be pastors of your faithful people, to whom you have entrusted the care of souls and the ministry of your holy gospel. Direct and guide them by your Holy Spirit, that they may be found faithful and true ministers of your glory, having only one goal: – that the poor, wandering, and lost sheep be gathered and restored to the Lord Jesus Christ, the chief Shepherd and Prince of bishops, so that in him they may daily grow and increase into all righteousness and holiness. Deliver all the churches from the mouths of ravening wolves, and from all mercenaries, who seek their own ambition or profit but never the exaltation of your holy name alone, nor the salvation of your flock.

We pray to you now, most gracious and merciful Father, for all humans everywhere. Since it is your will to be acknowledged as the Saviour of the whole world, through the redemption accomplished by your Son Jesus Christ, grant that those who are still estranged from the knowledge of him, being in the darkness and captivity of error and ignorance, may be brought by the enlightenment of your Holy Spirit and the proclamation of your gospel to the straight path of salvation, which is to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Grant that those whom you have already visited with your grace and illumined with the knowledge of your Word may grow in goodness day by day, enriched by your spiritual blessings; that together we all may worship you with one heart and one voice, giving honour and reverence to your Christ, our Master, King, and Lawgiver.

In the same way, O God of all comfort, we commend to you all whom you come upon and chasten with any cross or tribulation, whether by poverty, prison, sickness, or exile, or any other misery of the body or affliction of the spirit. Give them power to perceive and understand your fatherly affection which chastens them for their correction, that they may turn to you with their whole heart – and having turned, may receive full consolation and deliverance from every ill.

Finally, O God and Father, grant to those also who are assembled here in the name of your Son Jesus, for the sake of his Word, (and for the sake of his holy Supper,) that we may acknowledge truly, and without hypocrisy, the utter

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14 *to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent:* John 17.3.

15 *(and for the sake of his holy Supper):* This clause was to be spoken only on those days when the Lord’s Supper was celebrated.
destruction that is our due by nature, what condemnation we
deserve and daily heap upon ourselves by our unhappy and
disordered life. Therefore, since there is no good in us, and
since our flesh and blood cannot inherit your kingdom,16
[grant that] we may yield ourselves entirely, with all our love
and steadfast faith, to your dear Son our Lord, the only
Saviour and Redeemer:

In order that he, dwelling in us, may deaden our old Adam
and renew us for a better life, by which your name, inasmuch
as it is holy and worthy, may be exalted and glorified
everywhere and in all places; and that we, with all creatures,
may render you true and perfect obedience, just as your angels
and heavenly messengers have no desire but to fulfill your
commandments. Thus may your will be done without any
gainsay, and all apply themselves to serve and please you,
surrendering their own will and all the desires of their flesh. In
this manner may you have lordship and dominion over all of
us, and may we learn more and more each day to submit and
subject ourselves to your majesty. Thus may you be King and
Ruler over all the earth, guiding your people by the sceptre of
your word and the might of your Spirit, confounding your
enemies by the power of your truth and righteousness. So may
every power and principality which stands against your glory
be destroyed and abolished every day, until the fulfillment of
your kingdom is made manifest, when you shall appear in
judgement.

Grant that we who walk in the love and fear of your name
may be fed by your goodness; and supply us with all things
necessary and serviceable for eating our bread in peace. Then,
seeing how you care for us, may we better acknowledge you
as our Father, and wait for all good gifts from your hand,
withdrawing our trust from all creatures and placing it wholly
in you and your goodness.

And because in this life we are miserable sinners, so full of
weakness that we continually fall and stray from the right
path, may it please you to pardon our faults, by which we
held under your judgement; and by means of that forgiveness,
deliver us from the necessity of eternal death in which we
stand. Be pleased, then, to turn your wrath away from us, and
do not count against us the iniquity that is in us – just as we,
on account of your commandment, forget the injuries done to

16 our flesh and blood cannot inherit your kingdom: Cf. 1 Corinthians
15.50.
us and, instead of seeking revenge, entreat good for our enemies.

