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"Let us Keep the Feast:" Some Perspectives on the Form and Symbolism of the Eucharistic Bread in the Early and Medieval West

The Early Form of the Eucharistic Bread

To begin with, we should clarify the form of the Eucharistic bread before the Western resumption of unleavened bread (*azymes*). The use of *artos* instead of *azyma* in the four New Testament accounts of the Last Supper probably tells us that the type of bread used was not considered sufficiently important to merit specification, although Andrew McGowan believes that such a use "might reflect the assimilation of the institution narratives to meal practices of a more everyday nature... or may conversely be a remnant of a non-paschal tradition embedded in the Gospel accounts"[1] – even though any such tradition, if it existed, would have been superseded well before the end of the first Christian century. Thus, leavened bread was considered acceptable for Eucharistic use. For example, in a work sometimes attributed to Ambrose but perhaps from the early fifth century we have the statement *meus panis est usitatus* ("my bread is the usual sort"),[2] while the consecrated *fermentum* particle about which Innocent I wrote to Decentius,

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[1] Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 94.

[2] *De Sacramentis,* 4, 4, in Jacques-Paul Migne ed. Patrologia Latina (hereafter *PL*), 16, 439.

Bishop of Gubbio in 416 must have been leavened in virtue of its name.[3] Almost two centuries later, Gregory the Great has it written of him how he saw a woman grin at receiving the bread of her own offering at communion.[4] As to the bread's appearance, Theodor Klauser notes that "perhaps it was shaped like a small wreath,"[5] while, more specifically, J. A. Jungmann refers to two Ravenna Eucharistic mosaics in which "the bread appears in the form of a chaplet or crown, that is, twisted like a braid and then wound into a circlet about four inches across."[6] He identifies this with the *corona* used from at least the third century (presumably referring to the entry for Pope Zephyrinus in the *Liber Pontificalis*)[7] and later mentioned by Gregory. Jungmann also argues that "sometimes the centre hole of the crown was filled in, and so the bread had the form of a disk."[8] This conforms to *Ordo Romanus IV*, written about 770-790,[9] which states that "the pontiff [bishop] breaks one of the breads which he is offering for himself and leaves its crown (*et dimittit coronam ipsius*) on the altar."[10] As late as 1089, another author, either Bernard of Constance or his more famous pupil Bernold

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[3] Innocent I, *Epistola ad Decentium Eugubinum* 5, PL, 20, 556-557, also 56, 516-517, also 130, 696; Martin Connell, *Church and Worship in Fifth-Century Rome: The Letter of Innocent I to Decentius of Gubbio* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2002), 39-40. For more recent research and opinions, see John Baldovin, "The Fermentum at Rome in the Fifth Century: A Reconsideration," *Worship* 79 (2005): 38-53; Lizette Larson-Miller, "The Liturgical Inheritance of the Late Empire in the Middle Ages," in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages,* ed. Ian Levy et al. (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012), 57; Bryan Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me: The Eucharist from the Early Church to the Present Day* (London: SCM, 2013), 203; also Mary Leith and Allyson Sheckler, "Relics? What Relics?," in *Religious Competition in the Greco-Roman World,* ed. Nathaniel DesRosiers and Lily Vuong (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 207.

[4] Paul the Deacon, *Vita Sancti Gregorii,* 23, PL, 75, 52-53. For this story as retold by Jacopo De Fazio ("Jacobus de Voragine," 1230–1298), see Daniel Bornstein, "Relics, Ascetics, Living Saints," in *Medieval Christianity,* ed. Daniel Bornstein (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 92; Kathryn Rudy, *Rubrics, Images and Indulgences in late Medieval Netherlandish Manuscripts* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 101.

[5] Theodor Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed. 1979), 67.

[6] Josef Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite,* ed. Charles Riepe (London: Burns & Oates, 1959), 330.

[7] *Liber Pontificalis,* ed. Louis Duchesne (Paris: Thorin, 1886), 1, 139.

[8] Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite,* 330.

