

On The Body And Blood Of Our Lord

Ratramnus

Imperial · Early Medieval · Treatise

STROMATA 06

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INTRODUCTION

Composed in the mid-ninth century at the request of Charles the Bald, this treatise answers a pointed royal question: when the faithful receive the Eucharist, do they receive Christ's body in figure or in unveiled substance? Ratramnus, a monk of Corbie, was responding to his abbot Paschasius Radbertus, whose more realist account had unsettled the Carolingian court, and the exchange between them stands as the first sustained Western controversy over eucharistic presence, one that would be exhumed at the Reformation by Ridley and others who found in Ratramnus a theological fellow traveller. The prose is careful, deferential, and methodical, proceeding by distinctions drawn from Ambrose and Augustine rather than by polemic. Expect a closely reasoned argument that moves slowly, weighing terms before it commits to them.

A treatise addressed to King Charles the Bald, examining whether the Eucharist is received in figure or in naked truth, and whether the body present in the Sacrament is identical with the body born of Mary.

Preface

You have bidden me, O glorious Prince, to make known to your Majesty what I think touching the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ. A command no less worthy of your magnificent and princely estate than difficult for my poor ability. For what can be more worthy of a Prince than to take care that he himself be Catholic in his judgment concerning the sacred mysteries of Him who hath deigned to commit to him his kingly throne, and to endure not that his subjects should think diversely concerning the Body of Christ, in which it is certain that the whole sum of Christian redemption doth consist?

I. The Question Stated: Differences Touching the Mystery

Whilst some of the faithful say that the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ, which is daily celebrated in the Church, is performed under no figure or veil, but with the naked exhibition of the

Truth itself; others testify that these things are contained under the figure of a mystery, and that it is one thing which appeareth to the bodily senses, and another upon which faith gazeth. There is then clearly no small diversity of judgment among them. And though the Apostle writeth to the faithful "that they should all think and speak the same thing, and that there should be no schism among them" (*1 Corinthians 1:10*), yet by no small schism are they divided who give utterance to such diverse opinions touching the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Wherefore your Royal Highness, being provoked with zeal for the faith, and with no easy mind pondering on these things, and being desirous that, as the Apostle commandeth, all men should think and speak the same thing, doth diligently search into this secret verity, that so you may recall to it them that are out of the way. Wherefore you do not disdain to ask the truth in this matter even from the most humble; for you well know that so great and secret a mystery cannot be acknowledged unless God reveal it, who without respect of persons sheweth forth the light of his truth by whomsoever he chooseth.

Pleasant as it is to me to obey your command, yet no less difficult is it with my slender ability to dispute on a subject so far removed from human senses, and into which no one can penetrate except by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Wherefore, in submission to your Majesty's command, yet with entire confidence in his aid of whom I am about to treat, I will strive to open what I think on this matter in what words I can, not leaning to my own wit, but following the steps of the Holy Fathers.

II. The State of the Controversy

Your excellent Majesty enquireth, whether the Body and Blood of Christ, which in the Church is taken by the mouth of the faithful, be made so in a mystery or in truth; that is, whether it containeth any hidden thing which lieth open to the eye of faith alone, or whether without the veil of any mystery the sight gazeth on that Body outwardly which the eye of the soul inwardly beholdeth, so that the whole matter standeth forth open and manifest. And, whether it be the very same Body which was born of Mary, suffered, died, and was buried, which rose again, ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father.

III. The First Question: On Figure and Truth

Let us look closely into the first of these two questions, and let us define what Figure is, and what Truth, that we be not hindered by doubtful ambiguity, but that, keeping somewhat certain before our eyes, we may know whither we ought to direct the course of our reasoning.

