

THE PHRASE 'TRANSFORMATIO CORPORIS ET SANGUINIS DOMINI' IN THE DOCUMENTS OF THE GALLICAN AND HISPANIC LITURGIES

(RESUME of Part II, Art. 6 c), of the thesis 'Les Post Secreta du Missale Gothicum et la Theologie Eucharistique de l'Anaphore Gallicane': Fr. John Frendo O.P., Paris 1964).

The phrase 'transformatio Corporis et Sanguinis Christi' is found in two documents of the Gallican liturgy: The Missale Gothicum (nn. 154 and 57) and in the Masses called of MONE (nn. 331). We find it also in three documents of the Hispanic liturgy: the Liber Mozarabicus Sacramentorum (n. 854), the Missale Mixtum (PL 85, col. 794 and 250), and the Liber Ordinum (ed. FEROTIN 342 and 281); so that in all we find it in eight liturgical formulas of the eucharistic anaphora. Apart from these we find parallel texts which we will deal with later on.

Let us read only the three formulas of the Gallican liturgy: Goth. 154 and 57, and Mone 331: Goth. 154: 'Haec igitur praecepta servantes sacrosancta munera nostrae salutis offerimus, obsecrantes, ut inmiscere digneris spiritum tuum sanctum supra haec sollempnia, ut fiat nobis legitima eucharistia . . . *in transformatione corporis et sanguinis domini*'.

Goth. 57: 'Haec nos, domine, instituta et praecepta retinentes, suppliciter oramus, uti hoc sacrificium suscipere et benedicere et sanctificare digneris, ut fiat nobis eucharistia legitima . . . *in transformatione corporis et sanguinis domini* . . .'

Mone 331: 'Discendat, domine, plenitudo magistratis, divinitatis, pietatis, virtutis, benediction(bu)s et gloriae tuae super hunc panem et super hunc calicem et fiat nobis legitima eucharistia *in transformatione corporis et sanguinis domini* . . .'

The interpretation of this phrase always raised great interest as well as difficulty. We will first of all see what the word 'transformare' means. It is a verb made up of two words, 'Trans' and 'formare'. The prefix 'trans' means 'change, movement, passage'; the verb 'formare' is derived from the noun 'forma', which may have any of these four meanings:

1) the external shape: what is seen of the thing. In this sense St. Augustine says: 'Invisibilia conspicimus, *sine ullis formis et molibus corporalibus, sine ullis lineamentis figurisque membrorum*'. (Epist. 120, 2, 10).

2) the internal quality or nature of the thing. St. Ambrose, while commenting on the words of St. Paul: 'qui, cum in forma Dei esset ... seipsum exinanivit formam servi accipiens' (Phil. 2.6, 7) says: 'Quid, 'est in Dei forma', nisi in divinitatis plenitudine? Disce igitur quid sit 'formam servi accipit', id est 'plenitudinem perfectionis humanae' (De Fide 5, 8. 108-109).

3) Symbol, type, sign, mystery. St. Prosper of Aquitaine says: 'Sic ergo accipiendus est psalmus ut historicas actiones formas esse rerum corporalium' (Expos. Psalm. 143).

4) The state or condition of a thing.

Thus the compound verb 'transformare' too can have four meanings:

- 1) To change the external form or give a new aspect to something;
- 2) To change the internal quality or nature of an object;
- 3) To change the type, give a new symbol;
- 4) To change the condition or state of the object.

In the New Testament, the verb 'transformare' is found only once; 'Nos autem omnes, revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes, in eandem imaginem *transformamur* a claritate in claritatem tamquam a Domini spiritu'. (II Cor. 3. 18). Here 'transformamur' seems to signify an internal, invisible change; it is not a change of nature, but of state or condition.

St. Hilary speaks of external change (in the first sense) when he says: 'Nam in habitu Dominus gloriosae *transformationis* suae constituit, regnantis corporis sui claritate perfecta'. (De Trinitate, II, 37).

St. Maximus of Turin uses the word in the sense of an internal change (second sense): 'Si ipse est, quem novi ego flumina produxisse de petra, poterit nunc in panem lapides *transformare*, etsi non mea petitione, sua tamen necessitate, qui esurit'. (Hom. 42).

