271 Bread (*Panis*)

Bread is found in four ways, namely, in nature, doctrine, penance, alms, and the eucharist.

First, bread is good but corporal, Psal. [103:15]: “Bread may strengthen man's heart.”

Second, there is a better bread but spiritual, about which Matt. [4:4]: “Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word.”

¶ Again, Lam. 4[:4]: “The little ones have asked for bread, and there was none to break it unto them.” So, we are children not able to receive the doctrine of Christ thick and whole unless it is broken up for us through the saints explaining, just as the bread broken for the boys. Wherefore also the disciples of Christ did not know Christ while he went with them in the way, but “in the breaking of the bread,” Luke last chapter [24:35]. Wherefore in the person of such ones it is said, Prov. 9[:4-5]: “To the unwise she said: Come, eat my bread.” For the bread of doctrine if it should be profitable it ought to be incorporated and as if eaten by the listener.

¶ Concerning the bread of penance it is said in Isai. 30[:20]: “And the Lord will give you spare bread, and short water.” And this sometimes is good for the sinners, for the lack of corporal bread sometimes forces a man to penance. Wherefore also the sons of Jacob who sinned against Joseph were forced to go down into Egypt to seek bread where through penance they found Joseph, Gen. 42[:6]. If sinners sometimes seek the precept which before they offended, Psal. [79:6]: “You will feed us with the bread of tears.” And Eccli. 29[:27]: “The chief thing for man's life is water and bread, and clothing.” Because to turn away from fault requires the water of contrition, the bread of restitution, and the clothing of honest association.

¶ Concerning the bread of alms it is said in Isai. 58[:7]: “Deal your bread to the hungry,” etc., as if Christ eats the bread in heaving which you break for the poor on earth. Therefore, Tobias said to his son, Tobias 4[:17]: “Eat your bread with the hungry and the needy.”

¶ Concerning the bread of the Eucharist it is said in John 6[:41]: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven.” And in the Lord’s Prayer, Matt. 6[:11]: “Give us this day our daily bread.” Wherefore it is well figured in Gen. 49[:20]: “Aser, his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield dainties to kings.”

¶ And it is well said this bread is dainty, because it has been prepared in the virginal womb, as if a hunter for seeking human nature which was at one time in his parents, just as wild and untamed, of such a kind the flesh as it was commonly reputed delicate, Isai. 66[:11]: “Flow with delights, from the abundance of her glory.” For those traveling on the great sea toward the holy land bread was truly reputed to be baked for the delicate, just as for us traveling in his world Christ is given to us as twice baked. Because formerly in heaven he was begotten by the father, and again on earth he was born of the virgin.

¶ Concerning this bread it is said, Wis. 16[:20]: “You gave them bread from heaven; having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste.” The bread was literally manna which the Lord rained on them, Exod. 16[:15]. Which however they did not receive while they were under Egyptian servitude nor afterwards when they entered the promised land, because the manna disappeared after they had eaten of the fruit of the promised land, Jos. 5[:12]. But on the way by journeying toward the promised land that bread was given to them in figure that they who had served Pharaoh, that is, the devil in mud and hiding were not worthy to eat the body of Christ nor those who touched the promised land, that is, heaven. They need that bread in figure because now they are satisfied with that true bread which gives life to the world, John 6[:52] and Luke [14:15] it is said, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of the heavens.” Wherefore Chrysostom, *Homilia* 27,[[1]](#endnote-1) that bread is great which fills the mind and not the belly. Let it be eaten and not finished. Let if fill the world and remain whole. From that we live and are nourished. And however, we seek that every day. Therefore, before we incorporate that, let that come to pass which is said in 1 Cor. 11[:28]: “Let a man prove himself,” through true contrition of the heart, confession of the mouth, and satisfaction of work, “and so let him eat of that bread.” For he who eats another eats perilously. For this true body is the body, but under the covering of the species. Where one is believed by faith, one is seen with the eye, and one is perceived by the sense.

¶ However the truth of the body is believed, so in the blessing of Isaac all the senses were deceived except for the hearing, so in this sacrament.

¶ Therefore beware lest in preparing yourself there be negligence, in attending irreverence, in receiving insult. For this bread is heavenly by origin, angelic by sweetness, and living by virtue.

¶ Again, natural examples show the possibility of the conversion of the bread into the body of Christ. For the digestive power of the stomach converts bread into the flesh of man.

¶ And if a finite power can do this gradually, an infinite power can do this in an instant.

¶ Again, in Ireland,[[2]](#endnote-2) there is a certain lake in which if you insert a stick the part which is stuck in the earth is turned into iron, what is under in the water is hardened into stone, and what is above, remains wood.

¶ Again, in Greece, there is a fountain in which anything submerged hardens into stone, which was evident in a deed of the Emperor Frederick.[[3]](#endnote-3) Who wishing to experience this, sent his glove through his messenger. Up to the middle part of which was put into the water and it hardened into stone, the part above the water remained leather.

¶ Again, the nature of a certain tree turns the fruit of the tree into something that flies, namely, into sloughed off leaves.

¶ Again, nature converts earth into gold and into gems.

¶ Again, there is bread baked under hot ashes in remembrance of the ashes which Elias ate, 3 Kings [19:6]. There is the bread made from barley for the mortification of the flesh which the crowd in the gospel consumed, John [6:11]. There is the bread made from wheat for the remembrance of the divine passion, John [12:24]: “Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die.” And this is the heavenly origin, etc., as was said above.

1. Cf. John Chrysostom, *Homil de Orat. Dominic* [pagina 607 of Paris,1570 ed. tom. 5] *Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie.* Magnus iste panis qui replet mentem et non ventrem. Iste panis et noster est, et Angelorum: iste panis manducatur, et non finitur: iste panis mundum totum replet, et integer manet. De ipso comedimus, inde vivimus, inde pascimur, inde nutrimur, inde pervenimus: et tamen quotidie illum quaerimus, ne deficiat fides nostra, ne vires animae nostra in ista arcta et angusta via fatigatae non perveniant ad patriam.

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2. Cf. Pierre Bersuire, *Reductorii Moralis* c. 16 (Venice: Haeredem Hieronymi Scoti, 1583, p. 627a): Et est in Ibernia quidam lacus in quem si palum infixeris, pars que in terra fixa, conuertitur in ferrum, et que est in aqua convertitur in lapidem, quae autem exterius est, lignum manet. Sic vere in lacu huius mundi si palus, hoc est anima, figitur per amorem in terra, id est, in amore temporalium, efficitur ferrea per duritiam, et incompassionem, si in aquis deliciarum mergitur, efficitur labidea per inuerecundiam et obstinationem….. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Emperor Frederick, cf. Joannes Zonaras, *Annalium* 4.14 (PG 134:351): Taxiles vero, uni integer illos celebri Calano persuasit, ut Alexandrum conveniret. Is corium aridum projecit, et ejus extrema per vices calcavit: quod dum fieret, aliae partes attollebantur. Cum autem medium calcasset ad compressisset, totum corium quietum mansit et immobile.... [↑](#endnote-ref-3)