Figure Defined

Figure is a certain outshadowing which exhibiteth what it meaneth under some sort of veil; for instance, when we would speak of the Word (*Matthew 6*), we say Bread, as in the Lord's Prayer, we pray that God would give us our daily Bread. Or as Christ in the Gospel saith, "*I am the living Bread, which came down from heaven*" (*John 6*). Or when he calleth himself a Vine, and his disciples the Branches, saying, "*I am the True Vine, and ye are the Branches*" (*John 15*). All these passages express one thing and hint at another.

Truth Defined

But Truth is the shewing forth of a plain matter, veiled under no shadowy images, but conveyed to us in clear, open, and natural significations; as when we say that Christ was born of the Virgin, suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried. Nothing is here shadowed forth under the veil of figure, but the truth of the matter is exhibited in the natural signification of the words; nor must aught else be understood than is expressed. But in the former instances it is not so. For substantially Christ is not Bread, nor is Christ a Vine, nor are the Apostles Branches. So that in this case a Figure is presented in the expression, but in the former Truth — that is, the naked and open signification.

IV. The Sacrament Proved to Be in Figure

Now let us return to the subject, with a view to which this hath been said — namely, the Body and Blood of Christ. For if that mystery be performed under no figure, then it is not rightly called a mystery, since that cannot be called a mystery in which there is nothing hid, nothing removed from our bodily senses, nothing concealed under any veil. But that bread which by the ministry of the Priest is made the Body of Christ, sheweth one thing outwardly to man's senses, and proclaimeth another thing inwardly to the souls of the faithful. Outwardly, the form of bread which it was before is presented, its colour is exhibited, its taste is perceived; but inwardly a far different thing is signified, and that much more precious, much more excellent — for it is heavenly, for it is divine — that is, Christ's Body is shewn forth, which is beheld, is taken, is eaten, not by the bodily senses, but by the gaze of the believing soul.

Likewise the wine, which by the Priest's consecration is made the Sacrament of Christ's Blood, sheweth one thing outwardly and inwardly containeth another. For what outwardly appeareth but the substance of wine? Taste it, there is the savour of wine; smell it, there is the scent of wine; behold it, there is the colour of wine. But if thou dost consider it inwardly, then it is no longer the liquor of wine but the liquor of the Blood of Christ, that to the souls of believers savoureth when tasted, is recognized when beheld, is approved when smelt. Since no one can deny that this is so, it is plain that that Bread and Wine are in a figure the Body and Blood of Christ. As to outward appearance, neither the nature of flesh is recognized in that Bread, nor the fluid of blood in that Wine; yet after the mystic consecration, they are no longer called bread or wine, but Christ's Body and Blood.

An Argument from the Nature of Faith

If nothing is here taken in figure, as some say, but all is seen in truth, then faith hath no operation here; since in that case nought is performed spiritually, but the whole, whatever it be, is received altogether corporally. In that faith, according to the Apostle (*Hebrews 11*), is "the evidence of things not seen" — that is, not of visible but of invisible substances — we shall receive nothing according to faith, since thus we pass judgment on it, whatever it be, by our bodily senses. And nothing is more absurd than to take mere bread for flesh, and to call mere wine blood. Nor will that be any longer a mystery in which nothing secret, nothing hidden, is contained.

There Is No Natural Change Wrought in the Elements

And how shall that be called the Body of Christ where no change is perceived to be made? For every change is either from not being to being, or from being to not being, or from one being to another. But in this Sacrament, if it be considered simply and in truth, and nought else wrought be believed than what is seen, we know of no change at all being made. For the bread and wine had a real existence before they passed into the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ.

They therefore who will here take nothing figuratively, but will have the whole matter consist in simple truth, must be asked in what respect that change takes place by which the elements come to be, not bread and wine, but the Body and Blood of Christ? For according to the nature of the creatures, and their form as visible things, neither the bread nor wine have aught changed in them. And if they have undergone no change at all, they are nought else than they were before.