Finally St. Augustine speaks of 'a change of state or condition' (fourth sense) in his *De Trinitate*. (15,8-11): 'Quod vero ait, 'in eandem imaginem *transformamur*': utique imaginem Dei vult intelligi, eandem dicens, istam ipsam scilicet, id est quem speculamur...' *transformamur* ergo dicit, de forma in formam mutamur, atque transimur de forma obscura

in formam lucidam ... Quae natura humana in rebus creatis excellentissima, cum a suo Creatore ab impietate justificatur, a deformi forma formosam transfertur in formam ... Quod vero adjunxit, 'tamquam a Domini spiritu': ostendit gratia Dei nobis conferri tam optabilis *transformationis* bonum ... Cum ergo renovata, simile Deo erimus, quoniam videbimus eum, non per speculum sed sicuti est'.

After seeing all the possible meanings of the verb 'transformare' we ask: 'What is the sense of this verb in our case: in transformatione corporis et sanguinis Christi?'

To give the right interpretation we must examine the texts where we find the verb 'transformare', and also, although it is never found in Gallican liturgical texts, of the verb 'transfigurare'. We must also examine the texts where we find 'vertere, convertere, mutare, transferre'.

When the latter four verbs are used in the Gothicum to signify the Eucharistic change, their sense is always that of 'transformatio', or a change in the nature itself, as we find in St. Ambrose: 'Quod si tantum valuit humana benedictio ut naturam *converteret*, quid dicimus de ipsa consecratione divina ubi verba ipsa Domini salvatoris operantur? Nam sacramentum istud quod accipis Christi sermone conficitur. Quod si tantum valuit sermo Helias ut ignem de caelo deponeret, non valebit Christi sermo ut *species mutet* elementorum? De totius mundi operibus legisti 'quia ipse dixit et facta sunt, ipse mandavit et creata sunt'. Sermo ergo Christi, qui potuit ex nihilo facere quod non erat, non potest ea quae sunt in id *mutare* quod non erant? Non enim minus est novas rebus dare quam *mutare naturas*'. (De Mysteriis, IX, 52).

The texts in the Gothicum are the following:

'... Pia obsecratione poscentes, ut qui tunc aquas in vina *mutavit*, nunc in sanguinem suum oblationum nostrarum vina *convertat*'. (n. 82).

'... Ut qui hodie per filium suum mirifice aquae speciem *vertit* in vinum, ita omnium simul oblationes et vota *convertere* dignetur in sacrificium divinum'. (n. 84).

'... Panis hic *mutatus* in carne, et calix *translatus* in sanguine'. (Mone 321).

'... Operante virtute panem *mutatum* in carne, poculum *versum* in sanguine'. (n. 538).

'... *Translata* fruge in corpore, calicem in cruore'. (G. 100).

It is clear that in these texts the meaning of the words 'mutare, convertare, vertere, transferre' is the change of the bread and the wine into

the Body and Blood of Christ.

As regards 'transformare' we have two kinds of texts. In the Gallicanum Vetus n. 85 we find:

'Iesus Christus . . . *panem et vinum*, quod Melchisedech in praefiguratione futuri mysterii sacerdos obtulerat, in sacramento sui corporis et sanguinis *transformavit*'. Here undoubtedly, 'transformavit panem et vinum' means that Christ changed (transformavit, second sense) bread and wine into his Body and Blood. It is a change of the nature itself. In this sense 'Pseudo-Germanus' says (Expositio, ed. Quasten p. 18): 'Panis vero in corpus et vinum *transformatur* in sanguinem'.

Then comes the formula in question: Goth. 57, 154; Mone 331; LMS 854; MM=PL 85: 794, 250; LO (Ferotin 342, 281). Apart from these in the Missale Francorum (n. 32) and in the Gelasian Sacramentary (Gel. Vetus; Reg. 316) n. 148, in the Ordination to the priesthood we find the following words: 'Sanctificationum omnium auctor, cuius vera consecratio, plena benedictio est: tu, Domine, super hunc famulum illum quem presbiterii honore didicamus, manum tuae benedictionis (eum) infunde . . . ut purum atque immaculatum ministerii tui donum custodiat, et per obsequium plebis tuae corpus et sanguinem filii tui immaculata benedictione *transformet*'. It is notable here that the sentence: 'corpus et sanguinem filii tui transformet' was changed in the time of Charlemagne, and now reads: '*Panem et vinum in corpus et sanguinem Christi* immaculata benedictione *transformet*'.