[9] Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources* (Washington DC: The Pastoral Press, 1986), 152; Barry Craig, *Fractio Panis: A History of the Breaking of Bread in the Roman Rite* (Rome, Studia Anselmiana 151: Pont. Ateneo Sant'Anselmo, 2011), 147.

[10] *Ordo Romanus* xc 57, in *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age,* ed. Michel Andrieu (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense Administration, 1971), 2:164.

of Constance, in a work now seemingly lost but paraphrased in the sixteenth century by Georgius Cassander, uses the phrase "the form of a crown," but this time it refers to a surely unleavened roll, made from "a handful of fine flour."[11]

Jungmann also argues that the most usual type of bread may have been circular with a cross cut into it to facilitate breaking, since such a pattern was known in the ancient world for secular use.[12] Alternatively, the loaf may have been marked with a circle for the crown and then several lines for breaking the rest of it. This would accord better with *Ordo IV*'s "crown"; and, while such a view is not provable, there should be recorded both that little hollow loaves of such a kind are still baked for secular use in Rome today and that such popular customs are often very old. So we can see that the bread was, at least generally, leavened. Archdale King observes that "the references cited in favour of *azymes* in the early Church are quite inconclusive, and they are for the most part either apocryphal or symbolical."[13] One instance of the apocryphal is the quotation ascribed to Gregory the Great by Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* III, 74, 4. "For, Gregory says: 'The Roman Church offers unleavened bread, because our Lord took flesh without union of sexes: but the Greek Churches offer leavened bread, because the Word of the Father was clothed with flesh; as leaven is mixed with the flour.'"[14]

As this belongs to no surviving work of Gregory, there seems to be an error of attribution on Aquinas' part;[15] the quotation comes, in fact, from the *Tractatus contra Errores Graecorum* of 1250 or 1252, by an author identified by Migne as Pantaleon, deacon of Constantinople during Western rule there; he seems to have been a Dominican.[16] To explain and assess King's observation in the setting of the Roman West, we will move on to look at the symbolism of *azymes*, with special reference to their adoption.

The Symbolic Adoption of Unleavened Bread

In a Passover context, unleavened bread is mentioned in Exodus both as to be eaten at the Passover meal (12: 8) and as food for the people during the week after it (12: 18-20). The *azymes* of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (which

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[11] Gerald Ellard, "Bread in the Form of a Penny," *Theological Studies* 4/3 (1943): 343.

[12] Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite,* 330.

[13] Archdale King, *Liturgy of the Roman Church* (London: Longmans, 1957), 169-170.

[14] Translation accessed December 20, 2018, www.newadvent.org/summa/4074.htm

[15] Reginald Maxwell Woolley, *The Bread of the Eucharist* (London: Mowbray, 1913), 14.

[16] Jacques-Paul Migne ed. Patrologia Graeca (hereafter PG), 140, 524. See also Roger Pearse, accessed December 20, 2018, www.roger-pearse.com/weblog/2015-10-24

originally started on the day following the Passover) were baked with the first wheat of the new harvest and so were made before the new leaven, made with old dough kept from before the feast and fermented, was ready. Philo thus saw this feast as commemorating the world's creation in its former purity.[17] And, for Paul, the leaven's absence became a symbol of "sincerity and truth": "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor 5:7b-8).

Justin, addressing the Jews in the mid second century, both sees the specifically fine flour of a particular Jewish offering as a "type" of the Eucharistic bread[18] and takes up the Pauline symbolism of leaven as denoting "malice and wickedness," but applies it specifically to the old leaven and therefore without Paul's festal image: "What the *azymes* signify is that you should no longer do the old works of the evil leaven. But... God commanded you to knead a new leaven, after the seven days of the unleavened bread, which signifies the practice of new works."[19]

Hippolytus, writing in the early third century and, it seems, primarily addressing the Roman church, develops this by seeing the new leaven as symbolizing Christ's redemption of humankind: "Let the Jews, then, eat the *azymes* for seven days, let them strive on during the seven ages of the world. But as for us, Christ, our Pasch, is sacrificed, and we have received a new paste from his holy mixing."[20]

Although the antithesis between "*azymes*" and "new paste" implies that Hippolytus saw the latter as leavened, not unleavened as for Paul in 1 Cor 5:7, we can see that early Christianity adapted the symbolism of the purified creation, together with the liberation idea associated with the Passover, to refer to our regeneration in Christ. However, because Paul's symbolic condemnation of leaven is total (unlike Justin's), we can see how unleavened bread, rather than new-leavened bread, was taken up in the Middle Ages to symbolize the new dispensation.