Those Who Admit No Figure Contradict Themselves

Your Highness perceiveth, illustrious Prince, whither their opinion tendeth who think thus: they deny that which they are believed to affirm, and are convicted of overthrowing that which they believe. They indeed faithfully confess the Body and Blood of Christ, and by so doing, without doubt they profess that the elements are not that same thing which they were before; and if they are other than they were before, they have undergone some change. Since this cannot be denied, let them say in what respect they are changed. For no bodily change can be seen in them. They must therefore confess either that they are changed in respect of something else than their corporeal substance — and that therefore they are not what in truth they seem to be, but somewhat else which they evidently are not in their proper essence — or, if they will not acknowledge this, they are forced to deny that they are the Body and Blood of Christ, which is impious, not only to say, but even to think.

Yet because they do confess that they are the Body and Blood of Christ, and that they could not be so but by a change for the better, and since this change is not corporally but spiritually wrought, it followeth that we must acknowledge it to be done in a figure, since under the veil of corporeal bread and corporeal wine, the spiritual Body and the spiritual Blood of Christ do exist. Not that two things co-exist diverse between themselves, namely body and spirit, but one and the same thing hath in one respect the nature of bread and wine, in another is the Body and Blood of Christ. As far as they are corporally handled, they are in their nature corporeal creatures, but in their power, and as they are spiritually made, they are the mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ.

V. Analogies from Scripture and Tradition

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

Let us consider the font of Holy Baptism, which is styled, not without reason, the Fountain of Life, because it forms afresh those who descend into it with the newness of a better life, and gives back alive to righteousness those who were dead in sin. Hath it this power in that it is, as we see it, the element of water? Unless it received a sanctifying grace, it could by no means wash away the stain of sin. Unless it possessed a life-giving power, it could in no sort give life to those who are dead — dead, I mean, not in the flesh, but in soul. For in that font, if we have respect to that alone which meeteth the bodily senses, we see the mere element of water subject to corruption, and able to wash the body only. But the power of the Holy Ghost is added thereunto by the consecration of the Priest, and it is made efficacious to wash not the body only but the soul too, and by its spiritual virtue to remove spiritual stains.

See how in one and the same element two things are contained, the one contrary to the other — that which is subject to corruption giving incorruption, that which hath not life conveying life. We know then that in this font there is that which corporeal sense can touch, and therefore subject to change and corruption; and again there is that which faith only can behold, and therefore neither corruptible nor mortal. If you ask what washeth the body outwardly, it is the element; but if you ponder on that which purgeth the inward parts, it is a quickening power, a sanctifying power, a power of immortality. Wherefore in its proper nature it is a corruptible fluid, but in a mystery it is a healing power.

So too the Body and Blood of Christ, considered outwardly, are creatures subject to change and corruption. But if you weigh the power of the mystery, they are life, giving immortality to such as partake thereof. They are then not the same as they are seen and as they are believed; according to that they are seen, they feed a corruptible body, themselves corruptible; according to that they are believed, they feed our souls which shall live for ever, themselves immortal.

The Baptism of the Fathers in the Sea and the Cloud

The Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, saith: *"Know ye not, that all our Fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:1–4).*

We observe that the sea and the cloud bore the likeness of Baptism, and that the Fathers of the Old Testament were baptized in them. Could then the sea, in respect of what it was to outward sight — an element — have the power of Baptism? Or could the cloud in respect of what it was to outward sight — a condensation of thick air — have power to sanctify the people? Yet we dare not say that the Apostle, who spake in Christ, did not with truth affirm that our Fathers were baptized in the cloud and in the sea.

And though that baptism bore not the form of the Baptism of Christ which at this day is performed in the Church, yet no sane person will dare deny that of a truth it was baptism. Wherefore both the sea and the cloud conveyed the cleansing of sanctification, not in respect of their bodily substance, but in respect of that which they inwardly contained — the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. For in them there was both a visible form, apparent to the bodily senses; and also a spiritual power, which shone forth within, discernible not by the eye of the flesh, but of the soul.