The first difficulty is that in these texts we do not find the 'terminus ad quem' of the *transformatio*. In the expression 'transformare corpus et sanguinem Domini' one would expect the complement 'in . . .' which is never found in the liturgical texts. But the whole phrase is found in an ancient literary text called the '*Verba Seniorum*'; this is probably a sixth century Latin version of a nameless Greek work which is now lost. The text runs as follows:

'Dixerunt autem ei senes: Deus scit humanam naturam; quia non potest vesci carnibus crudis, et propterea *transformat corpus suum in panem*; et *sanguinem suum in vinum*, his qui illud cum fide suscipiunt'. (PL 73, col. 979).

The same phrase is found in the writings of Pascasius Radbertus: *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini*, and Aimon of Auxerre's *Homeliae de Tempore*.

The verb 'transfigurare' which is used in the same way in the literary

texts clarifies the question:

In a commentary of the Gospel of Saint Mark (5th cent. Text: PL 30 col.632, Published and studied by Dom G.Morin) there is written: 'Accepit Jesus panem et benedicens fregit, *transfigurans Corpus suum in panem*'.

Another text was found by Dom Wilmart in *Codex Palatinus* ms. 556 of the Vatican Library:

'Numquid non magis timore et tremore tractare poterimus membrum regis aut os? ... Quanto magis corpus et sanguis Iesu Christi Domini nostri, quae (qui) *transfiguravit in panem* istum coelestem et *calicem* vitae aeternae'.

From the literary texts we may conclude with certainty that the phrase 'transformatio corporis et sanguinis Christi in panem et vinum' had the meaning of the Eucharistic change. But the question is: why is it that in the liturgical texts the *terminus ad quem* (panis et vinum) are not expressly mentioned? P. Falsini thinks it is a question of moderation in the Liturgical expression. But I think that it is a question of style and rhythm, which require a short and elegant sentence. Thus we have two sentences of nearly the same length:

1. Ut fiat nobis legitima eucharistia. (14 syllables).
2. In transformatione corporis et sanguinis Christi (15).

Apart from this, Mone 331 shows us that the meaning is one of the change of the Body of Christ into bread: 'fiat nobis legitima eucharistia in transformatione corporis et sanguinis Domini: ut quicumque et quotienscumque *ex hoc pane et ex hoc calice* libaverimus, sumamus ...'

The second problem is this: in what sense do we speak of: 'transformatio corporis et sanguinis Christi (in panem et vinum)? I believe the answer is the following: 'Transformare corpus et sanguinem Christi' means: Putting the Body of Christ in a condition of being edible, and his Blood in a condition of being drinkable; tum the Body of Christ into the eucharistic Bread, and his Blood into the eucharistic Wine: in other words: 'transformare' means: 'change the form or the state of the Body and Blood of Christ (which in themselves are not edible or drinkable) and give them the external form, the new state of Bread and Wine; make them present and visible (in a certain sense) to our eyes, in the state of bread and wine; give them the state of food (the bread) and drink (the wine) so that men may be able to eat and drink them'. Finally they

are 'transformati' into bread and wine.

This, after all, is what the quoted texts show us: 'Deus scit humanam naturam; quia *non potest vesci carnibus crudis*, et propterea *transformavit corpus suum in panem et sanguinem suum in vinum*'. God transforms his Body into Bread and his Blood into Wine to give men the possibility of eating this same Body of Christ and drinking this same Blood. After this 'transformatio' the Body of Christ 'is real food' and his Blood 'is real drink'. (cf. John 6, 55).

This implicit reference to St. John (6, 35-55) is found in the Gothicum text which confirms our meaning: 'Hic panis vivus et verus, qui de coelo descendit; ut daret escas esurientum, immo et ipse esset esca viventium: fiat *nobis in pane*, quo corda firmanur, ut in virtute panis huius . . .' In this formula we pray that Christ, who wanted to be our food, be given to us in the external form, the condition or state of bread.

In these two formulas that speak of the change of Christ's Body into the state of bread (*transformatio in panem*) we should not see any allusion to the theory of *impanatio*. It is enough to read a text of St. Paul to convince ourselves. In this text the Body of Christ which we eat is called *bread*: 'Quotiescumque enim *manducabitis panem hunc et calicem bibetis* mortem Domini annutiabitis donec veniat'. (I Cor. 11, 26). Neither should we think that the formula is against the doctrine of *transsubstantiatio*. The formulas we have studied include in themselves a doctrine which is much easier to understand, nearer to St. John's explanation of the Eucharist, and is of great pastoral and catechetical value, since our people are not able to draw the philosophic distinction between *substantia* and *accidentia*.

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