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[17] Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 2, 159-161 (Loeb Classical Library, 320, Philo, Vol. 7; Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1937, reprinted 1998), 404-405.

[18] Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 41:1, in *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed,* ed. Ronald Jasper and Geoffrey Cuming (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 3rd ed. 1990), 27; see also Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 180-183.

[19] Quoted and trans. in Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1979 ed.), 174.

[20] Ibid.

The noted liturgical scholar Fernand Cabrol, Abbot of Farnborough (1855 – 1937) has taken the view that unleavened bread came in during the sixth or seventh century. This early date seems largely attributable to the testimony of Bede (c. 673 – 735).[21] However, the value of that testimony is more probably as an illustration of the development of the symbolic understanding that gave rise to *azymes*' adoption. In one place, Bede sees the week of unleavened bread as a "type" of Christian living on earth:

When, indeed, the lamb had been sacrificed one day at eventide, there followed seven days of *azymes* in succession. So too – Christ Jesus having suffered in the flesh once for us in the fullness of time – he has given instructions to us to live lives throughout all the time of this age, which is envisaged by the seven days, with the *azymes* of sincerity and truth.[22]

A little later, Bede examines the relation between the old and new dispensations in greater detail as regards Christ's redemptive work. Here Christ is seen, not only as the sacrifice of the new covenant, but also as typified by the *azymes* themselves:

> (Christ) does not cease to observe the sacraments of the law... until... eating the Passover for which he had longed with his disciples; so also at last, in the shining morning, he offers the very comely mysteries of his body and blood, consecrated on the altar of the cross, to the faithful to be initiated, as it were the azymes of the earth of the new promise.[23]

Further on, Bede takes up the Pauline symbolism of Christ, the head, and the Church, his body (Rom 12: 4-5; 1 Cor 12: 27-28; Eph 1: 22-23, 5: 39-30; Col 1:18,24). Here again, we should not necessarily infer a reference to the use of unleavened bread, since we are not told what the grain was mixed with:

> And neither is it permitted of anyone to offer only water or only wine, as neither wheat-grain only without its being mixed and made into bread: lest, of course, such an offering might signify – as it were – the head being severed from the members.[24]

Despite Cabrol's view, unleavened bread is more likely to have begun to be adopted in the West in the eighth century and to have gained considerable

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[21] Fernand Cabrol, "Azymes," in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie,* Part 2, 3258, see also King, Liturgy of the Roman Church, 1:171.

[22] Bede, *In Lucae Evangelium Expositio* 22, PL, 92, 593.

[23] Ibid., 595.

[24] Ibid., 597.

acceptance in the ninth,[25] when canonical legislation for its use began to be passed,[26] though its complete adoption took a long time. Woolley's view, that, when unleavened bread was first adopted in the West, it looked more, as it were, rough and ready (possibly more like Jewish Passover breads) than the smooth white breads of later times, is probably correct: such products as the latter must have taken some time to develop.[27] The first certain information we have is from Alcuin (c. 735 – 804) and Hrabanus Maurus (c. 780 – 856). Alcuin, writing in 798, states: "Thus too the bread, which is consecrated as Christ's body, must be entirely fine, without the leaven of other permeation" [28] and again: "The bread which is consecrated as Christ's body is made from water and flour."[29] However, it is clear from the passage as a whole that the use of leavened bread was still wide in the West at this time.[30] Hrabanus explains the importance of unleavened bread (i) by appeal to Christ's usage at the Last Supper and (ii) by taking up both the typology of the Old Testament cereal-offerings and the Pauline symbolism. Concerning (ii): despite Klauser, who imputes the primary cause of the reversion to azymes to the Old Testament,[31] the greater justification seems to be Paul's view of leaven:

> Wherefore, moreover, it befits the bread of the sacrifice to be without leaven... "every oblation which is offered to the Lord, let it be without leaven..." [Lev 2:11] So we believe, too, that that bread which the Lord first made through consecration into the mystery of his body in the mystic supper was unleavened, especially when at Passover time it was not allowed for anyone to eat leaven... What that leaven signifies...St Paul shows...: "Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed, therefore let us keep the feast" [1 Cor 5:7b-8].[32]

One reference in Hrabanus' contemporary Paschasius Radbertus (785 – 865), written in 844, has been quoted as a witness to the use of unleavened bread.

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[25] King, *Liturgy of the Roman Church,* 169; Clifford Howell, "The Communion Rite – The Deterioration of the Signs," *Liturgy* 2/6 (1978): 240; Colin Buchanan, *The End of the Offertory – An Anglican Study* (Bramcote: Grove Liturgical Study No. 14, 1978), 16.

[26] Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite,* 331.

[27] Woolley, *The Bread of the Eucharist,* 15.

[28] Alcuin, *Epistola* 90 *(Ad Fratres Lugdunenses),* PL, 100, 289.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Woolley, *The Bread of the Eucharist,* 19.

[31] Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy,* 110.

[32] Hrabanus Maurus, *De Institutione Clericorum* 1, 21, in *De Divinis Catholicae Ecclesiae Officiis et Mysteriis,* ed. Melchior Hittorp (Paris: Cum Privilegio Regis, 1610, facsimile republished Farnborough: Gregg International, 1970), hereafter Hittorp, 561-562.

While it is unclear whether the passage in question bears witness to the use of *azymes*' use or else is meant to be symbolic, the passage remains noteworthy:

> For this is the true and new paste of sincerity and truth so that we may be unleavened bread without the leaven of malice and wickedness... truly we are now members through Christ's new paste, nothing except for the body...Therefore this paste makes one Body from many grains, may it be a body of sincerity and truth, truly we are *azymes*, that is, without the leaven of malice and wickedness.[33]

A further interesting development is that, elsewhere, Paschasius puts the Eucharistic sacrament, and therefore the Eucharistic bread, in an eschatological context, perhaps inspired by the Roman Canon (now Eucharistic Prayer I), in which "the eschatological dimension is articulated by uniting the Roman Church with the saints and martyrs and the heavenly worship at the altar in heaven."[34] He writes: "We only feed upon and drink the sacrament of the body and blood so that nourished from it we may be made one in Christ, that being invigorated by tasting him we may be prepared for things immortal and eternal."[35]

Since Alcuin and Hrabanus both came from north of the Alps, it is, as King writes, "possible that *azymes* were yet another Gallican infiltration into the Roman liturgy."[36] According to the distinguished Jesuit scholar Jacques Sirmond (1559 – 1651), leavened bread – so to speak – "reigned supreme" in Rome until c. 850[37] and *azymes* did not, apparently, become universal in the West until about 1050.[38] By this date the older use of leavened bread had, generally, become distant enough for the West in general and Rome in particular to overlook it in the arguments with the East on the question in the mid eleventh century, when Rome believed that Christ used *azymes* at the Last Supper and the East interpreted the use of *artos* in the institution narratives to mean that leavened bread was used. However, Eastern opposition to the use of *azymes* does not seem to have become particularly contentious until just before the Great Schism between East and West in 1054. The belief that the use of *azymes* was an early

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[33] Paschasius Radbertus, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini* 22, 3, in Woolley, *The Bread of the Eucharist,* 19.

[34] Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me,* 206.

[35] Quoted and trans. in *Early Medieval Theology,* ed. George McCracken and Allen Cabaniss (Philadelphia, Library of Christian Classics 11: Westminster Press, 1957), 100, quotation taken from Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me,* 216.