The Manna and the Water from the Rock

In like sort the manna which was given to the people from heaven, and the water which flowed from the rock, had a corporeal existence, and were meat and drink for the bodies of the people; yet the Apostle calleth that manna and that water spiritual meat and spiritual drink. How so? Because in those corporeal substances the spiritual power of the Word was contained, which was meat and drink to the souls rather than the bodies of believers.

The Apostle, intending to intimate thus much, after saying our Fathers ate the same spiritual meat and drank the same spiritual drink, immediately addeth, *"For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4)*. To the end we might understand that in the wilderness the same Christ was in the spiritual Rock, and gave the stream of his Blood to the people; who afterwards exhibited in our age his Body taken of the Virgin, and hanged upon the cross for the salvation of believers, and shed from it the stream of his Blood — to the end we might not only be redeemed by it, but also have it for our drink.

In very deed this is wonderful, since we cannot comprehend its depth, nor weigh its value. He had not as yet assumed man's nature; he had not as yet tasted death for the salvation of the world; he had not as yet redeemed us with his Blood; and still our Fathers in the desert, by means of that spiritual meat and that invisible drink, did eat his Body and drink his Blood, as the Apostle testifieth. Here we must not enquire how that could be done, but must believe that it was done.

This David understood and testified in the Holy Ghost, saying, *"Man did eat Angels' food" (Psalm 78:25)*. The Psalmist, or rather the Holy Ghost speaking in the Psalmist, teacheth us both what our Fathers received in that heavenly manna, and what the faithful ought to believe in the mystery of Christ's Body.

VI. The Words of Institution

We know also on the testimony of the Evangelist that our Lord Jesus Christ, before he suffered, *"took bread, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying, This is My Body, which is given for you: do this in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My Blood, which shall be shed for you" (Luke 22:19–20)*.

We see that, though Christ had not yet suffered, he still, even then, wrought the mystery of his Body and Blood. For sure am I, no believer doubteth that the bread which he gave to his disciples was made the Body of Christ; or that the cup of which he also said, "*This cup is the New Testament in My Blood,*" contained the Blood of Christ.

VII. The Exposition of John 6

Here too we must consider how his words are to be taken: "*Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, ye shall not have life in you.*" He doth not say that his Flesh, which hung on the cross, should be cut in pieces and eaten by his disciples, or that his Blood, which he was to shed for the redemption of the world, should be given to his disciples to drink. It had been a horrible crime for his disciples to drink his Blood or to eat his Flesh, as the unbelieving Jews then understood him.

Wherefore in the words following he saith to his disciples, "*Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?*" — as though he said: "Think not that My Flesh is to be corporally eaten, or My Blood corporally drunk by you. After My resurrection ye shall see Me ascend into Heaven with the fullness of My entire Body and Blood. Then shall ye understand that My Flesh is not to be eaten by believers, as the faithless suppose, but that bread and wine, truly yet mystically changed into the substance of My Body and Blood, is to be received by them."

And immediately he addeth, "*It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing*" (John 6:63). He saith that the flesh profiteth nothing as those unbelievers understood it, but otherwise it giveth life, as it is mystically received by the faithful. Wherefore in this mystery of the Body and Blood, it is the spiritual working that giveth life, without which working these mysteries avail nothing; they may feed the body, but cannot feed the soul.

VIII. The Testimony of the Holy Fathers

Saint Augustine

St Augustine, a chief doctor of the Church, in his third book of *On Christian Doctrine*, writeth thus:

"Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, ye shall not have life in you."
He seemeth to command a flagitious crime. His words therefore are in a figure, bidding us communicate in the Lord's passion, and faithfully store up in our memory that his Flesh was crucified and wounded for us.

We see this doctor saith that the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ is celebrated by the faithful under a figure; for carnally to receive his Body and Blood is not, he saith, an act of religion, but a crime.