Finally, may it please you to uphold us by your power for the time to come, that we may not stumble because of the weakness of our flesh. And most especially, since on our own we are so frail that we are unable to stand fast for a single moment, while on the other hand we are continuously beset and assailed by so many enemies, the devil, the world, sin, and our own flesh never ceasing to make war on us: Strengthen us by your Holy Spirit, and arm us with your grace, that we may be able to resist all temptations firmly, and persevere in this spiritual warfare until we achieve complete victory, to triumph at last in your kingdom with out Captain and Protector, Jesus Christ our Lord.

11 On the day when the Supper is to be celebrated, the following is added to what has just preceded:

AND as our Lord Jesus not only offered you his body and blood once for all on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, but also wills to impart them to us for nourishment in eternal life: Grant us this grace, that with true sincerity of heart and with burning zeal we may receive from him so great a benefit and gift – that is, in steadfast faith may we receive his body and blood, even the whole Christ, as he, being truly God and truly human, is veritably the holy and life-giving bread of heaven. May we no longer live to ourselves, and according to our nature, which is completely corrupt and vicious; but may he live in us, to guide us to the holy, blessed, and eternal life, whereby we truly become participants of the new and eternal testament, namely, the covenant of grace; being certain and assured that it is your good pleasure to be our propitious Father for ever, not counting our faults against us, and to supply us, as your well-beloved children and heirs, with all things necessary as well for the body as for the soul. So may we ceaselessly offer you praise and thanksgiving, and glorify your name by our deeds and words. Grant us, heavenly Father, in this manner to celebrate this day the memorial and blessed remembrance of your dear Son; to become practised in the same; and to proclaim the benefit of his death; that we, receiving new growth and strengthening in the faith and all good things, may acclaim you as our Father and glory in you. Amen.

13 After the Supper has been finished, the minister uses this or a similar thanksgiving:
HEAVENLY Father, we give you eternal praise and thanks that you have granted such a kindness to us miserable sinners as to call us into the communion of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, having delivered him to death for us, and giving him to us as the food and nourishment of eternal life. Now grant us this kindness also, that you not allow us ever to forget these things; but rather, having them engraved on our hearts, may we constantly grow and increase in the faith which works in all good deeds; and in doing this, may we order and pursue all our life to the exaltation of your glory, and to the up-building of our neighbour: through the same Jesus Christ your Son, who in the unity of the Holy Spirit lives and reigns with you, O God, for ever.

¶ The blessing which the Minister gives at the dismissal of the people, according to the form that our Lord has ordained (Numbers 6):

THE Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and maintain you in true well-being.

The Manner of Celebrating the Holy Supper

¶ It must be noted that on the Sunday before the Supper is to be celebrated, the Minister shall declare to the people, first, that each person should prepare and dispose himself to receive the Supper worthily and with such reverence as it deserves. Secondly, that no one present any children at the Supper unless they have been well instructed and have made profession of their faith in church. Thirdly, that if there are any strangers who are still uninstructed and ignorant, they are to come and present themselves for private instruction. On the day when it is done, the Minister refers to it in concluding the sermon or, still better (if occasion arises), devotes the sermon entirely to it for the sake of explaining what our Lord

17 Numbers 6.24-26. and maintain you in true well-being: et vous maintienne en bonne prosperité. To translate this clause literally would suggest that the blessing of the Lord affords really solid financial security – which is not the point at all.

18 1 Corinthians 11.23-29.
wills to say and signify by this mystery and in what manner it is proper for us to receive it.

¶ Then, after doing the prayers and the confession of faith (to testify in the name of the people that they all desire to live and die in the Christian teaching and religion), the Minister says in a loud voice:

LET us hear how Jesus Christ instituted his holy Supper for us according to the account of Saint Paul in the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians:18

“I received from the Lord,” he says, “what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new testament in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, shall eat of this bread or drink from this cup unworthily, will be held accountable for the body and blood of the Lord. But let a person examine himself, and only then eat of this bread and drink from this cup. For whoever eats and drinks unworthily, receives his own condemnation, not discerning the body of the Lord.”