[36] King, *Liturgy of the Roman Church,* 171.

[37] Jacques Sirmond, *Disquisitio de Azymo* (Paris: Cramoisy, 1651), cited in King, *Liturgy of the Roman Church,* 169.

[38] Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite,* 331.

custom would seem to have been held by Leo IX, who mentions the matter in a letter to Michael Cerularius, Patriarch of Constantinople from 1043 to 1059.[39] This belief is also discussed in a letter from Peter of Antioch to Cerularius.[40]

Later Symbolic and Practical Developments

Later on, well after the 1054 schism, we find the Western justification for unleavened bread stated by Rupert of Deutz (c. 1075 – 1129 or perhaps 1135).[41] Almost three centuries after Hrabanus, Rupert uses Hrabanus' reasons for *azymes* (the Lord's example, the Old Law and Paul). Rupert follows Paul's festal image in writing "let us celebrate the paschal feast" ("epulemur paschali convivio") and then repeats Paul's association of leaven with "malice and wickedness" and of unleavened bread with "sincerity and truth."[42] The West's use of *azymes* is then uncompromisingly set forth by Innocent III (1160 or 1161 – 1216). After quoting Exodus 12 in support of the use of unleavened bread, particularly on the grounds of Christ's having used it at the Last Supper in accordance with the prescriptions in Exodus 12, he restates Paul's symbolism by reference to two texts. Firstly:

> For leaven designates corruption, as St Paul bears witness..."A modest amount of leaven corrupts the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5: [6, Vulgate]). Thus, so that nothing corrupt or tainting, but entirely pure and cleansing, may be shown to be in this sacrament, we consecrate, not leavened bread, but *azyme*.[43]

1 Corinthians 5:7b-8 is then quoted in corroboration; thus Innocent, too, draws attention to Paul's festal image. Secondly, the strength of Innocent's convictions about unleavened bread is clearly shown by that of the value judgment he sets forth:

> *Azyme* bread and leavened bread are utterly opposed things...: thus it was not fitting for God, as if opposed to himself, to abandon *azyme* bread and adopt leavened, as if preferring the less good.[44]

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[39] Leo IX, *Epistola ad Michaelem Caerularium* 20-21, PL, 143, 759-760.

[40] Michael Cerularius, Dominic of Grado and Peter of Antioch, *Epistolae Mutuae,* PG, 120, 808; the addressee of the letter in question was almost certainly Cerularius – cf. ibid., 796 note 60.

[41] Rupert of Deutz, *De Divinis Officiis* 2, 22, Hittorp, 881-882.

[42] Ibid., Hittorp, 882.

[43] Innocent III, *De Sacro Altaris Mysterio* 4, 4, PL, 217, 855.

[44] Ibid., 857.

Two of the main effects of the changeover to unleavened bread were that the Eucharistic bread ceased to be baked in ordinary households and that the size of altar-breads diminished – in particular, small hosts eventually came to be used for the people's communion. After the Western adoption of *azymes*, baking the Eucharistic bread came to be done by the clergy and in other Religious Houses. The main reasons were, firstly, that unleavened bread was not made for domestic use. But this does not seem to be the whole explanation: it would not, in principle, have been impossible to ask housewives to bake it as their families' contribution to the Church's work. Secondly, there was the medieval piety which engendered "the effort to remove the bread destined for the altar farther and farther from the sphere of the merely profane."[45] The importance of this process is shown by the coming-in of the same custom in the East, where the bread was, of course, still leavened. In the East the baking became a liturgical ceremony in its own right and it did likewise in some quarters in the West, particularly in Religious Houses.[46] We can thus say that both causes produced "the ushering in of the era of the specialized wafer, specially produced by ecclesiastical professionals".[47] The great medieval reverence for Christ's sacramental presence was, generally, based on adoration from afar rather than sacramental communion, and consistent with this outlook was the use of smooth white hosts, causing only the smallest of crumbs and containing bread of the highest "purity", that is, virtually only the best flour with water. The advantage of unleavened bread with regard to crumbs is mentioned as early as the mid eleventh century by Humbert of Silva Candida,[48] who presented the bull of Cerularius' excommunication at Constantinople in 1054.