The same Father in his *Epistle to Boniface* writeth:

We often speak in this manner, when the Pasch draweth nigh, "To-morrow or the next day is the Lord's Passion," though he suffered so many years ago, and that but once for all. Likewise we say on the Lord's day, "On this day the Lord rose again," though so many years have passed since he rose. Why then is none so foolish as to charge us with falsehood for so speaking? It is because we name the days after their likeness to those on which the things themselves were done. Was not Christ once sacrificed in his own Person? And yet in the Sacrament he is offered up for the people, not only during all the Paschal solemnity, but every day. Wherefore he lieth not who, when questioned, answereth that Christ is now sacrificed. For if Sacraments had not some resemblance to those things of which they are the Sacraments, they would not be Sacraments at all. But from this resemblance they oft-times take the names of the things themselves. As then after a certain sort the Sacrament of the Body of Christ is the Body of Christ, and the Sacrament of the Blood of Christ the Blood of Christ, so too the Sacrament of the faith is the faith.

We see St Augustine saith that Sacraments are one thing, and the things of which they are Sacraments another. For the Body in which Christ suffered, and the Blood which flowed from his side, are the things themselves; whilst the mysteries of these things are the Sacraments of the Body and Blood of Christ, celebrated in memory of the Lord's passion.

And although the Body of Christ in which he once suffered is one, and his Blood which was shed for the salvation of the world is one, yet the Sacraments of these things have assumed the names of the things themselves, so as to be called the Body and Blood of Christ — from their likeness to the things which they shadow forth; even as the Passion and the Resurrection, which are celebrated every year, are so called, though he suffered and rose again in his own Person but once.

Saint Isidore

St Isidore, in his *Etymologies*, speaketh thus:

Sacrificium is so called from *sacrum factum*, a thing made sacred, because it is consecrated by mystical prayer, in remembrance of the Lord's passion on our behalf. Whence by his command, we call that the Body and Blood of Christ which, though made of the fruits of the earth, is sanctified and becomes a Sacrament by the invisible operation of the Spirit of God. The Sacrament of this bread and cup the Greeks call Eucharist, which the Latins interpret *Bona Gratia* — Good grace. And what can be better than the Body and Blood of Christ?

This Catholic doctor also teacheth that this holy mystery is celebrated in memory of the Lord's passion on our behalf. By so saying, he shews that the Lord's passion was once accomplished, but that the memory of it is represented in sacred and solemn rites.

So that the bread which is offered, though taken from the fruits of the earth, is by consecration changed into Christ's Body, and the wine, though it hath flowed from the Vine, is by the consecration in this divine mystery made the Blood of Christ — not indeed visibly, but, as this doctor saith, by the invisible operation of the Spirit of God.

The same doctor saith: "There is a Sacrament in the celebration of any thing, when it is so performed that it be understood to signify somewhat which must be spiritually taken." By these words he sheweth that every Sacrament in divine matters containeth within itself some secret thing, and that it is one thing which appeareth to the outward eye, whilst it is another which must be taken on faith and not on sight.

Immediately after he sheweth what the faithful ought to celebrate: "The Sacraments are Baptism and Chrism, the Body and the Blood. These are called Sacraments, because under the covering of bodily things the power of God secretly worketh the salvation which lieth in them. Whence from their hidden and sacred virtues they are called Sacraments."

Summary of the First Question

From all that we have heretofore said, it hath been proved that the Body and Blood of Christ, which in the Church are received by the mouths of the faithful, are figures in respect of their visible nature. But in respect of their invisible substance — that is, the power of the Word of God — they are truly the Body and Blood of Christ. Wherefore as far as they are visible creatures, they feed the body, but in virtue of a more powerful substance, they both feed and sanctify the souls of the faithful.

IX. The Second Question: Is It the Same Body Born of Mary?

Now we must examine the second question proposed, and see whether the self-same Body which was born of Mary, which suffered, died, and was buried, and which sitteth at the right hand of the Father, be that which daily in the Church is received by the mouths of the faithful in the mystery of the Sacrament.