We have heard, my brothers, how our Lord did his Supper with his disciples; and by this he shows us that strangers, and those who are not of the company of his faithful, must not be admitted. Therefore, following this rule, in the name and by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, I excommunicate all idolaters, blasphemers, despisers of God, heretics, and all persons who form private sects to break the unity of the Church; all perjurers; all those who are rebels against mothers and fathers, and against their superiors; all seditious persons, mutineers, abusive persons, quarrellers, adulterers, fornicators, thieves, rapists, misers, drunkards, gluttons; and all those who lead a scandalous and dissolute life. I give them warning, that they are to abstain from this holy table, for fear that they will defile and contaminate the holy foods which our Lord Jesus Christ gives to none but members of his household and believers.

Therefore, in accordance with Saint Paul’s exhortation, let each test and examine his conscience to see whether he has

18 1 Corinthians 11.23-29.
true repentance for his faults and grieves for his sins, desiring from now on to live a holy life in accordance with God. Above all, [let each test his conscience to see] whether he has confidence in the mercy of God and seeks his salvation entirely in Jesus Christ; and whether, renouncing all hatred and rancour, he has a true intention and resolve to live in peace and brotherly peace with his neighbours.

If we have this testimony in our hearts before God, let us never doubt that He acknowledges us as His children, and that the Lord Jesus addresses his word to us, to invite us to his table and to present us with this holy sacrament which he communicated to his disciples.

And although we know within ourselves much frailty and misery, as not having perfect faith, but being inclined to unbelief and defiance; as not being devoted to the service of God as entirely and with such zeal as we ought, but having to battle daily against the lusts of our flesh: – nevertheless, since our Lord has granted us this grace, to have his gospel imprinted on our hearts in order to resist all unbelief, and has given us this desire and longing, to renounce our own desires in order to follow his righteous-ness and his holy commandments: let us be assured, that the vices and imperfections that are in us will not prevent him from receiving us, and he makes us worthy to have a share in this spiritual table. For we do not come here to assert that we are perfect or righteous in ourselves; but, on the contrary, by seeking our life in Jesus Christ, we confess that we are in death. Let us therefore recognise that this sacrament is a medicine for poor sick beings; and that the only worthiness which our Lord requires of us, is that we know ourselves well enough to be displeased by our vices and to have all our pleasure, joy, and contentment in him alone.

Before all else, then, let us believe in his promises, which Jesus Christ, who is the infallible Truth, has spoken with his own mouth – namely, that he truly wishes to make us sharers of his body and his blood, to the end that we may possess him wholly, in such a way that he lives in us and we in him. And although we see only bread and wine, yet let us have no doubt at all that he accomplishes spiritually in our souls all that he shows us outwardly by these visible signs – which is to say, that he is heavenly bread to feed and nourish us to eternal life.

Finally, let us never be ungrateful for the infinite goodness of our Saviour, who displays all his riches and his blessings at this table for the sake of distributing them to us. For in giving himself to us, he bears witness that all that he has is ours. Furthermore, let us receive this sacrament as a pledge that the
power of his death and passion is imputed to us for righteousness, even as if we ourselves had suffered it in our own persons. Let us never be so perverse, then, as to hold ourselves back where Jesus Christ invites us so gently by his word. Instead, pondering the worthiness of this precious gift which he gives us, let us present ourselves to him with a burning zeal, in order that he may make us capable of receiving him.

To do this, let us lift our spirits and our hearts on high, where Jesus Christ is in the glory of his Father, and from where we expect him at our redemption. And let us never be distracted by these earthly and corruptible elements, which we see with the eye, and touch with the hand, so as to seek him there, as if he were enclosed in the bread or in the wine. For our souls will be disposed to be nourished and vivified by his substance, only when they are lifted above all earthly things to reach up to heaven and enter the kingdom of God, where he dwells. Let us be content, therefore, to have the bread and the wine as signs and testimonies, seeking spiritually the Truth where the word of God promises that we shall find it.

\[20\] This done, the ministers distribute the bread and the cup to the people, having admonished them to come forward with reverence and in good order. Meanwhile, some Psalms are sung, or some portion of Scripture is read, appropriate to what is signified by the sacrament.

\[21\] At the end [of communion], the Minister uses the thanksgiving, as it has been appointed.\[19\]

\[22\] Then the Minister dismisses the assembly with the blessing as on Sunday.\[20\]