When *azymes* came into use in the Middle Ages, the practice was, apparently, to make them relatively large and break them in the fraction-rite for the people's communion. Ulrich of Zell (1029 – 1093) has left an account of baking the Eucharistic bread at Cluny by kneading the unleavened dough into flat cakes for cooking:

> One [monk] sprinkles the flour [with water] and very vigorously kneads [it] on a very clean table... They sprinkle with cold water because then the hosts may be made whiter...Six hosts may be placed in the irons at the same time.[49]

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[45] Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite,* 331.

[46] Ibid., 331-332; Ulrich of Zell, *Constitutiones Cluniacenses* 13, PL, 149, 757-758.

[47] Buchanan, *The End of the Offertory,* 16.

[48] Quoted in Woolley, *The Bread of the Eucharist,* 25-26.

[49] Ulrich of Zell, *Consuetudines Cluniacenses* 13, PL, 149, 757; translation taken from Craig, *Fractio Panis,* 181 note 116.

The reduction in size of the celebrant's altar-bread is essentially a twelfth-century phenomenon[50] and seems to have been caused by the decline in lay communions. That protracted and complex process seems to have begun around Antioch as early as about 250;[51] it seems to have been familiar in Rome as early as about 500.[52] Such a reduction of the celebrant's altar-bread was subsequently maintained by allowing convenience to predominate over principle: since *azymes* do not harden quickly like leavened bread, the particles for the people's communion could be broken before Mass started. Thus arose the provision of ready-broken or, as has been normative since the eleventh century,[53] small round pieces of bread for communicating the faithful. Barry Craig has pointed out that such small hosts are nowadays baked in sheets of wafer bread, so that they are not individually baked and might be said to be broken before Mass insofar as they are cut from sheets,[54] though small hosts (of thicker bread) were individually baked in the late eleventh century, according to a common pattern of altar-bread irons at that time.[55]

This eleventh-century date for the adoption of small hosts may seem early in view of Jungmann's statement that the priest's host was not made smaller until the twelfth century, but he appears to have got these events the right way round: the introduction of small hosts must have come first, then the reduction of the priest's host, since to give communion to the people from the latter (as and when lay communion was distributed) was no longer necessary. Sadly, the replacement of domestic bread-baking by "professional" baking of unleavened bread engendered a measure of alienation of the congregation from active liturgical participation which, though far from complete, was nonetheless furthered. As this alienation progressed, money gradually replaced gifts in kind.[56] In noting the form the unleavened breads eventually took, one should note the work of Julie Kerr, who sees the baking of altar breads in medieval monasteries, duly attended by suitable rites, as having been an annual event only.[57] Clearly, in houses where

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[50] Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite,* 332.

[51] Ernest Benjamin Koenker, *The Liturgical Renaissance in the Roman Catholic Church* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), 97.

[52] Josef Jungmann, *Public Worship: A Survey* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1957), 144.

[53] Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite,* 65.

[54] Craig, *Fractio Panis,* 109.

[55] Ibid., 198.

[56] John Cardinal Bona (1609-1674), *Rerum Liturgicarum,* (*Liber II*), ed. Roberto Sala (Turin: *Ex Typographia Regia,* 1753, facsimile republished Farnborough: Gregg International, 1970), 3: 194,196; Ellard, "Bread in the Form of a Penny," 335, 337-339.

[57] Julie Kerr, *Life in the Medieval Cloister* (London & New York: Continuum, 2009), 158.

this was so, the breads would have had to be altogether dry, to facilitate storage, and decidedly thin, to facilitate consumption. The form of such thin white hosts can also be attributed to medieval piety; Clifford Howell well describes the effect on the *azymes*' form of the replacement of other gifts by money. He writes that "as a reminder that these coin-offerings were a substitute for the former bread-offerings, the altar-breads now began to be made to look like coins; they were cut like coins and stamped with an 'image and superscription' like coins, in fact – 'wheaten money'."[58] This change would have meant that, while Paul's festal metaphor still applied, it would have been more difficult to appreciate than before.