Saint Ambrose

Let us enquire what is the judgment of St Ambrose on this point. He saith in his first book of *On the Sacraments*:

Of a truth it is marvellous that God should rain down manna on our Fathers, and feed them from day to day with heavenly food. Yet all they who ate that bread perished in the wilderness. But that food which thou receivest, that living Bread which came down from heaven, ministereth in a hidden way the substance of everlasting life, and whoso eateth of this Bread shall never die, and this is the Body of Christ.

Doth it, as it is seen, and corporally taken, and pressed by the teeth, and swallowed by the throat, and received into the belly, doth it so minister the substance of everlasting life? In that respect, it nourisheth only the flesh which shall die. There is then in that Bread a life which appeareth not to the bodily eye, but is seen by the eye of faith, which is the living Bread that came down from heaven, and of which it may with truth be said, "Whoso eateth of this shall never die."

And afterward, speaking of the almighty power of Christ, St Ambrose saith, "Can not the word of Christ therefore, which from nothing could make that which was not, change those things which are into that

which they were not? For is it not a greater work to produce new things, than to change the nature of things that are?"

He addeth, "Why dost thou here require the order of nature in the Body of Christ, when the Lord Jesus himself was born of the Virgin, beside the order of nature?"

"The same Body which was crucified, which was buried — this is truly the Sacrament of his Flesh. The Lord Jesus himself proclaims, *This is My Body*."

How carefully, how warily is this distinction drawn! Of the Flesh of Christ which was crucified and buried, he saith, "This was surely the true Flesh of Christ"; but of that which is received in the Sacrament, he declareth, "Therefore this is truly the Sacrament of that Flesh." Here he distinguisheth between the Sacrament of the Flesh and the Flesh itself — inasmuch as the mystery performed in the Church is the Sacrament of that true Flesh in which Christ was crucified. For in its nature it is bread, but sacramentally it is the true Body of Christ, as the Lord Jesus himself declareth, "*This is My Body*."

And lastly: "Christ is in that Sacrament, because it is the Body of Christ. Wherefore it is not corporeal, but spiritual food." What can be plainer? For he saith, "Christ is in that Sacrament." He saith not, that bread and wine are Christ — did he say this, he would declare that Christ was mortal and subject to corruption, which God forbid. It is the Body of Christ, yet not corporally; it is the Blood of Christ, yet not corporally. Nought then is to be understood here corporally, but all spiritually.

Saint Jerome

Of which matter, in his commentary on the Epistle of St Paul to the Ephesians, St Jerome writeth thus:

The Blood of Christ, and the Flesh of Christ, are taken in two senses. They are either that spiritual and divine Flesh and Blood, of which he himself saith, "*My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed*" (*John 6*); or the Flesh which was crucified, and the Blood which was poured out by the soldier's spear.

The difference is not small with which this doctor distinguisheth concerning the Body and Blood of Christ. For whilst he saith that the Body and Blood of Christ, which are daily taken by the faithful, are spiritual; while the Flesh which was crucified and the Blood which was poured out by the soldier's spear are not said to be spiritual or divine — openly doth he insinuate that these two differ from one another no less than things corporeal and spiritual, visible and invisible, divine and human. And because they differ, they are not the same.

The Bread as a Figure of the People

It is further to be considered that in that Bread, not the Body of Christ alone is figured, but also that of the people who believe in him. Wherefore it is made of many grains of corn, as the Body of faithful people is made up of many who believe through the word of Christ.

So too, with the wine which is called the Blood of Christ, water is ordered to be mixed; because, as the head cannot be without the body, nor the body without the head, so neither can the people be without Christ, nor Christ without the people. The water in that Sacrament beareth the image of the people. If therefore that wine, when consecrated, is corporally changed into the Blood of Christ, the water also which is mixed with it must necessarily be corporally changed into the blood of the faithful people. But we see no change made in the water as to bodily substance; and therefore there is no corporeal change in the wine. Whatever in the water signifieth the people of Christ is taken spiritually; whatever therefore in the wine representeth the Blood of Christ must be taken spiritually too.