In describing these coin-like hosts, the tractate *Gemma Animae*, attributed to Honorius of Autun in the twelfth century, sees the "image and superscription" as an allegory of God's image in humankind being mended through sacramental communion,[59] and Craig explains Honorius' provision of such allegorical interpretations for the hosts' appearance as the coins for which Christ was betrayed and the coins with which the workers in the vineyard were paid in the gospel account.[60] However, we find strong opposition from Bernard or Bernold of Constance in his apparently lost work of 1089, which Georgius Cassander has paraphrased in the sixteenth century thus:

> In some churches at (the original author's) time the bread offerings, which in the ancient custom of the Church were wont to be brought... by the pious faithful for the use of the sacrifice, were reduced to the likeness of coins, and to a thinness and lightness entirely foreign to the appearance of real bread, and hence (the original author) contemptuously calls them infinitesimal minted wafers, ascribing a fantastic and unreal smoothness to them, unworthy for their lightness of the name of bread.[61]

We find such hosts used in England by at least the early twelfth century in that Ernulf, Bishop of Rochester (1039/40 – 1124) writes of the Eucharistic bread, "we receive bread in coin shape (*nos in forma nummi panem accipimus*)," contrasting it with the everyday bread used in the primitive Church.[62] There is also an interesting passage in the first of the Synodal Statutes, or Constitutions, of William de Bleis, Bishop of Worcester, of 1229. The passage must refer to

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[58] Howell, "The Communion Rite," 240; see also Ellard, "Bread in the Form of a Penny," 340.

[59] *Gemma Animae I,* 35, Hittorp, 1190. See also Bona, *Rerum Liturgicarum,* (*Liber II*), 3: 194.

[60] Craig, *Fractio Panis,* 196.

[61] Quoted and translated in Ellard, "Bread in the Form of a Penny," 343-344, cited also in Howell, "The Communion Rite," 240.

[62] Ernulf, *Epistola ad Lambertum,* quoted in Ellard, "Bread in the Form of a Penny," 319.

azymes; while it is not altogether clear whether they are in coin form, that is quite possible:

> Therefore, concerning the species which are required for the same Sacrament, more diligent attention ought to be applied, so that the offerings may clearly be made from the pure kernel of the corn grain... Let the utensil in which the offerings ought to be cooked be greased only with wax, not with oil or other fat; the offerings which have a becoming whiteness and a seemly roundness may be offered over the table of the altar.[63]

The same synodal tradition provides further legislation on this subject in canon 4 of an Exeter synod of 1287 under Bishop Peter Quinil (Quinel, Quivil). While this canon's contents do not seem unrealistic, they also reflect the high standards that Quinil set:[64]

> Let them provide among the priests that they have offerings prepared from the finest wheat-flour of grain, and water only, such that nothing should be mixed in with the grain; and let the offerings be whole, white and round.[65]

While no canonical legislation was passed to the effect that altar-breads had to be made like coins, the practice, begun in the late eleventh century, had become widespread by the end of the thirteenth.[66] Thus Gulielmus Durandus, writing about 1286 and quoting an early thirteenth-century source, specifies that "the bread however is shaped in the manner of a denarius... and in a round shape."[67] We should also take note of an English source, relevant to this article's scope, which, though late, is particularly significant. In the First Prayer Book of King Edward VI of 1549, compiled for the nascent Church of England, the third directive after the Communion service runs:

> It is meet that the bread prepared for the Communion, be made... after one sort and fashion: that is to say, unleavened and round, as it was afore, but without all manner of print, and something more larger and thicker than it was, so that it may be aptly divided in divers pieces... and men must not think less to be

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[63] Frederick Maurice Powicke and Christopher Cheney ed. *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 2.1: 170.

[64] Richard Pfaff, *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 396.