The Elements Are Corruptible; Christ's Body Is Not

Things that differ from each other are not the same. The Body of Christ which died, which rose again, and being made immortal "*dieth no more, nor hath death any more dominion over him*" (Romans 6:9) — that Body is eternal, and no longer subject to suffering. But the Body which is celebrated in the Church is temporal, not eternal; corruptible, not incorruptible. They differ then from each other, and therefore are not the same.

Now if they be not the same, how are they said to be the very Body and very Blood of Christ? Of a truth, that which is presented outwardly is one thing, and that which is by faith believed is another; that which appertaineth to the bodily senses is corruptible, but that which faith believeth is incorruptible. That therefore which outwardly appeareth is not the thing itself, but its image; but that which is perceived and understood by the soul is the very thing itself.

Saint Augustine Again

Whence St Augustine in his exposition of St John's Gospel, when treating of the Body and Blood of Christ, saith:

Moses ate manna, and Aaron ate, and Phinees ate, and many more ate there who pleased God, and died not. Wherefore? Because they spiritually understood that visible food, they were spiritually an hungred, they spiritually tasted, that spiritually they might be satisfied. For we too at this day receive visible food; yet the Sacrament is one thing, the virtue of the Sacrament another.

Again he addeth:

This is the Bread which came down from heaven — the manna, the altar of God — these things were Sacraments, differing in signs, yet the same in the thing signified. They ate manna, and we eat another meat; yet spiritually they ate the same as we. They drank of the spiritual Rock, and that Rock was Christ. In figure the Rock was Christ, but the true Christ was in the Word and in Flesh.

And of our Lord's words he saith:

"What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?" What meaneth this? He here resolveth that which troubled them. They thought he would give them his own Body;

whilst he said that he was about to ascend into Heaven whole and entire. When ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before, ye shall then at least see of a surety that he giveth not his Body in the way which ye think; then at least shall ye of a surety understand that his grace is not consumed by the teeth.

We see then that the food of the Lord's Body and the drink of his Blood subsist truly as his Body and truly as his Blood after a certain sort — namely, in that they are Spirit and Life.

Saint Fulgentius

Let us hear also what St Fulgentius saith in his book *Concerning Faith*:

Most firmly hold, and doubt not in any sort, that the Only-Begotten Son, God the Word, when made Flesh, offered himself for us, a sacrifice and oblation to God for a sweet-smelling savour. To whom, now, in the time of the New Testament, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church throughout the world ceaseth not to offer the sacrifice of Bread and Wine in faith and love. In those carnal victims there was a signification of the Flesh of Christ which he without sin was to offer for our sins, and of that Blood which for the remission of our sins he was to pour forth. Whilst in this sacrifice there is the thanksgiving and commemoration of the Flesh of Christ which he hath offered for us, and of the Blood which he hath shed for us. In those sacrifices, therefore, what was to be given us was figuratively signified; but in this sacrifice, what has already been given us is evidently shewn.

When he saith that in those sacrifices there was a signification of what should be given us, but in this sacrifice a commemoration of what has been given us, he clearly implieth that, as the one had a figure of things to come, so this sacrifice too is a figure of things past.

By these words he most evidently sheweth how great is the difference between the Body in which Christ suffered and this Body which is for the commemoration of his passion and death. For the one is his proper and true Body, and hath naught in it of mystery or figure; the other is mystical, and sheweth one thing by a figure outwardly while it representeth another thing inwardly through the understanding of faith.

Saint Augustine: A Final Testimony

Let me allege one other testimony of Father Augustine, which will confirm what I have said. In his sermon to the people concerning the Sacrament of the altar, he speaketh thus:

What ye now see on the altar of God, ye saw also on the night that is past; but as yet ye have not heard what it is, what it meaneth, and of how great a thing it containeth the Sacrament. What ye see then is the bread and the cup, which even your eyes declare to you; but the point in which your faith requireth instruction is this — that the bread is the Body of Christ, the cup is the Blood of Christ. These, brethren, are called Sacraments for this reason: because in them one thing is seen,

and another understood; that which is seen hath a corporeal nature, that which is understood hath a spiritual fruit.

This venerable author in these words instructeth us what we ought to think of our Lord's proper Body — which was born of Mary, and now sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and in which he will come to judge the quick and the dead — and what of that which is placed on the altar and received by the people. The former is entire, is neither cut nor divided, nor veiled under any figure; the latter, which is set on the Lord's Table, is a figure, because it is a Sacrament: as it is outwardly seen, it hath a corporeal nature which feedeth the body; as it is inwardly understood, it hath a spiritual fruit which quickeneth the soul.

He addeth:

Wherefore if ye wish to understand the Body of Christ, hearken to the words of the Apostle, "*Ye are the Body and members of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 12:27). If therefore ye are the Body and members of Christ, your own mystery is laid on the Lord's Table, ye receive your own mystery, ye answer Amen to that which ye are, and by so answering ye subscribe thereto. We being many are one bread, and one body (1 Corinthians 10:17).

X. Conclusion and Determination of Both Questions

Your wisdom, most illustrious Prince, may understand that it hath been most clearly shewn, by the testimony of Holy Scripture and the words of the Holy Fathers, that the bread which is called the Body of Christ and the cup which is called the Blood of Christ is a figure, because it is a mystery — and that the difference is not small between the Body which existeth in mystery and the Body which suffered, died, and rose again. For the one is the proper Body of our Saviour; no figure, no hidden signification, but the manifestation of the reality itself is there acknowledged, and the vision of this believers still desire; for he is our Head, and with the vision of him our desire shall be satisfied.

But in this other, which is celebrated in a mystery, there is a figure not only of the proper Body of Christ, but also of the people that believe in Christ. For it beareth the figure of either body — that is, of the Body of Christ which suffered and rose again, and of the people who in Christ are born again and quickened from the dead.

Let us moreover add, that the bread and the cup, which is both called and is the Body and Blood of Christ, doth represent the memory of our Lord's passion and death, as he saith himself in the Gospel, "*Do this in remembrance of Me*" — which the Apostle Paul explaineth when he saith, "*As often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

We are taught both by our Saviour and by St Paul the Apostle that this bread and cup which are placed on the altar are placed there in figure or in memory of the Lord's death, that they may recall to our present remembrance that which was done in times past — so that being put in remembrance of his passion, we may by it be made partakers of the heavenly gift whereby we have been freed from death; knowing well that when we shall arrive at the vision of Christ, we shall have no need of such like instruments to remind us what his boundless mercy hath endured for us. For we shall then see him face

to face, and by the contemplation of the Truth itself shall see how we ought to render thanks to the Author of our salvation.

Yet let it not be thought, from my saying this, that in the mystery of the Sacrament the Body and Blood of the Lord are not received by the faithful — for faith receiveth that which it believeth, not that which the eye beholdeth. It is spiritual meat and spiritual drink; spiritually doth it feed the soul and giveth life which shall satisfy for ever, as our Saviour saith himself: *"It is the Spirit which quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing"* (John 6:63).

Afterword

In my desire to obey your Majesty's command, I have presumed, though of slender powers, to dispute on a subject of no small importance. I have followed no presumptuous opinion of my own, but have had regard to the authority of the ancients. If you approve what I have said as Catholic, ascribe it to the merit of your own faith, which disdained not to lay aside your kingly glory and magnificence and to enquire from a humble subject an answer of truth. But if it please you not, ascribe it to my weakness, which hath failed sufficiently to explain that which it desired.

Here endeth the book of Ratramnus on the Body and Blood of the Lord.

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De Corpore et Sanguine Domini (c. 860). Translation from the nineteenth-century edition. Provenance: digitised from out-of-print print edition; OCR-corrected.

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