[65] Powicke and Cheney, *Councils and Synods,* 2.2: 990; Nicholas Paxton, "From the Canon to the Communion in the Sarum Mass," *In Illo Tempore: Ushaw Library Bulletin and Liturgical Review* 23 (2003): 23-24.

[66] Ellard, "Bread in the Form of a Penny," 340; Howell, "The Communion Rite," 240.

[67] Gulielmus Durandus, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* 4, 41, 8, quoted and trans. in Craig, Fractio Panis, 197.

> received in part than in the whole, but in each of them, the whole body of our saviour Jesus Christ.[68]

From this, we can again see that, over the course of the Middle Ages, the hosts which the congregation received became stamped and became small and thin enough for each communicant to receive a complete, unbroken host. Here is the "wheaten money" to which Howell refers.[69] Moreover, the references to Bernard or Bernold of Constance and to Durandus, given above, indicate that these developments were not confined to England.[70] Nonetheless, while the difference which Craig postulates between wafers and his understanding of unleavened bread, as made from kneaded dough,[71] agrees with a phrase quoted by Howell, that wafers are "called bread only by courtesy of the Roman Catholic Church,"[72] Craig's view cannot command universal agreement: the present writer considers, as do countless Catholics, that wafer bread is a variety of the unleavened bread with which we keep the feast of Christ our sacrificed Passover.

Conclusion

The Council of Florence, wishing reunion with the East, declared in 1439 that "the body of Christ is truly confected in both unleavened and leavened wheat bread,"[73] though that did not stop those Greeks who were opposed to the union agreed at Florence from stigmatizing the pro-union party as "azymites." Furthermore, this statement of Florence about valid matter for consecration did not stop the polemics of the East and the West about the rival claims of leavened and unleavened bread, which Georgij Avvakumov has set out and discussed in our own day.[74]

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[68] *The First and Second Prayer Books of King Edward the Sixth* (London, Everyman's Library: J. M. Dent, 1910), 230. See also Nicholas Paxton, "Ecumenical Perspectives on the Breaking of Bread," *One in Christ,* 40, 4 (2005), 75-76.

[69] Howell, "The Communion Rite," 240.

[70] See above, notes 57 and 62.

[71] Craig, *Fractio Panis,* 181.

[72] Howell, "The Communion Rite," 239.

[73] Florence, *Definitio Sanctae Oecumenicae Synodi Florentinae,* 6 July 1439, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* ed. Norman Tanner (London: Sheed & Ward, and Georgetown: Georgetown Univ. Press, 1990), 1:527; Tanner's translation.

[74] Georgij Avvakumov, *Die Entstehung des Unionsgedankens: Die lateinische Theologie des Hochmittelalters in der Auseinanderszetung mit dem Ritus der Ostkirche* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 87-159.

The post-medieval centuries have seen repeated studies of the nature and history of the difference in the form of the Eucharistic bread, within the West itself as well as between East and West, as described long ago in dissertations by the great Jesuit scholar Jacques Sirmond (1559 – 1651), and the monumental Maurist scholar Jean Mabillon 1632 –1707).[75] It nowadays befits all Christians to do their best to leave polemics behind. The quality both of church life and of theological study and writing tends to suffer if energies are diverted into polemics. Nowadays, one important idea might be to set the question of what type of bread is used at the liturgy in the context of the ecumenical movement, treating earlier attitudes with respect, building on them towards a new respect for different traditions and attaining a previously unknown level of symbolic richness. Perhaps the time has come to see the use at the Eucharist of leavened and of unleavened bread in terms of complementarity rather than opposition, concentrating on the one gift of Christ himself, of the body and blood which are the food and drink of his risen life, at every celebration of the Eucharist. For Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast.

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[75] Jacques Sirmond, *Disquisitio de Azymo* (Paris: Cramoisy, 1651); Jean Mabillon, *Dissertatio de Pane Eucharistico, Azymo ac Fermentato* (Paris: Billaine, 1674); Avvakumov, 31; Craig, 191-192.